

Negotiations with U.S. at current situation is equal to surrender **2**



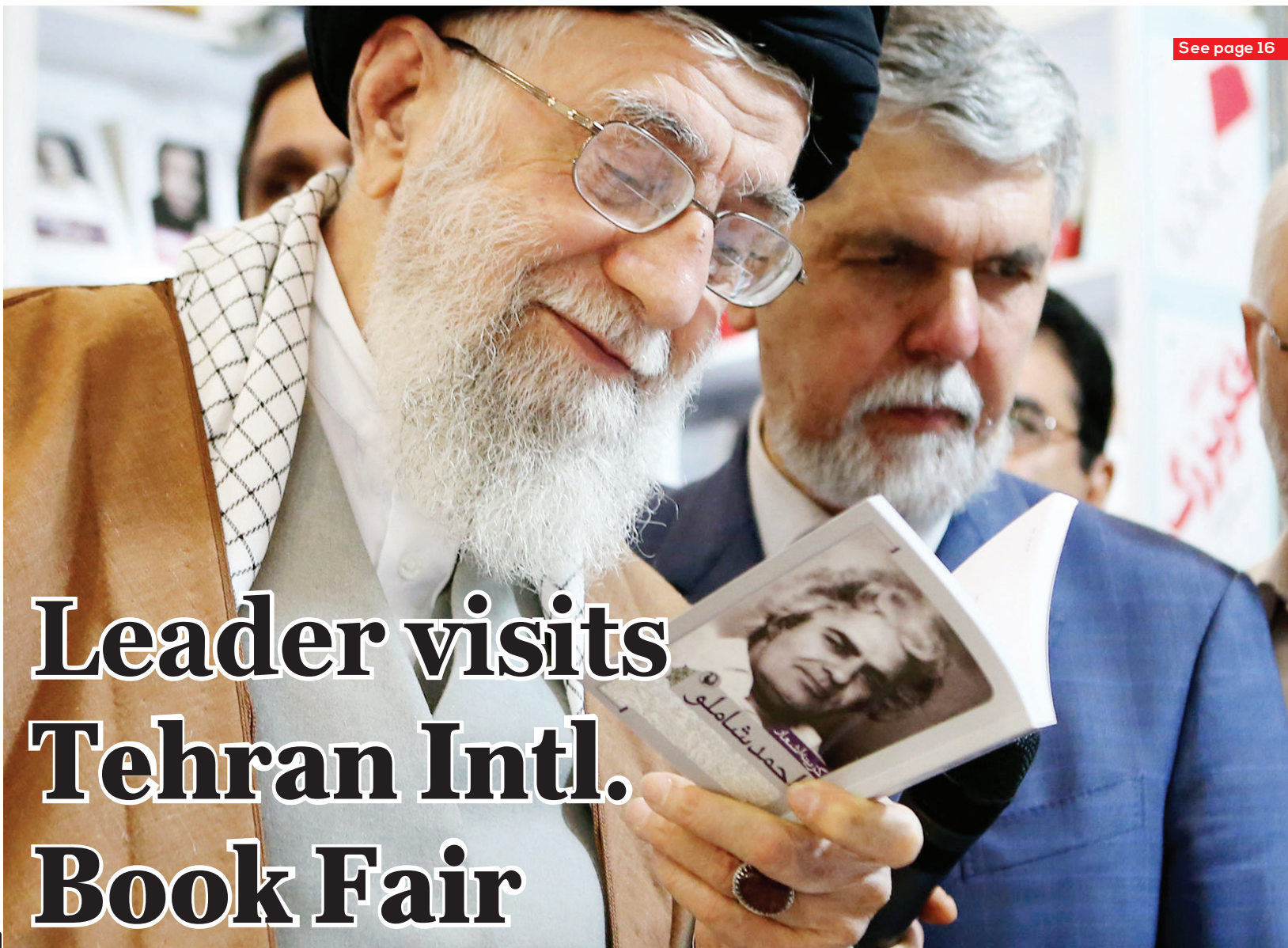
Larijani calls talks with U.S. a 'strategic mistake' **2**



Croatia Olympic chief meets Iranian top sports officials **15**



Danish film festival to open in Tehran on Wednesday **16**



Leader visits Tehran Intl. Book Fair

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Iran, Turkey ink MOU on transportation co-op

TEHRAN — Iran and Turkey signed a memorandum of understanding for expanding transportation cooperation, IRIB reported.

The MOU was inked during the eighth meeting of Iran-Turkey joint transportation committee which was held in Tehran on Monday.

Iran's Transport and Urban Development

Minister Mohammad Eslami, Turkish Minister of Transport and Infrastructure Mehmet Cahit Turhan, Ali Ihsan the chief executive of Turkish railways (known as TCDD) and Saeed Rasouli head of Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAI) along with representatives of major transportation companies from both sides were among the attendees of the gathering. **→4**

World should stand up to health-related human rights violation: minister

TEHRAN — The Iranian health minister has called on health policy makers to fully stand up to those who violate health-related human rights by imposing brutal sanctions on countries.

Saeed Namaki made the remarks during the opening ceremony of 7th World Health Summit Regional Meeting in the Persian Gulf island of Kish on Monday, ISNA news agency reported.

No one should be deprived of their

healthcare rights due to sanctions, no healthcare center in Yemen, Libya, or Republic of the Congo should be raided and no healthcare provider should be murdered like Dr Richard Mouzoko.

Dr Richard Valery Mouzoko Kiboung, an epidemiologist deployed by WHO in the response to the Ebola outbreak in DRC, was killed in an attack on Butembo University Hospital on Friday, 19 April 2019. **→12**

Imran Khan says after stronger ties with Tehran

TEHRAN — Imran Khan, the Pakistani prime minister, has reiterated that his country attaches importance to ties with Iran and intends to bolster relations and cooperation with its western neighbor.

"Pakistan enjoys good relations with Iran and we are after strengthening these ties," Khan said while on tour of

China on Monday, Fars news agency reported.

He also referred to the insecurities at border areas, saying, "We make efforts to establish a tranquil region and want Iran's cooperation to this end."

Khan said that Pakistani people's economic welfare is impossible without stability and security in the region. **→2**

Theorizing about religion one of the core areas of inquiry in IR: Peter Haas

By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Peter M. Haas, a professor of Political Science at the University of Massachusetts Amherst says that the crux of the argument about secular and religious states in IR is still seen as the conflict between animating pressures on people: religious, post religious, secular.

Karl Deutsch Visiting Professor at the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin adds that "While there is no singular theory of religion, religion is meaningfully studied as a form of cultural analysis."

He also adds "Theorizing about religion has

always been one of the core areas inquiry in IR."

Following is the full text of the interview: When have been the religious issues a matter of great in Theorizing of International Relations?

Theorizing about religion has always been one of the core areas inquiry in IR. Modern IR emerged out of the 1548 Treaty of Westphalia and the corresponding toppling of the authority of the Catholic Church over domestic politics in Western Europe.

As the legacy of the Treaty of Westphalia,

the secular state has always been a normative feature and aspiration of the international system, although the degree of conformity with the secular state has varied over time and extent. For instance, currently religion seems to trump the secular state in Israel and Saudi Arabia; religion is in an ongoing contest with secular orientations in Turkey and Iran; different spaces are assigned to religious and secular rules in Japan, China and the USA; and secular beliefs prevail over religious ones in France, the UK, and Russia. **→6**

What Iranian flood victims said to the Supreme Leader

By Huda Z

TEHRAN — About a month ago, devastating floods hit a number of provinces in north and west of Iran, killing at least 70 people, rendering thousands homeless, flattening residential properties, destroying farmland and cutting off access to remote villages.

The deluge was unprecedented and came unannounced. Disaster management authorities in flood-prone areas seemed unprepared for it,

perhaps not expecting a normal seasonal rainfall to turn into a catastrophic natural calamity.

Over the past several weeks, people across the country, despite crippling sanctions and adverse economic condition, have been pooling money for the flood victims. As per rough estimates, the damage caused by this year's flood accounts to almost USD 2.5 billion.

Some regional countries did come forward with offers of help but the U.S. sanctions prevented the

international community to send cash assistance to the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) to respond to the crisis, which Foreign Minister Javad Zarif aptly termed as 'economic terrorism'.

"Even though certain countries and organizations have announced their readiness to offer cash contributions, given the inhumane U.S. sanctions against Iran, there is no channel for cash aids to be sent to IRCS as of this date," IRCS said in a statement. **→6**

Saudis destabilizing Middle East, paying for U.S.-Israeli crimes: Hezbollah

TEHRAN — The deputy secretary general of Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement has described Saudi Arabia as the root cause of instability in the Middle East, stating that the incumbent regime in Riyadh is sponsoring fiendish U.S. and Israeli crimes in the region.

"Saudi officials are paying for American-Zionist crimes from the pockets of poor and impoverished people among other walks of

society in the kingdom. Saudi rulers have turned the country into the kingdom of evil. Saudi money rests behind all crises and problems in the region, besides the agents that are on the American-Israeli side," Arabic-language al-Ahed news website quoted Sheikh Naim Qassim as saying at a ceremony in the southern Lebanese town of Kfar Fila on Sunday evening.

Qassim added that the ruling Saudi family is a sheer example of an oppressive and dictatorial regime, which practices all kinds of pressure and injustice under American orders to legitimize Arabs' normalization of diplomatic relations with the Israeli regime, the so-called deal of the century that deprives Palestinians of their motherland and their future, in addition to aggression and occupation, Press TV reported. **→13**



Iran to celebrate Persian Gulf National Day

TEHRAN — Today, Iranians from all walks of life are to celebrate Persian Gulf National Day, an occasion to commemorate the exit of colonial and foreign forces from the strategic waterway.

Tenth of Ordibehesht month (April 30) in the Iranian calendar marks the anniversary of Shah Abbas I of Persia's successful military campaign when the Portuguese navy was forced out of the Strait of Hormuz in the Capture of Ormuz (1622). **→10**



ARTICLE

Mudasir Sheikh
Researcher and writer from Kashmir

Saudi-U.S. nuclear hypocrisy exposed

According to author and radio host, Harvey Wasserman, U.S. President Donald Trump's recent decision to infuse \$3.7 billion dollars into Vogtle nuclear power plants is a criminal act.

The U.S nuclear industry is facing stiff competition from cheap natural gas and renewable energy, so financial assistance is critical for the survival of the industry. Trump administration is not only infusing money into the troubled U.S. nuclear energy sector but strongly advocating the transfer of sensitive nuclear technology to the regime in Riyadh. It has adopted a well-coordinated strategy to guarantee the survival of the U.S. nuclear industry.

The unilateral withdrawal of the U.S. from JCPOA, malign interests of the U.S. military-industrial complex and a comprehensive plan to contain Iranian influence in the Middle East are some important links that can explain the Saudi-U.S. nuclear hypocrisy.

At the superficial level, Saudi regime considers itself a strong advocate of weapons of mass destruction free zone (WMD-FZ) in the Middle East but by praising the unilateral withdrawal of U.S. from JCPOA and an open admission to acquire nuclear weapons in case Iran undertakes a nuclear program is a testament to Saudi hypocrisy.

It seems logical to put deterrence against a rival but Saudi intentions to acquire nuclear weapons date back to the inception of Pakistan's nuclear program.

The justification for deterrence against Iran is a fabricated story as we analyze the Iran nuclear deal which reduced the enriched uranium stockpile of Iran by 98% and the number of gas centrifuges reduced to two-thirds for 13 years.

Iran even agreed to halt building new heavy water facilities and enrich uranium up to 3.67%. Further it agreed on regular inspection of its nuclear program by international Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

In this context, the statement of former UK ambassador to UN and IAEA, Peter Jenkins that "as long as Iran is complying with the JCPOA, the U.S., Israel, and Saudi Arabia are deprived of any basis for claiming that Iran presents a nuclear threat which must be eliminated by use of force" sufficiently explains the Saudi nuclear hypocrisy. **→6**



ARTICLE

Farrokh Hesabi
Tehran Times journalist

Violence in Iranian football needs to stop

The Iranian domestic football, known as Iran Professional League, has been marred by violence and abusive language.

The rivalry between Persepolis and Sepahan, two old and popular football clubs in Iran, is a footballing rivalry which dates back to many years ago.

However, in recent years the rivalry between these two teams, who have always been among the favorites to win the Iran Professional League (IPL), has often stirred controversy.

Chaotic scenes broke out during match between Persepolis and Sepahan on Friday as visiting fans broke the seats and clashed with the security forces.

In a rather disastrous afternoon, angry Sepahan fans started ripping plastic seats from the stands before hurling them onto the pitch at the Azadi Stadium in Tehran. Later the fans of both teams scrapped with each other in the stands before the start of the match and according to Tehran emergency center more than 250 fans were injured in the clashes before and after the game.

On Friday April 19, similar issues happened in Tabriz. After the match between Tractor Sazi and Paykan the Tabriz fans were devastated at their team's 0-1 home loss and started causing a public nuisance as a display of their anger.

The Football Federation of Iran Disciplinary Committee on Saturday made temporary rulings in some disciplinary cases regarding the match between Persepolis and Sepahan. The committee has also made penalties for some clubs and their violent fans in previous similar cases. The punishments were temporary. So were the solutions. That behavior has been repeated again and again at pitches everywhere in Iran and of course it is something that can be seen in stadiums all over the world.

Sport can heal and unite cultures. But sometimes the anger of biased fans of some teams lead to unpleasant scenes in sports, especially football. Violent incidents of Iranian football in recent years have reached alarming levels, putting pressure on the Iran Football Federation (FFIRI) to adopt stronger measures. **→15**

Iran, Russia to stage joint naval war games in Persian Gulf

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Rear-Admiral Hossein Khanzadi, the commander of Iran's navy, announced on Monday that Iranian and Russian military forces will stage a naval drill in the Persian Gulf later this year.

The top military official made the announcement during a press conference upon return to Tehran from a high-profile visit to China, where he met with his counterparts from other countries. "Our negotiations with Russia revolved mostly around technical and operational topic and we plan to hold a joint naval exercise" this year, he stated.

While Iranian and Russian naval forces have received training together in the Caspian Sea before, the upcoming Persian Gulf drill takes cooperation between the two sides to a new level.



The announcement comes at a time that Iran has threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz, a strategic chokepoint for maritime oil transportation, in response to threats by the United States to zero out Tehran's oil exports.

The Persian Gulf has also become the center of another showdown between Iranian and American forces following U.S. President Donald Trump's recent move to designate the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organization.

Iran has in response designated the U.S. central Command (CENTCOM), which oversees all U.S. forces' operations in the region, as terrorist and vowed to confront them in case of any trespassing on its territorial waters in the Persian Gulf.

In January, Admiral Khanzadi said upon announcing joint drills in the Caspian Sea that military-to-military work with Russia "will surely take us to a new level of cooperation in strategic, tactical, and operational areas at sea."

The Iranian navy has celebrated significant advances over the past years and expanded its global operating range.

Admiral Khanzadi announced that the force would soon receive the Damavand destroyer, which he said is currently being equipped with the latest domestic technologies for naval combat.

Iran, China sign military cooperation agreement
The navy chief also announced that he had signed an extensive cooperation agreement with his Chinese counterparts during the trip.

"Expanding technical and training capacities will be some of the issues we have on agenda for our interactions with the Chinese navy," he added.

Khanzadi noted that besides China, Iran has received invitations from India, Pakistan and even Italy for joint training.

"Currently, our officers are being trained in some of these countries and some of them have sent officers to Iran to receive training," he said.

Iran to defend oil tankers against Israel

Asked about Israeli Prime Minister Benajmin Netanyahu's recent remarks about the possibility of using military action to hinder Iranian oil exports, Khanzadi said the armed forces were ready to protect Iran's tanker fleet.

"The Islamic Republic's tankers are part of our country's soil and surely we will protect them," he asserted.

Imran Khan says after stronger ties with Tehran

1 → Prime Minister Khan visited Tehran on April 21-22 to take part in a number of meetings with senior Iranian officials, including Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and President Hassan Rouhani.

Rouhani and Khan in a joint statement underlined the need to widen mutual cooperation between the two countries, especially in trade and economy.

Rouhani and the Pakistani premier vowed to boost energy relations, including Iran's electricity export to Pakistan.

The two sides also agreed to hold the next Joint Consular Commission meeting in late 2019 in order to examine the progress made and chart the progress made in facilitating people's travel from the two countries.



The two officials also reiterated that common borders should be the border of peace and friendship.

The Pakistani side, meantime, welcomed the Iranian government's announcement of the release of a number of Pakistani inmates and the adoption of measures for their immediate extradition.

The two sides required their respective ministries to use all potentials to put in place all necessary mechanisms to maximize monetary, financial, and commercial activities.

They also agreed to hold the 21st round of Joint Economic Committee meeting in Pakistan in late 2019 in order to consult on the above issues.

Referring to the need for a secure, stable and independent Afghanistan to promote peace and stability in the region, the Iranian president and the Pakistani prime minister called for the establishment of peace talks between Afghan groups, and called on the countries in the region and outside to cooperate with each other to put an end to the conflicts and return peace to Afghanistan.

Rouhani and Khan also condemned all forms of terrorism while acknowledging the great achievements of the two countries in combatting terrorism.

With regard to the importance of extending roads to develop and facilitate bilateral and regional cooperation, the two sides agreed on the implementation of bilateral and multilateral agreements, including the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), CPEC and the North-South, and East-West Transit Corridors in Iran.

The two sides, meantime, emphasized the need to resolve the issue of Jammu and Kashmir through dialogue based on the will of the people of that region and in accordance with the UN Security Council resolution.

Larijani calls talks with U.S. a 'strategic mistake'

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani said on Monday that talks with the U.S. is a "strategic mistake".

"U.S. officials should know that they are facing a tough opponent," Larijani said during a conference on monetary policies.

He noted that Iran sat at the negotiating table for 12 years, however, U.S. President Donald Trump violated the 2015 nuclear agreement and quit it.

Larijani was referring to Iran's nuclear talks with the West which first started with Europeans in 2003 and then included the U.S. in following years and concluded in 2015. Larijani himself was Iran's chief nuclear negotiator in the early years of the Ahmadinejad presidency. He sat for talks with Javier Solana who in those years was the European Union's chief diplomat.

Larijani, a philosopher-turned politician, said the U.S. has adopted a "discourse of humiliation" and this approach has made talks with Washington nonsensical.

"Anything should be done in its appropriate time. Now is not the time to negotiate with the America. This is a strategic mistake if one think that issues will be solved with this dangerous creature," he stated.

U.S. President Donald Trump unilaterally pulled Washington out of the 2015 nuclear deal in May 2018 and ordered reimposition of sanctions against Iran. The first round of sanctions went into force on August 6 and the second round, which targets Iran's oil



exports and banks, were snapped back on November 4.

On July 31, 2018, Trump offered to meet Iran's leaders with "no preconditions" and "any time they want".

"I'd meet with anybody. I believe in meetings," Trump told reporters at the White House.

In remarks on April 29, President Hassan Rouhani likened Trump to a knifeman with whom Iran will not negotiate. "Undoubtedly, accepting the demands of a knifeman who through bullying and lying is seeking negotiation will get nowhere," Rouhani told

a cabinet meeting.

Also, in remarks on August 13, 2018, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said there will be no war between Iran and the U.S. and nor will be any negotiation between the two countries.

The Leader noted that as Imam Khomeini "banned talks with the U.S. I also ban it". He added that negotiation with the current U.S. administration is impossible. "Even if we were to negotiate with America, we would never hold talks with the current American administration."

Jahangiri urges intl. bodies not to be silent on U.S. illegal policies

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri said on Monday that the international bodies especially the World Health Assembly should not be silent on the U.S. illegal policies.

"We expect the international bodies especially the World Health Assembly not be silent on the U.S. administration's illegal policies which are directly related to the people's lives and use all the tools they have to counter the U.S. administration's inhuman policies," he said during a speech at a World Health Assembly forum on Kish Island in the Persian Gulf.

The U.S. is lying when it says sanctions have targeted Iran's government and not the Iranian people, he said.

"Unfortunately, the U.S. administration has caused problems in area of medicine by imposing toughest sanctions and has endangered lives of many people despite all the human rights' law," he said.

President of the Academy of Medical Sciences of the Islamic Republic of Iran Alireza Marandi said in a speech at the forum that the U.S. had endangered the lives of many Iranian patients by imposing "unjust" food and drug sanctions, according to Fars news agency.

It has been repeatedly claimed by the Trump adminis-

tration's officials that sanctions against Iran do not include food and medicine, however, the sanctions have restricted transfer of money which affects importation of food and medicine.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo claimed in a tweet on November 12, 2018, "The U.S. does not, and never did, sanction food and medicine. They are exempt from sanctions."

Kianoush Jahanpour, spokesman for Iran's Food and Drug Administration, told ISNA in an interview published on November 2018 that the claim by Washington that medicine is exempted from sanctions is a "big clear lie".

Sanctions include food and medicine and the only point is that these two items have not been mentioned in the sanctions list announced by the Trump administration, he said.

Limits on financial transactions cause problems in the process of buying and producing medicine, Jahanpour added.

The Trump administration imposed sanctions on Parsian Bank in October 2018, one of Iran's most reputable private-sector institutions.

Policy analysts and sanctions experts say Parsian processed much of Iran's humanitarian trade transactions and was trusted by European firms. It was one of the Iranian banks whose anti-money-laundering procedures were up



to international standards, said Esfandiyar Batmanghelidj, an expert on business relations between Iran and Western countries.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif posted letters on Twitter in November 2018 which he indicated were from four European pharmaceutical companies announcing the end of their business activities in Iran.

Quds Force chief: Negotiations with U.S. at current situation is equal to surrender

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Qassem Soleimani, commander of the IRGC Quds Force, told a police gathering in Tehran on Monday that negotiations with the Trump administration at the current situation is equal to total surrender.

"Through economic pressure the enemy wants to bring us to the negotiating table but such a negotiation would be an example of surrender; however, our people are vigilant and clever and believe that negotiation in the

current conditions is pure surrender and we will not give in to such an indignity," the major general remarked.

On April 22 the United States ended sanctions waivers to importers of Iran's oil, threatening that any company that imports oil from Iran will be subject to sanctions. The sanctions will go into force in early May.

Soleimani said that the way out of the current conditions is "resistance economy". Top general said today all economic experts

believe that the resistance economy introduced by Leader of the Islamic Revolution should have been implemented since the beginning of the revolution in 1979.

The Trump administration withdrew from the multilateral nuclear deal in May 2018 and ordered banking and oil sanctions against Iran. This happened despite the fact that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which is tasked to police Iran's compliance to the 2015 nuclear agreement, has issued

14 reports each time confirming Iran's full compliance to the terms of the agreement.

Under the nuclear agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Iran agreed to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions.

By withdrawing the international deal, the United States actually breached international law as the JCPOA was endorsed by the UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

Iran to give U.S. a proper response soon: Araqchi

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said on Sunday that Iran's patience is not limitless and will give a proper response to the U.S. illegal actions soon.

"The Islamic Republic's patience is not limitless and will give proper response to the U.S. illegal actions soon by comprehensive assessment of the current situation and without emotional reactions," he said in a meeting with a group of Austrian MPs in Tehran.

He also criticized Europe's delay in implementing its special mechanism to save the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Iran has given enough time to Europe to make up for consequences of the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA, he noted.

"We welcome political position of the European Union, but political support will be no help to keeping the JCPOA. The JCPOA is not an economic agreement and has security nature. If it matters to Europe, it should also pay the costs to keep it," added Araqchi who acted as senior nuclear negotiator with the 5+1 group and the European Union.



Elsewhere, he noted that Iran will not allow any country to become an alternate to Iran in the oil market.

For his part, head of Austrian Parliamentary Friendship Group Wolfgang Gerstl said that the EU is determined to preserve the JCPOA.

"This is a fact that Europe needs the JCPOA more than the U.S. does. So, Austria, along with the European Union, remains

committed to supporting the deal," Gerstl stated.

He noted that the European Union rejects Washington's decision in quitting the nuclear deal and is worried about decline of its importance and value.

U.S. President Donald Trump unilaterally pulled Washington out of the 2015 nuclear deal in May 2018 and ordered reimposition of sanctions against Iran. The first round of sanctions went into force on August 6 and the second round, which targets Iran's oil exports and banks, were snapped back on November 4.

Also, on April 22 the U.S. announced that Washington has decided not to extend waivers allowing major importers to continue buying oil from Iran when they expire in early May.

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

Larijani says EU has lost its credibility

Plan of Action.

In May 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump unilaterally pulled Washington out of the JCPOA and ordered reimposition of sanctions against Iran. The first round of sanctions went into force on August 6 and the second round, which targets Iran's oil exports and banks, were snapped back on November 4.

"We have this question why the European leaders just support us or express regret over

the U.S. behavior in words?" he remarked.

"Definitely, you might say there are problems because of U.S. pressure and it might sound logical. However, we look at this from our own point of view and the most important thing for us is that this behavior has raised questions about the European Union's credibility and it means that the European Union lacks the weight to solve problems," remarked Larijani who served as Iran's chief nuclear negotiator with the EU in the early

years of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's presidency.

Gerstl admitted that the recent developments showed how deeply Europe was dependent on the U.S.

He noted that the EU has had the will to have economic interaction with Iran.

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

Iran cannot pin hopes on its Europe ties: expert

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — An expert on international affairs believes that Iran cannot be hopeful about the future of its relations with Europe.

“Taking into account the conflict of interests among Europe, America and Iran in different issues, it can be said that we cannot be hopeful about the future of relations with Europe and their cooperation with [Iran],” Esmail Bashari said, Mehr news agency reported on Monday.

“Perhaps in some cases, Europe has had disagreements with U.S. policies on certain countries or issues, but in general, they are in the same direction because of their mutual interests,” he stated.

The commentator said Europe has asked Iran not to exit the nuclear agreement and remain committed to its obligations “and meanwhile, they themselves have not fulfilled their commitments.”

Bashari pointed to the issue of human rights, saying it is clear that human rights is used by Europe and the U.S. as a political leverage in dealing with other countries.



He also said Europe has tried to stand up to Washington's greed by launching INSTEX,

“but how successful they'll be in this regard remains to be seen.”

INSTEX can have good benefits for Europe and is a good opportunity for European countries to regain their lost independence of opinion, he argued.

The Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX) which was launched in January, has been designed by France, Germany and the UK — the three European signatories to the 2015 Iran deal — to help European companies circumvent the U.S. bans and continue trading with Iran.

In its initial stage, the transactions channel was intended to be used for selling food, medicine and medical devices to Iran, but efforts are underway by the trio to expand INSTEX to cover other areas of trade, including oil sales.

The United States reinstated its sanctions against Iran after leaving the historic multi-lateral nuclear agreement with Tehran, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The move, however, drew criticism from the other signatories, which pledged efforts to protect the agreement and keep Tehran in it.

Will Trump let B-team to drag U.S. into ‘forever war’ with Iran? Zarif asks

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — In a post on his Twitter page late on Sunday, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has asked whether Donald Trump will his national security advisor John Bolton along with Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Israel “realize their dreams” to push the U.S. toward an unending war with Iran.

Zarif has classified Bolton, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman, UAE Emir Khalifa bin Zayed, and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as “B-team” who have “shown an interest in dragging the United States into a conflict” with Iran.

“While John Bolton and the B-team say the Iranian people ‘deserve better’, they’ve admitted to targeting them with Economic Terrorism — and even war — in a delusional pursuit of ‘regime-change’. But will Donald Trump let them realize their dreams of another Forever War?” Zarif asked.

In an earlier interview with Fox News, Zarif said the goal of the B-team is “at least” to change the regime in Iran.

Bolton immediately responded to Zarif's remarks on the same network, claiming his statement is “completely ridiculous” and “an effort to sow disinformation”. He also claimed that “the Iranian people deserve a better government”.



Ex-official: Iran-U.S. talks impossible owing to Trump's policies



POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — A former presidential chief of staff says Tehran and Washington cannot hold talks and reach an agreement because of U.S. President Donald Trump's approach toward the Islamic Republic.

“In the current situation, due to the approach and policies of Trump, there's no possibility of dialogue and reaching an agreement between Iran and America,” Mohammad Ali Abtahi told IRNA on Monday. “Therefore, we should abandon hesitation and know that there's no way other than moving forward and looking for ways to mitigate the effects of sanctions,” remarked Abtahi who served under the Khatami administration.

No one doubts the cruelty of U.S. sanctions, he stressed, adding that Trump's claim that the sanctions put pressure on Iran's establishment is “nothing but a joke” since the main victims of the sanctions are the ordinary people.

Abtahi, who is a reformist, further said there are many ways to circumvent the

sanctions, “but the recent years' experience showed that bypassing the sanctions could lead to corruption.”

He advised the government to beware of and fight such corruption, but said at the same time the government needs to be bold in circumventing the sanctions.

Abtahi also pointed out that the best approach to counter the sanctions is to create an atmosphere in which everyone feels a sense of participation in the country's affairs.

He added, “Different political and religious fronts should be active in the field, and looking to the future, they should set aside their differences.”

Tensions between Tehran and Washington have risen since the Trump administration withdrew last year from a 2015 international nuclear deal with Iran and began reimposing sanctions.

Earlier this month, the United States blacklisted Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organization and demanded buyers of Iranian oil stop purchases by May or face sanctions.

U.S. foolish to think it can force Iran back to negotiating table: expert



POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — Hossein Sheikholeslam, an expert on international affairs who served as deputy foreign minister and ambassador for years, has said the United States can never force Iran back to the negotiating table and the U.S. administration is “foolish” to think otherwise.

“I believe that holding talks with America was wrong from the very beginning,” Tasnim news agency on Monday quoted Sheikholeslam as saying.

With a reference to the 1981 Algeria Declaration, Sheikholeslam said, “At the beginning of the [Islamic] Revolution, a dialogue between Iran and America was formed for the release of the American hostages, and in return the U.S. government pledged not to interfere in Iran's internal affairs.”

The former diplomat said some believe that only the Trump administration is to blame for exiting the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

But, he continued, the structure of the U.S. establishment has fundamental problems because one president signs an agreement and the next can easily withdraw from it.

“Hence, trusting such regime is an unforgivable strategic error,” he argued.

Meanwhile, Iran's Foreign Ministry has rejected as baseless and false claims by certain foreign media outlets about Tehran's request for negotiations with the United States.

“There has been no request for talks with the U.S.,” Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Saturday.

Speaking at a cabinet session on Wednesday, President Hassan Rouhani said claims by the U.S. that it seeking negotiations with Iran were “mere lies”, noting the U.S., in fact, intends to bring the Iranian nation to its knees.

Contrary to what some are trying to promote, “the U.S. does not have the willingness for negotiations at all,” Rouhani said.

Reformist council holds first meeting in new Iranian year



POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — The Supreme Reformist Council for Policy-Making has held its first meeting in the new Iranian year which started on March 21, Mehr reported on Sunday.

The meeting was chaired by Mohammad Reza Aref, chairman of the pro-reform Hope faction in the parliament.

During the meeting, members of the council reviewed the latest political developments in the country and voiced their gratitude to the country's diplomatic apparatus, headed by Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

They denounced the United States' behavior toward Iran as a violation of all international treaties and a breach of the Iranian people's rights.

They also pointed to the people's economic problems and called on the relevant government bodies to try their best to resolve the issues, especially with regard to the problems faced by the victims of the recent nationwide floods.

Extreme rainfall, starting on March 19, has caused flooding in 28 out of 31 provinces affecting 42,269,129 inhabitants in 253 cities and causing widespread damage to municipal facilities, including roads, sewage systems, health centers, hospitals, etc.

The floods have left 78 people dead and 1,137 injured. As many as 295,787 people have been displaced.

Ali Alqasi-Mehr named Tehran's new prosecutor

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — Ali Alqasi-Mehr has been appointed as the new prosecutor general of Tehran, replacing Abbas Jafari Dolatabadi who had been serving in the post since 2009.

According to Tasnim news agency's Monday report, Alqasi-Mehr was head of Fars province's Justice Department. He was replaced by Kazem Mousavi.

Jafari Dolatabadi will bid farewell to his post by the end of the week.

Judiciary spokesman Gholam-Hossein Esmaili said Jafari Dolatabadi has been named adviser to the Supreme Disciplinary Court of Judges.

Party chief: Iran won't be milked like certain Arab states

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — Iran is an independent country which is ruled by its people and therefore the United States will never be able to “milk” it the same way it does certain Arab countries, says Hossein Kan'ani, secretary general of the Green Party.

“The Americans expect the Iranian government to behave like other governments which are obedient to U.S. policies and be a ‘lactating cow’ like some Arab countries,” Kan'ani said, Mehr reported on Sunday.

He also said U.S. President Donald Trump's policies toward Iran is based on the intelligence and guidance he receives from the MEK, monarchists, Zionists, Saudis and all other enemies on Iran.

Kan'ani said the best way to counter U.S. pressure is through perseverance and resistance.

“Perhaps one of the reasons that we can resist against the sanctions and bring the enemy to its knees is our years of struggle and resistance,” he added.

Ex-FM: Iranians will never sell independence under U.S. pressure

Former Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi, who currently acts as the head of Iran's Strategic Foreign Relations Council, has blasted Washington for imposing the toughest-ever sanctions against Tehran, stressing that the U.S. pressures will never force the people of Iran to lose their independence.

“One of our common problems is the West and U.S. sanctions. The Iranian people are not willing to accept that their independence be harmed under these pressures,” Kharrazi said in a meeting with Director of Moscow Institute of Oriental Studies Vitaly Naumkin on Monday. Elsewhere, he referred to the legal presence of Iran and Russia in Syria, stressing that cooperation between the two countries within the framework of the Astana conference is important to establish peace and stability in the war-hit Syria.

Naumkin, for his part, underscored Iran's important role in the establishment of stability in Syria, and condemned the U.S. sanctions against Tehran.

Washington withdrew from the internationally-endorsed 2015 nuclear deal with Iran and reimposed sanctions against the country.

Under the nuclear agreement reached between Iran and six world powers in July 2015, Tehran undertook to put limits on its nuclear program in exchange for the removal of nuclear-related sanctions.

Despite Washington's measures, Iran has not left the deal, stressing that the remaining signatories to the agreement have to work to offset the negative impacts of the U.S. pullout for Iran if they want Tehran to remain committed to it.

(Source: FNA)

MP: U.S. not able to drive Iran's oil exports to zero

A member of the parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee has underlined the large number of customers for Iran's oil, saying the U.S. won't be able to drive the country's oil exports to zero.

“The U.S. president's threat to decrease Iran's oil sales is an illusion. Iran can easily sell oil and gas condensates in the global market and there will be no problem because many countries need Iran's oil,” Seyed Hossein Naqavi Hosseini told FNA on Monday.

He referred to Turkey and Russia's protest at the U.S. decision not to extend waivers on Iran's oil exports, and said, “Therefore, the U.S. threat can never be materialized and they will not be able to prevent Iran's oil sales.”

Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said on Friday that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) did not have the capacity to replace his country's supply in the oil market, after the new round of U.S. sanctions on Iran's oil exports are implemented on May 1.

Zanganeh accused Saudi Arabia and the UAE of exaggerating their ability to replace the country's oil in the wake



of a renewed push by Washington to zero Tehran's exports by implementing “brutal” economic sanctions.

“I believe they are overstating their oil capacities,” Zanganeh said, after Saudi and Emirati officials pledged to make

up for any potential oil supply shortages that may result in the absence of Iranian oil in the global market.

The ambitious pledges by Washington's staunch Arab allies came shortly after the White House announced that it would no longer renew waivers that allowed Tehran's eight largest customers purchase Iranian oil.

The measure threatens buyers of Iranian oil with sanctions and other punishments if they fail to stop their purchases beyond May 1. The move quickly sent global crude prices to their highest levels since last November.

Zanganeh on Friday addressed concerns about the seriousness of U.S. President Donald Trump's recent drive “to bring Iran's oil exports to zero”, stressing that U.S. sanctions-related measures were “no bluff”.

“(These measures) are very brutal provocations against the Iranian nation,” he added.

U.S. oil sanctions on Iran is not a political bluff, rather, it is extreme hostility waged by the United States against the noble nation of Islamic Iran, the minister reiterated.

(Source: FNA)

STOCK MARKET	
TEDPIX	214867.5
IFX	2613.6

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES	
USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,859 rials
GBP	54,303 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES	
Brent	\$71.05/b
WTI	\$62.92/b
OPEC Basket	\$74.04/b
Gold	\$1,282.90/oz
Silver	\$15.02/oz
Platinum	\$900.05/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



‘No country can replace Iran in oil market’

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN**— No country can replace Iran in the global oil market, Iranian Deputy Oil Minister Amir-Hossein Zamaninia stressed.

The official said that such imagination that some countries can replace Iran in the global oil market is wrong technically and politically, Tasnim news agency reported.

U.S.’ sanctions against Iranian oil industry hurts stability of global oil markets; the deputy minister added.

Earlier this month, the Trump administration announced it will end waivers on crude purchase granted to Iran’s primary oil buyers in a bid to push Tehran oil sales to zero.



‘Progress in equipment production projects at 60%’

E C O N O M Y **TEHRAN** — Director General of Machinery Manufacturing and Equipment Office at Iran’s Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade said several equipment production projects were launched last year, their total progress of which has exceeded 60 percent.

According to Amir-Hossein Shiravi, the mentioned projects which are mostly aimed at producing the necessary equipment for the production lines at petrochemical, oil and steel sectors will improve the country’s domestic production and reduce the reliance on imports.

Mentioning the exports of machinery and equipment, the official noted that most of the machinery and equipment produced inside the country are also used inside and only parts like pumps and compressors are exported.



Annual aluminum ingot production exceeds 276,000 tons

E C O N O M Y **TEHRAN**— Iran produced 276,575 tons of aluminum ingots in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2019), IRNA reported citing the data released by Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization.

As reported, Iranian Aluminum Company (IRALCO) accounted for producing 53 percent of the total production in the past year.

As the world’s 18th producer of aluminum, Iran plans to reach the annual production of 1.5 million tons of aluminum ingot by the Iranian calendar year 1404 (March 2025-March 2026).

Trade between Iran, Azerbaijan increases 3.4% in Q1

E C O N O M Y **TEHRAN** — The value of trade between Iran and Azerbaijan increased 3.4 percent during the first quarter of 2019 compared to the first quarter of 2018, IRNA reported.



Iran-Azerbaijan three-month trade stood at \$230.6 million in 2019 while it was \$162.2 million in 2018.

In the third quarter of this year, the value of Azerbaijani exports to Iran was more than \$11 million, and the worth of that country’s imports from Iran was \$219.6 million.

Iran, Turkey ink MOU on transportation co-op

1 → the possibility transit to Iran from Turkey’s ports and free zones, removal of restrictions imposed by Turkey on the amount of fuel for Iran’s fleet in transiting to Turkey, the removal of restrictions imposed on transportation of empty fleet into the territory of the both sides, and accelerating the customs clearance procedures between the two countries, were among the subjects covered in the MOU.

■ Tehran-Ankara train to roll in early July

Speaking in a press conference held after the meeting, head of Iranian railway announced that a direct Tehran-Ankara train connection is due to be launched in early July.

“The two sides concluded to finalize the agreement in this regard after Ramadan (May 5-June 4).” Saeed Rasouli said.

Addressing the press, the official underlined important issues discussed during the event, including connecting border provinces of the two countries by rail, connecting the two countries comprehensive freight and passenger computer systems and signing an agreement on tariffs.

“An agreement was reached today [Monday] to raise the rail freight exchange between the two countries to one million metric tons from the current 500,000 metric tons.” the official further noted.

Ali Ehsan for his part expressed satisfaction with the positive talks held during the eighth joint transportation committee meeting.

■ Banking relations, investment and opportunities

The Iranian transport minister also welcomed the Turkish companies’ investments



Iran’s Transport Minister Mohammad Eslami (R) and Turkish Minister of Transport and Infrastructure Mehmet Cahit Turhan shaking hand after signing a memorandum of understanding in Tehran on Monday

in Iran’s transportation projects especially in railway areas.

Eslami stressed the need for close cooperation between the two countries’ central banks in order to create a mutual financial channel, as one of the most important facilitat-

ing factors in realizing the goal of increasing the two countries’ annual trade turnover to \$30 billion.

The official also expressed Iran’s readiness for holding the 27th Iran-Turkey joint economic committee meeting in Ankara.

NIMA supplies €1.84b for imports of goods, services

E C O N O M Y **TEHRAN** — Iran’s domestic Forex Management Integrated System (locally known as NIMA) has supplied €1.840 billion for imports of goods and services since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21) up to Sunday, IRNA reported.

According to the Governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Abdolnasser Hemmati, establishing direct communication between importers and exporters has significantly increased the volume of exchanges in the NIMA system during the past month.

NIMA, which seeks to boost transparency, create competitiveness among exchange shops and a secure environment for traders, is a new chance for importers to supply their required foreign currency without specific problems and for exporters to re-inject their earned foreign currency to domestic forex market. It was inaugurated to allow exporters of non-oil commodities



to sell their foreign currency earnings to importers of consumer products.

In mid-November, CBI issued the instructions on return details of the hard currency earned by exporters back to the domestic financial system.

The instructions, aimed to lead the export revenues from the non-oil exports back into the country’s economy through NIMA, mandate all the exporters of goods and services to guarantee bringing back to the country the foreign currency amount allocated to them by the government at lower prices than the free market.

Uganda determined to boost economic ties with Iran

E C O N O M Y **TEHRAN** — In a meeting with Iran’s Ambassador to Uganda Morteza Mortazavi, Uganda’s Foreign Minister Sam Kutesa underlined his country’s determination to expand economic ties with Iran, IRNA reported.



Iran’s Ambassador to Uganda Morteza Mortazavi (L) shaking hands with Uganda’s Foreign Minister Sam Kutesa

Kutesa welcomed maintaining cooperation with the Iranian companies to participate in Uganda’s economic development plans.

Uganda has made efforts to pave the grounds for attracting foreign investments, he said while inviting the Iranian companies to participate in Uganda’s projects to establish cooperation.

Rejecting the unilateral approach adopted by some countries, Kutesa said Uganda is an independent country and does not consider itself obliged to follow pressuring to stop working with Iran.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he emphasized Uganda’s determination for reinforcing cooperation with Iran in regional and international organizations.

Expressing happiness for his Iranian counterpart’s invitation, he said he will visit Iran within months.

Meanwhile, Mortazavi reviewed bilateral, regional and international cooperation, and underlined the importance of removing bottlenecks.

He emphasized making attempts to implement the MOUs signed between the two countries.

The Iranian diplomat also highlighted taking advantage of valuable experiences of Iran’s knowledge-based companies.

Earlier, Ugandan Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation, Elioda Tumwesigye in a meeting with Iranian Vice-President for Scientific and Technological Affairs Sorena Sattari urged more cooperation between Tehran and Kampala on scientific areas.

Noting that Uganda wants more active presence of Iranian science-based companies in the country, the Ugandan minister said that his government is ready to make the necessary preparations for the presence of Iranian companies and joint manufacturing of science-based products.

First Announcement

IN THE NAME OF GOD

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING

INTERNATIONAL TENDER NO. 98/133-02/03

Tender Holder:
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING (IRIB)

Subject of Tender:
Leasing 18MHz space on Eutelsat 3B (E3B) for three years in accordance with the technical specifications and other terms and conditions mentioned in the tender documents.

Deadline and How to Receive the Tender Documents:
From **Tuesday 30th April 2019 (1398/02/10)** until **Saturday 04th May 2019 (1398/02/14)** by **16:00 p.m.** with presentation of introductory letter by company or its representative and the receipt of paying the documents fee.

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

The Fee of the Tender Documents and How to Deposit it:
Submission of payment receipt for the amount of 1,000,000 Rials to account No. 4101029171204273 with BIC No. IR310100004101029171204273 IRAN Central Bank in the name of IRIB.

Type and Amount of Guarantee for Participation to Tender:
The amount of deposit for participant in tender is **USD 41,180** fixed or its equivalent in 5,765,000,000 Rials which should be in the form of Bank Guarantee.

Time and Place of Delivering Bidding Envelopes:
The sealed packages/envelopes should be submitted no later than **4 p.m. on Saturday 08 of June 2019 (1398/03/18)** and at the address mentioned in the 4th clause.

Time and Place of Opening Envelopes:
The date of opening the envelopes is on **Sunday 09 June 2019 at 03:00 p.m. (1398/03/19)** in the office of Financial Vice President. In case of complete content in the envelopes A, the envelope B including contract draft, Technical specifications and qualitative assessment analysis will be considered and opened. The Envelop C will be opened of only those eligible participants who meets the qualification criterion and approval of Technical and Commercial committee at the same time and place.
For more information, please see: www.iriboffice.ir/tenders and <http://iets.mporg.ir/> Tel: **00982122167053**

Purchasing (Kala) Dept. of IRIB

Iranian official warns of oil going above \$100

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — Chairman of Majlis (Parliament) Energy Commission, Fereydoon Hasanvand warned that oil prices are going to surge above \$100 per barrel following the U.S. decision to end the waivers.

“Not extending the oil waivers of some countries is another side of the U.S. measures against Iran. But if Iran’s oil is fully sanctioned, oil price will go higher than \$100 per barrel,” IRIB quoted Hasanvand as saying.

“Trump is struggling to win the next [presidential] elections” in 2020, the official said.

He noted that Washington’s plans to “take over Venezuela, cause trouble in Libya, and establishing martial law in Sudan” are all intended to boost support for U.S. sanctions



against Iran.

Iran has said it may close the Strait of Hormuz if prevented from using the waterway, which links crude producers in the Middle East to markets in Europe, Asia Pacific, North America and beyond.

In a recent interview with Reuters, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said that Iran was “not going to take any action” should the U.S. continue observing the rules of engagement.

Earlier this month, the Trump administration announced it will end waivers on crude purchase granted to Iran’s primary oil buyers in a bid to push Tehran oil sales to zero.

The waivers currently issued for China, Greece, India, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Turkey expire on May 2.

U.S. sanctions on Iran, Venezuela set up crunch for heavier oil

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — Tighter U.S. sanctions on Iranian oil planned for May are adding to a wealth of factors curbing global supply of heavy-medium crude, driving up prices for scarcer barrels and setting up a stand-off between buyers and sellers, Reuters reported.

The new curbs on Iranian exports come on top of Washington’s earlier ban on Venezuelan crude and output snags in Angola, another big producer of the dense crude grades that best yield lucrative refined products like jet fuel.

Refiners are also seeking more of the heavy sweet crude Iran and Venezuela once provided in abundance to produce low-sulfur fuel oil ahead of new shipping emissions rules due next year.

U.S. officials say overall global oil supply will remain plentiful despite its sanctions, not least from the boom in U.S. shale. But much of the profusion in supply, led by the United States, Saudi Arabia and Russia, is in lighter grades.

The price for heavier crudes like Norway’s Grane and Heidrun has been firming over the last few months, a North Sea trader said. Over April, the price of Grane rose from around dated Brent plus 10 cents to close to dated Brent plus \$1.00 a barrel.

This month Iraq’s SOMO sold 2 million barrels of Basra Heavy crude to China’s Unipet at a premium of over \$2 a barrel to its official selling price (OSP), the highest in months, sources said.



Price offerings for several Angolan streams, an approximate alternative to Iranian and Venezuelan crude, were at their highest ever, traders said.

State oil company Sonangol was said to have sold a cargo of one of its heaviest grades, Dalia, over the last week for \$2 a barrel above dated Brent, a \$7 increase from two years ago. Typically, the grade trades at a discount of \$1 or more.

Buyers resist

While some clients are prepared to buy at elevated prices,

others are holding back. “We’re resisting it as much as possible,” one potential buyer said.

Some of Sonangol’s regular customers balked at the mark-ups, prompting the company to offer the crude to other buyers instead as spot cargoes. These have sold quickly, trading sources said.

The current stand-off between buyers and sellers comes down partly to uncertainty over just how much Iranian crude may still flow, crucially to top consumer China, after the May 1 deadline the U.S. has imposed for importers to halt purchases.

China’s foreign ministry this week said Beijing had formally complained to the United States about the move.

Analysts expect China may flout the restrictions, especially since Washington may be loath to sanction Chinese companies importing Iranian crude which are at the same time key buyers of U.S. oil and liquid natural gas.

Sweden’s SEB says Beijing could lift its imports of Iranian crude in the coming months from some 600,000 barrels per day in March to around 1 million bpd, bucking U.S. pressure, while exports elsewhere under the sanctions radar could reach another 500,000 bpd.

That would make it harder for sellers to get away with higher prices.

“Decisions on buying will be easier to make when it’s clearer how much Iranian (crude) will still be flowing,” a trading source said.

Oil falls after Trump presses OPEC to make up for Iranian sanctions

Oil prices fell on Monday, extending a slump from Friday that ended weeks of rallying, after President Donald Trump demanded that producer club OPEC raise output to soften the impact of U.S. sanctions against Iran.

According to a report by Reuters, Brent crude futures were at \$71.59 per barrel at 0840 GMT, down 56 cents, or 0.78 percent, from their last close.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were at \$62.93 per barrel, down 37 cents, or 0.58 percent, from their previous settlement.

Both benchmarks fell around 3 percent in the previous session.

Trump said on Friday he told the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to lower oil prices.

“Gasoline prices are coming down.

I called up OPEC, I said you’ve got to bring them down. You’ve got to bring them down,” Trump told reporters.

“Spoke to Saudi Arabia and others about increasing oil flow. All are in agreement,” the president later tweeted.

Trump’s remarks triggered a selloff, putting at least a temporary ceiling on a 40 percent price rally in oil prices since the start of the year.

The rally had gained momentum in April after Trump tightened sanctions against Iran by ending all exemptions that major buyers, especially in Asia, previously had.

Traders said the market was shifting its focus to the voluntary supply cuts led by OPEC, de facto headed by the world’s top exporter Saudi Arabia.

“We are of the view that Saudi Arabia

will increase output as soon as May, something they were likely to do anyway in the lead up to summer,” ING bank said.

“The Kingdom could increase output by 500 million barrels per day (bpd) and still be in compliance with the OPEC+ deal for the month of May.”

The cuts have been supported by some non-OPEC producers, notably Russia, but analysts said this cooperation may not last beyond a meeting between OPEC and its other allies, a group known as OPEC+, scheduled for June.

Russia has said it would be able to meet China’s oil demand needs as Beijing tries to replace the imports it usually gets from Iran.

“Russia appears to have every reason to resume ramping up production levels and the base case should start to become



(that) we will not see OPEC+ agree upon extending production cuts, with tweaks to cover the shortfall from Iran,” said Edward Moya, senior analyst at futures brokerage OANDA.

Why an OPEC oil supply surge won’t happen

By Cyril Widdershoven

The end of the Iranian sanction waivers by the Trump Administration has put oil traders on edge.

While most analysts are optimistic about OPEC leader Saudi Arabia being able to fill the gap left by lower Iranian oil exports, reality could be totally different. Looking at the ongoing discussions between OPEC’s two key members, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, there are no real signs that the Kingdom of Oil will be willing to increase its overall oil production to keep prices at the pump low in oil importing nations.

The real crux at present is what the market will do when, on the 2nd of May, the Iran sanction waivers end. History has shown that oil importers are very well equipped to take mitigating measures to counter the effects of the Iran sanctions. Saudi Arabia, and others, will have to be very careful to stabilize the market without falling into a Trumpian trap, which could result in an oversupply situation in the short term.

At present, all signs point to higher oil prices. If no real additional oil is brought onto the market, shortages will become visible within months. Statements made by U.S. president Trump and U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo that Saudi Arabia and the UAE will add supplies to counter the loss of Iranian volumes are currently only wishful thinking, and not based on any hard promises from Riyadh or Abu Dhabi.

OPEC’s leaders are in a powerful position to react to Trump’s calls for additional volumes and lower prices as they wish. Washington’s strategy may well have backfired, as U.S. shale will not be able to supply the markets with the necessary crude grades. At the same time, national oil companies are willing to take a backseat, as long as OPEC+ production cuts are in place.

For Saudi Arabia, additional production increases are not needed. The current price and production levels are sufficient to support the ongoing economic diversification plans, stabilizing the position of Crown Prince Mohammed



bin Salman. Oil market stability has also generated enough positive sentiment in the market that NOCs like Aramco are able to enter the international bond market by force. Low cost financing is an attractive tool for Saudi Arabia and the UAE to boost their economies in the short run.

Western analysts are still addressing the loss of Iranian volumes in the light of OPEC’s spare production capacity. This, however is not a major concern, as the market is well enough supplied for the next months. There’s no real necessity to force Saudi Arabia and the UAE to open up their taps to flood the market. Current crude oil prices are also not at levels that really erode global economic growth. Saudi Arabia and UAE could easily add around 1.5-2 million bpd in the market, but looking at the irrational emotional behavior of the oil market at present, a Saudi output increase could lead to a price slump or worse. The OPEC+ cut agreement is up for review in June 2019, and no moves should be expected before then.

Another major issue is hanging over the market already. Oil importing countries, such as China or India, will use the next couple of weeks to negotiate new oil contracts with Iran. These volumes could partly destabilize the market if other

OPEC producers fall into the trap of increasing production to squeeze Iran out of the market. The most sensible approach would be a further tightening of the market resulting in a draw from the still elevated global storage but without creating a shortage.

The Iranian sanctions situation is not going to change Riyadh’s current position. The only unknowns at present are the impact of Libyan and Venezuelan supply outages. A potential loss of Libyan crude volumes could change OPEC’s overall strategy in the short term. The Venezuelan production decline has already been priced in by most parties.

Riyadh also will be looking at the developments in Russia. Even though Russia is part of the OPEC+ agreement, there seems to be some reluctance to sustain output cuts in Moscow. Russia and Saudi Arabia will need to consider their approach as U.S. shale production could leap higher when prices rise too much. Moscow and Riyadh will have to deal with an increasingly tight market, especially during U.S. driving season, while trying to keep prices in check.

Regardless of this, tight markets are much more important for OPEC+ than a happy Trump Administration is. Price levels between \$70-80 per barrel will not cut into economic growth dramatically, while the coffers of OPEC members will be filled. Trump’s tweets such as the one on Friday will likely fall on deaf ears.

OPEC also will also be able, without officially ending it production cut agreement, to supply additional volumes to the market in order to keep prices within certain boundaries. Saudi Arabia, for example, could increase production by another 500,000 bpd without going over its OPEC-imposed quota. If OPEC members, and Russia, are able to constrain their own eagerness to take over Iran’s market share, the market will be kept stable for longer. No news should be expected ahead of the June meeting in Vienna, not even during the OPEC+ ministerial monitoring meeting on May 19th. Trump will soon need to find a way to explain to his voters why he can’t keep gasoline prices in check.

(Source: oilprice.com)

What oil at \$100 a barrel would mean for the world economy

Surging crude prices are posing another headwind for the world economy after President Donald Trump’s “zero” pledge on Iran oil sales.

According to a Bloomberg report, Brent crude has risen about 33 percent this year and is close to the highest in six months. While higher prices due to strong demand typically reflects a robust world economy, a shock from constrained supply is a negative.

Much will depend on how sustained the spike proves to be. Exporting nations will enjoy a boost to corporate and government revenues, while consuming nations will bear the cost at the pump, potentially fanning inflation and hurting demand. Ultimately, there comes a point where higher prices may be damaging to everyone.

1. What does it mean for global growth?

The impact will vary. Rising oil prices will hurt household income and spending and it could accelerate inflation. As the world’s biggest importer of oil, China is vulnerable, and many countries in Europe also rely on imported energy. Seasonal effects will also impact. With the Northern Hemisphere summer approaching, consumers can switch energy sources and scale back usage. A slowing world economy will also hurt demand and by extension keep a lid on prices.

2. How can the world economy absorb oil at \$100?

For a sustained hit to growth, economists say oil would need to hold above \$100. It also depends on dollar strength or weakness, given crude is priced in greenbacks. Analysis by Oxford Economics found that Brent at \$100 per barrel by the end of 2019 means the level of global gross domestic product would be 0.6 percent lower than currently projected by end-2020, with inflation on average 0.7 percentage points higher.

“We see increased risks of significantly higher oil prices,” Oxford economists John Payne and Gabriel Sterne wrote in a note. “In the short-run, it is likely the supply impact will be offset by higher production elsewhere, but the market is tightening and all it would take is one more shock to supply and oil could reach \$100.”

3. How will Iran and Trump impact the market?

An upending of global oil trade around the Iran-Trump spat could continue to have a sizable impact on financial markets, as the affected supply is as much as 800,000 barrels a day. Uncertainties around availability have already whipsawed oil markets. And the political sensitivities of these developments have other markets bracing for volatility.

Trump has pledged to help, alongside Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E., those needing to shift orders from Iran to another supplier. But U.S. claims that its domestic supply can help offset the loss are a high bar to meet, given that the daily American output for similar crude is about a quarter of Iran’s.

4. Who wins from higher oil prices?

Emerging economies dominate the list of oil-producing nations which is why they’re affected more than developed ones. The increase in revenues will help to repair budgets and current account deficits, allowing governments to increase spending that will spur investment. Winners include Saudi Arabia, Russia, Norway, Nigeria and Ecuador according to analysis by Nomura.

5. Who loses?

Those emerging economies nursing current account and fiscal deficits run the risk of large capital outflows and weaker currencies, which in turn would spark inflation. That in turn will force governments and central banks to weigh up their options: hike interest rates even as growth slows or ride it out and risk capital flight. Nomura’s losers list includes Turkey, Ukraine and India.

6. What does it mean for the world’s biggest economy?

While U.S. oil producers try to take advantage of any sales boost from customers moving away from Iran, the broader U.S. economy won’t necessarily see benefits with oil price tags as high as \$100 a barrel.

It would be a squeeze on American consumers that are the backbone of still-steady economic growth. Prices at the gas pump already have risen more than 7 percent this month to \$2.89 a gallon, which could weigh on retail sales that jumped in March by the most since 2017.

And if things go awry in global oil markets, there’s risk that political blame shifts back to the U.S. for the sanctions, which could mean backlash via investment or other channels that threatens economic stability.

7. Will it lead to higher inflation around the world?

Because energy features prominently in consumer price gauges, policy makers look to core indexes that remove volatile components. If the run-up in prices proves to be substantial, and sustained, those costs will filter through to transportation and utilities.

8. What does it mean for central banks?

Led by the Federal Reserve, central banks around the world have taken a dovish tilt as the absence of inflation allows policy makers to shift their focus to slowing growth. That’s unlikely to quickly change. The International Monetary Fund this month lowered its global growth forecast and said the world is in a “delicate moment.”

Oil bulls on longest run in 13 years as Trump demands price cut

Oil is on its longest bull run in 13 years, fueling a rally that has U.S. President Donald Trump fretting about higher prices, Bloomberg reported.

Hedge funds have increased bullish sentiment on U.S. crude prices for the last nine weeks, the longest such run since 2006, according to data released Friday. Almost 14 times as many bets have been placed on prices going up as on a decline, as investors see supply threats multiplying around the globe.

Gasoline prices have risen in tandem this year, and Trump on Friday said that he has pressured OPEC to boost output to reverse the trend. That helped stall a rally that drove oil to a six-month high, partly due to tightened U.S. sanctions against Iran. But the ebullient tilt in speculative wagers suggested a correction was likely no matter what, said Phil Flynn of Price Futures Group Inc.

“The market is so bulled up right now,” said Flynn, a senior market analyst. “There’s been a lot of hedge fund buying, a lot of speculative interest, and we probably need to hit the pause button for now.”

West Texas Intermediate crude sank 2.9 percent to \$63.30 on Friday, capping its first weekly loss in two months. Brent, the international benchmark price, lost 3 percent.

The net-long WTI position — the difference between bets on higher prices and wagers on a drop — rose 3.6 percent to 314,387 futures and options contracts in the week ending April 23, the U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission said. Long positions edged up 1.7 percent, while shorts declined 18 percent.



What Iranian flood victims said to the Supreme Leader



➔ In a situation where no international aid organizations could possibly come forward for assistance, the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), which functions under the command of the Supreme Leader and was recently labeled a “terrorist” organization by the Trump administration, filled the gap in manpower, aided by the IRCS and the army.

IRGC volunteers could be seen at Friday congregational prayer centers across the country and in public events collecting funds for those affected by the floods. They were also actively involved in relief and rehabilitation work in flood-hit areas, evacuating people and providing them food and shelter.

Although local media did an admirable job by covering the stories of indomitable resilience displayed by survivors and the vital role played by IRGC volunteers to help them, the mainstream Western media was missing because the theme here did not suit their anti-Iran and anti-IRGC narrative.

Some ‘citizen journalists’ using their smartphones filled the information gap by bringing to light important stories of survival against odds. They interviewed people in flood-affected areas and the videos were shared widely over social media.

In one such interview, which became viral on Facebook and Twitter, a middle-aged woman, possibly from Khuzestan, speaks about her ordeal, and while struggling to hold back her tears wants to send a message to the Supreme Leader.

“Deliver this (message) to my dear (Supreme) leader,” she is heard saying. “And tell him that we resisted despite all difficulties and we will continue to stand (firm). We are standing till the last drop of our blood, and we will sacrifice our lives for him. Tell him to pray for us.”

This woman claims that her house was submerged in flood water but she saw it as a natural disaster and thanked God nonetheless. She also thanks the IRGC and IRCS for their support in dealing with the crisis.

“I thank the volunteers of the Red Crescent, the IRGC, and the army. All of those who came here (for help),” she says in a single breath, visibly overwhelmed by emotions.

A man from Lorestan province, in his mid-forties, also appeared in one video interview, full of remorse and guilt. He said he used to ridicule and humiliate the Supreme Leader, but the reality had finally dawned on him, after what he saw IRGC and others doing on the instructions of the Leader.

“Really, I am ashamed (today),” he says. “I have ridiculed him and shown disrespect to him... if it was not for my [Supreme] Leader, our alleys and roads would never have been cleared.”

He acknowledges the fact that the Supreme Leader relieved the IRGC of other responsibilities in the wake of floods, and instructed them to provide helping hand to the flood victims.

“Till we have Syed Ali, the IRGC and the army, we don’t need the [services of the parliamentary] government,” he says, with a sense of gratitude.

Writer is an Iran-based student and documentary filmmaker

US Expels SDF from Big Energy Zone in Eastern Syria

TEHRAN (FNA) — The US Army has forced the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) out of the largest energy zone in Eastern Syria for unknown reasons, media sources said, adding that the US army is now the only force in control of the field.

The American troops stationed in Conico gas plant in Eastern Deir Ezzur have ordered the SDF fighters to leave the region, the Arabic-language Al-Alam quoted special sources affiliated to the militants as saying.

The sources, meantime, said that the SDF patrols have also been expelled by the US from the gates of Conico gas production plant.

However, the reason for expelling the SDF from Conico energy zone has not been specified as yet.

The SDF stationed in Deir Ezzur have exchanged Eastern Syria’s oil in lieu of receiving American and Israeli arms and military equipment, sources said.

In a relevant development earlier on Sunday, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported that a military convoy comprising 70 trucks carrying military and logistic equipment (made in the US and Israel) has been dispatched by the US-led coalition from Iraq to Syria.

Meantime, the Arabic-language Rai al-Youm quoted local sources in Eastern Syria as saying that the SDF has swapped Syria’s oil and gas with US and Israeli weapons.

The sources told the Kuwaiti paper that the SDF is currently engaged in implementing the US occupation plots after the US declared the end of the ISIL in Eastern Syria. The US-backed Kurdish fighters have adopted hostile policies against people in the region.

Meantime, people in the towns of al-Sovar, Moileh, al-Shahil and al-Hasan in Eastern and Southeastern Deir Ezzur continued protests against the SDF and their measures such as stealing oil in cooperation with some foreign energy firms, and blocked Deir Ezzur-Hasaka Road to keep SDF militias outside their town.

In a relevant development on Saturday, the US-backed Kurdish militants received state-of-the-art weapons and military equipment, including Israeli arms in Eastern Euphrates, the Arabic-language media reports said.

The pro-militant Arabic-language Al-Khabor news agency quoted informed sources as saying that the US-led coalition has delivered new military and logistical supports through Simalka crossing to its allied Kurdish fighters in Eastern Syria.

It noted that the said military shipment included advanced missiles, US air defense systems, Israeli anti-Tank Spike missiles, shoulder-mounted surface-to-air Stinger missiles and drones.

The advanced weapons delivered to the Kurdish fighters were transferred to a clandestine depot near Ramilan Airbase in Hasaka province which is guarded by the US marine forces and Kurdish fighters.

Saudi-U.S. nuclear hypocrisy exposed

➔ Saudi criticism of Iran’s civilian nuclear program highlights its double standard as according to Abdul Hameed Nayyer, a Pakistani nuclear physicist, Saudi Arabia can demand nuclear weapons from Pakistan due to its generous investment in the country.

Additionally, Brigadier Feroz Hassan Khan in his book “Eating Grass: The Making Of the Pakistani Bomb” also explains the Saudi ambitions to acquire nuclear weapons.

Considering the nuclear option from Pakistan and potentially a huge space to exploit solar energy for clean power renders the establishment of nuclear infrastructure by Saudi regime useless. But the report from investigative journalist Kim Kleppin has revealed how Saudi lobby is pushing Trump administration to transfer the sensitive nuclear technology to the regime. According to the report a U.S. law firm linked to Trump vigorously lobbied the U.S. administration for nuclear technology transfer and received half a million dollars within one month of its establishment.

The vested business interests in Saudi nuclear program were revealed on February 19, 2019 in a report by the ‘house oversight and reform committee’ that disclosed Trump administration’s plan to bypass U.S. Congress for nuclear technology transfer to Saudi Arabia.

The report of the committee highlights intentions of IP3 international, a consortium of nuclear power producers. IP3 was founded by retired army general Jack Keane and its proposal was presented to White House officials by Thomas Barrack. Barrack is a close



friend of Trump who raised \$107 million for Trump’s inaugural committee. Michael Flynn is another central figure to the report who has worked as a paid advisor to a subsidiary of IP3 while serving in Trump’s presidential campaign. Flynn promoted IP3’s intention to sell nuclear technology to Saudi Arabia to white house officials.

McFarlane, the former national security advisor to the U.S. and currently an advisor to IP3, compared the transfer of nuclear technology to Saudi Arabia to the Marshall plan for the Middle East. According to the report, the founders of the IP3, McFarlane, and CEOs of Toshiba energy, GE power, Exelon

Corporation Bechtel Corp and Siemens have promoted the plan to sell nuclear technology to Riyadh.

The retired generals who founded IP3 have always portrayed Iran as a nuclear threat but now their intentions to transfer such technology to Saudi regime is meant to serve their monetary interests. The house oversight committee quoting a senior Trumps official said “the proposal of IP3 is not a business plan but rather a scheme for these generals to make some money.”

In an interview with Sputnik, Tom Sauer of University of Antwerp Belgium said the Saudi proposal to build about 40 nuclear

Theorizing about religion been one of the core areas inquiry in IR: Peter Haas

➔ Theorists of authority in world politics continue to heed changes in religious beliefs, religious discourses and the politics of religion as they affect broader attitudes about political authority in the world. For instance, Ron Hassner examines the impact of religious ideas, symbols and practices on military decision making in 20th century wars. (Hassner 2016)

■ Some argue that if the theory of International Relations means a constitutive and critical theory, then bringing religion into International Relations is possible, but if the theory of International Relations is an explanatory-empirical theory, the theorizing religion in International Relations is not possible and, in fact, there is not theological positivism theory in International Relations. What is your opinion?

We can understand the question of whether religion matters in IR in more general constructivist terms about how and when different types of beliefs influence human action. Constructivist literature focuses empirically on normative or principled ideas by the NGO and norm entrepreneur communities; and on causal ideas by the epistemic community’s community; and on broader cultural values, including religion.

A: wide and broadly applied set of questions and concepts look at differential national and global patterns of beliefs: namely who believes what and how strongly, and what are the behavioral and identity implications of such beliefs. Despite Stalin’s perfunctory dismissal of the influence of religion when he quipped “how many divisions does the Pope have,” Stalin and most other social analysts have not been blind to the role played by social beliefs in political organizing. Religion, and other social dogma (environmentalism, sustainability, and nationalism, among others) have been analytically important for identity politics. Consider the religious affiliations of European political parties and the willingness of their members to approve cooperation and partnerships with other groups.

Through the conceptual reconfiguration described above, religion is no different from other social beliefs that provide guidance to group members. Indeed, the relative turn against religious authority in the West (and to some extent in China) was due to an intentional effort to subvert and counter the political authority and legitimacy of dynastic, religious and monarchic power from the 17th century on.

But it cannot be emphasized strongly enough that not all religions are the same. They vary in terms of their orthodoxy, discipline over members and their degree of



presumed superiority over sects or other religions. Thus the degree and nature of effects of religious beliefs varies by the beliefs themselves. For instance, Confucianism provides far less detailed guidance to its members than do varieties of Islam or Judaism, just as varieties of Islam and Judaism vary in their own degree of permissive doctrines for their members.

Fruitful research might take the form of comparative panel studies of religions to capture variation between ideological perspectives, akin to the work which Ernst B Haas conducted on nationalist beliefs (Haas 1997; Haas 2000). In greater sync with contemporary sensibilities, researchers should look at the contestation and dialogues between religions and religious figures. Work on norm entrepreneurs (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998) may be relevant for understanding the development and diffusion of doctrinal beliefs and their impacts.

■ Some scholars such as “Michael Allen Gillespie” in the book “The Theological Origins of Modernity” believe that modernity was not initially against religion, and in later years, as a result of social, cultural and political conditions, it has led to secularism. So Based on this conception, religion is not conflict with modernity, so can it be said that religion is not conflict with the International Relations theory stemming from modernity?

A: I do not regard religion nor modernity as singular enti-

ties, or even coherent discourses. There are multiple types of religions, with different beliefs and different degrees of binding consequences of those beliefs on behavior, identity and with whom one may meaningfully cooperate. Similarly modernity began as a set of Enlightenment beliefs intended to undermine the historical influence of religion (Weber 1958; Hirschman 1977; Toulmin 1990; Mann 1993)

A current macro-topic is how changes in religious belief, and the resurgence of forms of fundamentalism worldwide influence modernity. To what extent is climate denialism and the assault on the authority of scientific legitimacy possibly a consequence of changes in religious beliefs?

■ Some argue that the current International Relations theory cannot explain some of the current phenomena of international relations and we need a religious theory of International Relations, especially with regard to religious issues. What is your opinion? In general, theorizing Religion in International Relations is feasible?

A: The crux of the argument about secular and religious states in IR is still seen as the conflict between animating pressures on people: religious, post religious, secular. While there is no singular theory of religion, religion is meaningfully studied as a form of cultural analysis, such as Peter J. Katzenstein’s series of edited works on comparative civilizations. (Katzenstein 2010)

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Bluebook reflects Tokyo fine-tuning diplomacy

By Chen Yang

Global Times —According to Asahi Shimbun, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA) released the 2019 Diplomatic Bluebook on April 23. As the last bluebook of the Heisei period, it uses new expressions such as playing down the significance of Japan-South Korea relations, sending friendly signals to North Korea and showing a proactive attitude on ties with Russia. Positive statement over the China-Japan relationship also emerged in the Bluebook.

The Diplomatic Bluebook is an annual document produced by MOFA to record Japan’s diplomatic trends. It is not only a reflection of Japan’s foreign policy and a preview of future trends, but also serves as a first-hand material for Japanese nationals to understand the latest diplomatic practices.

Like Japan’s defense white paper, produced by Japan’s Ministry of Defense, the Diplomatic Bluebook receives great attention by all parties every year. They try to figure out Japan’s diplomatic future from the document.

In the 2019 Diplomatic Bluebook, the changes in expressions concerning Japan-South Korea, Japan-North Korea, and Japan-Russia are actually a reflection of changes in relations between Tokyo and neighboring countries in

recent years. However, it can also be seen that the Shinzo Abe’s administration is eager to make diplomatic achievements. For instance, on Tokyo-Seoul relations, the expression “to move the Japan-ROK relationship forward in a future-oriented manner” in the 2018 edition is omitted, and it is instead pointed out that Japan-South Korea ties were “extremely difficult” last year. Since November last year, relations between the two countries have rapidly cooled down and anti-Seoul sentiment in Japanese society has been rising as a result of the decisions by the Supreme Court of South Korea asking Japanese companies to pay compensation for forced labor during World War II, the radar lock-on incident, South Korean National Assembly Speaker’s call to Japanese Emperor Akihito to apologize for historical issues, etc. Therefore, watered-down statements on Japan-South Korea relations in the Diplomatic Bluebook imply that the Abe regime is catering to current Japanese public opinion.

The 2019 Diplomatic Bluebook removed expressions such as “to maximize pressure on North Korea by all available means”, “the enhancement of nuclear and missile capabilities by North Korea constitutes an unprecedented, grave and imminent threat to Japan,” “to press North Korea for the early resolution of the abduc-

tions issue through leveraging the international community’s pressure on North Korea.”

The Abe administration used to adopt a tough foreign policy toward North Korea. But this diplomatic approach toward North Korea has been unable to make progress. After North Korean leader Kim Jong-un’s meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, among Six-Party Talks participants, only Japanese leader hasn’t met with Kim.

When it comes to territorial dispute with Russia, the 2019 edition said Tokyo and Moscow are working toward resolving the disputes under the “strong leadership” of Abe and Putin. This actually shows that the Abe’s administration is well aware of difficulties over resolving territorial disputes and signing the peace treaty with Russia and only by showing goodwill to Russia can the negotiation process be expedited.

The reason why Japan’s Diplomatic Bluebook is tough on South Korea, softer on the North, and friendlier toward Russia is that it has been difficult for Abe to make diplomatic progress this year.

Even though holding three talks with US President Donald Trump in a row from April to June will be a highlight, it will only be a highlight, not breakthrough.

The 2019 Bluebook counts China as “one of

reactors is a great business opportunity for troubled the U.S. nuclear industry and the Wall Street perceives peaceful Middle East as a nightmare for its military-industrial complex.

According to some experts, the nuclear technology transfer to Saudi Arabia will initiate an arms race in the Middle East that is what U.S. military-industrial complex wants.

According to Tom Collin, policy director at Ploughshares Fund, Saudis don’t require nuclear power and if the U.S. transfers such technology to the kingdom it will force Iran to restart its nuclear program.

The arms race will serve both the U.S. military industrial complex and the Saudi regime because Saudi regime wants to derail Iranian economy by draining its resources through arms race as they are frustrated by Iran’s influence and progress in the region.

It is similar to U.S. strategy to contain Russian influence by initiating arms race as the U.S. economy has an unlimited supply of petrodollars but Russian economy has limited options to finance its military and civilian projects.

IAEA has denied any military vector of Iran’s nuclear program but Saudi-U.S. hypocrisy to portray Iran as is a nuclear threat is meant to serve their vested interests. They consider nuclear arms race as a tool to serve private business interest and simultaneously a counterweight against Iran’s axis of resistance that consists of Iran, Assad government, Hezbollah and the alliance of Russia and China.

Tips on the results of the Spanish general election

Saeed Sobhani

The Spanish general election was held at a time when the country did not have a good economic situation. Spain, traditionally, and due to its vulnerability to the economic crisis, has the potential of becoming one of the main centers of the crisis in the United Europe and the Eurozone. This was proven during protests that took place after the economic crisis, and from 2007 to 2010 in Europe. Subsequently, Spanish citizens pursued their economic demands in the elections, or in public polls. However, the equation seems to be different this time! It seems that the rise of the "yellow vests" in Paris and other French cities has also affected the Spanish internal and social equations.

The recent protests in Spain have raised many concerns at both domestic and European levels. At the domestic level, Pedro Sanchez is concerned about the escalation of the protests and the collapse of his government. Because the current economic crisis in Spain is so severe that he can't offer many concessions to the protesters. At the same time, the protesters are so angry with the Spanish government that perhaps only some economic and welfare benefits can calm them down. In this regard, it is possible to compare the anger of Spanish demonstrators with the anger of the yellow vests in France. Some experts believe that if the protest rallies in Spain are repeated, and it becomes a trend, the administration can't stop the protesters' anger even by granting some economic and welfare benefits.

However, it seems that the anger of Spanish citizens of the economic process that has been



taking place in Spain (since 2007) is such that administration is incapable to manage it. In the past, economic and social protests in the European Union began in countries like Greece and Spain, and spread to other countries. This created the opportunity for the European troika to "temporarily curb the crisis." But this time the current protests in Europe started from France, which is the second economy in the Eurozone, and then spread to other countries. Obviously, under such circumstances, restraining the crisis by the European authorities would be far more difficult, and the impact of the crisis on other member states and even non-members in the Eurozone will be even greater, and Spain is no exception to this rule.

As Aljazeera reported, The governing Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE)

has won the country's general election with 123 seats after 99.9 percent of the votes were counted. PSOE's historical centre-right rival, the People's Party (PP), won 66 seats in Sunday's election in Spain. Speaking to supporters in Madrid, PSOE leader and Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said "the future has won" after his party won about 30 percent of the vote. Turnout was about 75 percent.

Supporters chanted "With Rivera, no!" at the rally, referring to Albert Rivera, the leader of Citizens, a party that considers itself centrist but allied with PP and Vox, leading to further criticism that it is far right.

PP leader Pablo Casado told supporters on Sunday evening that the party will "continue to lead the opposition and the centre-right" of Spain. Citizens won 57 seats, a gain of 25, while Vox made historic gains with 24 seats

representing the far right's return to Spanish national politics. Sanchez announced that he would soon open talks with other political parties to form a coalition.

In Catalonia, which has its own language, voters turned out beyond expectations. The Catalan Republican Left (ERC) - headed by Oriol Junqueras, who is facing trial on charges of sedition, rebellion and embezzlement of public funds over a 2017 referendum on Catalan independence - is projected to win 13 or 14 seats. That number is unprecedented for the Catalan nationalist party. If ERC agrees to a coalition with PSOE and UP, a government could likely be formed.

However, PSOE leader Pedro Sanchez has taken a tough stance against Catalan independence, saying there would be "no referendum and no independence" during a rally in Barcelona on Friday. Gerardo Rodriguez, a 42-year-old having lunch in front of a church, said he voted PSOE in part to Sanchez's tough stance on Catalan independence. "Politically, I am in the centre. I have voted for both PP and PSOE in the past," Rodriguez said. "I didn't want to vote PP because of Vox, but I was concerned with Sanchez's stance towards Catalan independence," he continued. "When he said there would be no independence, I was convinced."

Rodriguez said he admired PP leader Pablo Casado's tough stance towards Catalan independence, but found his willingness to partner with far-right Vox distasteful.

"I grew up hearing stories from my family about how horrible" life was under fascist dictator Franco. Members of Vox spoke warmly of Franco. "I couldn't vote for anyone who would work with them," Rodriguez said.

John Mason: Trump Makes Political Situation Dramatically Worse by Taking Advantage of Wealth Inequality

TEHRAN (FNA) — Dr. John G. Mason, Professor of Politics, says to win the US presidential election, Donald Trump secured the oligarchs' support, whose price was "the passage of a Tax Reform Bill that transferred over trillion dollars to America's richest Banks, Corporations and Upper class households... while offering little help to middle class households".

Speaking to FNA in an exclusive interview, Dr. Mason made comments on unequal wealth distribution in the US, saying, "America's income and wealth distribution has become dramatically "top heavy" over the past thirty years, so that the United States is now the most unequal of the advanced industrial countries by far."

Dr. John G. Mason, Professor of Politics, is the Chair of the Political Science Department at William Paterson University in New York. His areas of expertise are the politics of Europe and the former Soviet Union and American security policy. Dr. Mason is a on the Board of Directors of the Socialist Scholars Conference in New York.

Below is the full text of the interview:

■ President Trump tax overhaul has benefited the rich, unlike his promise that the middle class were supposed to be the biggest beneficiaries. What does it mean that Trump has offered socialism for the rich but capitalism for everyone else?

A: The argument that "we all too often have socialism for the rich and rugged free market capitalism for the poor" long predates Trump, and was first attributed to the American Socialist, Michael Harrington in his book on American poverty, *The Other America*, which was published in 1962. It then reappeared in many of Dr. Martin Luther King's speeches during his "Poor People's Campaign" up until his assassination in 1968. Already among one of the most unequal of the OCED countries a half century ago, America's income and wealth distribution has become dramatically "top heavy" over the past thirty years, so that the United States is now the most unequal of the advanced industrial countries by far.

■ Why is there a disparity between the rich employers and the low-income employees?

A: We have seen a massive redistribution of wealth and income to the Top 1% of American households, who has seen their share of the national wealth increase from 12% in the 1970's to 40% in 2015, and their share of national



income rise from 8.9% in 1978 to 22% in 2014. The share of the bottom 90% has fallen over the same period to less than 20%, with the bottom half owning effectively nothing, since their debts outweigh their assets. Their middle class "betters" in bottom 90% have the distinction of "owning" 75% of all consumer debt, as debt accumulation replaces salary increases that are missing due to wage stagnation. The median weekly wage has only increased to \$832 in 2015 from \$762 in 1979, while the average wage of the bottom 10% has declined over that same period from \$414 to \$392. The real revolution, however, is within that top 1% category, where the income share of the top 0.01% of households have now captured 5.1% of the national income, and hold more of the national wealth than the bottom 90%. The hyper-concentration of wealth and income in Today's America is best represented by one statistic – the three richest individuals at the top of the US Class hierarchy, Bill Gates, Jeff Bezos and Warren Buffet, now own more of the national wealth than the bottom half of American households.

■ How does wealth inequality affect US politics?

A: What hold true for wealth may be equally true for political influence of America's oligarchs. In a sense, America is their country, because they own so much of it. This situation

long predates Trump's arrival in the White House, as income and wealth inequality became increasingly skewed toward the top over the Clinton, Bush and Obama administrations. But Trump has made the political situation dramatically worse by taking advantage of it.

First, he overcame the resistance of the Republican establishment to his candidacy by weaponizing the social insecurity, financial precarity, and the racial resentments, of rural White America. And then repeated this trick against the Neo-liberal elites, even while he mobilized the financial resources of Conservative oligarchs such as Sheldon Adelson, Robert Mercer, and David and Charles Koch to build his campaign war chest, and win the presidential election in the Electoral College. While losing the popular vote by 2%. In fact, Trump did not win more votes than Mitt Romney had in 2012, and owed his victory to the large number of abstentions among Democratic voters. The price of the Oligarchs support was the passage of a Tax Reform Bill that transferred over trillion dollars to America's richest Banks, Corporations and Upper class households – who will receive 87% of the future benefits, while offering little help to middle class households.

Many Trump voters in the Blue States have now seen their federal taxes actually increase, and the refunds upon which many working class households depend, have shrunk by 8.7%. "Socialism for the Rich," indeed.

And austerity for the bottom 80%. It remains to be seen how Trump can spin the disappointment of his base and win the 2020 election, given that only four in ten likely voters say they are prepared to vote for him again.

Cultural exchanges under BRI will deepen understanding

By Li Qingqing

Global Times — The University of Sargodha based in Pakistan has forged close and friendly relations with China. It has built academic links with many of China's universities and set up the Pakistan Institute of China Studies. This is only one example of China's academic cooperation in recent years. Successful academic exchanges between China and other countries have been increasing rapidly within the framework of China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

As many Chinese universities are deepening exchanges with foreign universities under the framework of BRI, the US has restricted ties with China in academic exchanges and cooperation. Many US universities, including some that are world-renowned, have cut ties with China's Huawei Technologies and the Confucius Institute.

Although the US and some other Western countries' governments are politicizing the normal academic cooperation, China will not shut its door. Nor will it stop academic communication and research with Washington. This shows our open-mindedness. China is increasingly open to cooperation with universities and institutes worldwide.

China keeps expanding its circle of friends, because such cultural and academic exchanges have brought real benefits to the country in its 40 years of reform and opening-up. During the past four decades, China sent its students and scholars overseas on academic exchanges, which greatly widened their views. This also accelerates our country's

modernization and promotes the implementation of the BRI. After all, how can a country make any achievement if it only draws up plans behind closed doors?



China's openness echoes the spirit of the BRI's cultural exchanges. The Second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation (BRF) ended Saturday in Beijing, and more than 150 countries and international organizations have signed cooperation documents with China. Such exchanges will be win-win cooperation.

However, it is still a pity that India did not join the BRF. Why? Because it still lacks a comprehensive understanding of China.

To understand China better, cultural exchanges are of great importance. Some Indian people have doubts about China's BRI, but we still hope to expand cultural exchanges, including cooperation between Chinese and Indian universities, because this helps cast away their misunderstandings. The BRI will act as an effective platform to promote Chinese universities' exchanges with the world.

The BRI not only focuses on economic construction, it also aims at promoting exchanges between countries. Educational and cultural exchanges between universities are an important foundation of economic and trade cooperation.

Foreign countries may understand the cultural and educational factors in China's economic development through exchange and cooperation, while China also needs to understand foreign countries' development experience and cultural backgrounds

First Announcement															
 N.I.O.C 1398.543		 National Iranian Drilling Company													
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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.

For more information contact:

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Fly me to the moon: Germany eyes slice of lucrative space market

Facing tough competition from China, the United States and even tiny Luxembourg, Germany is racing to draft new laws and attract private investment to secure a slice of an emerging space market that could be worth \$1 trillion a year by the 2040s.

The drive to give Germany a bigger role in space comes as European, Asian and U.S. companies stake out ground in an evolving segment that promises contracts for everything from exploration to mining of outer-space resources.

Firms likely to benefit from any future spending rise in Germany include Airbus, which co-owns the maker of Europe's Ariane space rockets, and Bremen-based OHB.

The new legislation would limit financial and legal liabilities of private companies should accidents happen in orbit, set standards for space operations and offer incentives for new projects, the German economy ministry told Reuters.

The ministry's aerospace and space commissioner, Thomas Jarzombek, could submit the laws to parliament later this year. The move comes as companies and trade groups press for German authorities to establish a regulatory framework for the lucrative new market to encourage private investment.

"We are sounding the alarm that Germany and Europe are falling behind in space vis-a-vis China and the United States," Dirk Hoke, defense and space chief at Franco-German-led aerospace group Airbus, told Reuters. "We're at a critical juncture to ensure we stay in the top league."

Germany is Europe's economic powerhouse and the world's fourth-largest economy. However it had just the world's seventh-largest national space budget in 2018, an estimated \$1.1 billion, just over half the amount generated by fifth-placed France, according to preliminary data from Paris-based research firm Euroconsult.

The figure, which excludes contributions to pan-European programs, is dwarfed by the United States - by far the largest spender on space at almost \$40 billion.

Ironically, American space ambitions could offer a lifeline.

Hoke said a new lunar Gateway program backed by U.S. space agency NASA offered a chance for Germany and others in Europe to stake a claim to a key role



in the market.

"In my view, it is hugely important that we participate as equal partners so that we are primed to develop and build technologies for such a gateway," he said.

The program involves designing and developing a small spaceship that will orbit the Moon and serve as a temporary home for astronauts and as a base for work on the moon's surface and, later, missions to Mars. NASA had aimed to finish the Gateway by 2026, but Washington is now aiming to put humans back on the Moon by 2024, which could lead to an accelerated schedule.

Even before then, Germany is facing a brain-drain as companies worldwide ponder how to extract minerals from asteroids and water from the moon within a decade.

Some companies are already considering moving to Luxembourg, which has taken a lead in Europe by enacting laws to limit liabilities and ease restrictions on mining operations. It has also set up a 100-million-euro (\$112 million) investment fund for projects.

"It's a global market. We have our customers and we will keep them, even if we have to run the company from somewhere else," said Walter Ballheimer, CEO of German Orbital Systems, a Berlin-based start-up that builds small satellites.

"Germany was overtaken a long time ago," he said. "But it's not too late. If they are courageous enough and adopt a clear space policy ... then we can still

have a piece of the cake that we should have as a leading export nation."

Two other heads of small German space companies told Reuters they were considering leaving the country.

But Germany is not standing still. Space commissioner Jarzombek is working with trade groups, companies and other experts to draft the space laws, and plans to submit it them parliament sometime after September.

"We are aiming for a lean basic law that is open to the future," said a spokeswoman for Jarzombek and the economy ministry. "A national space law should focus above all on incentives and make it possible for the German space industry to play a bigger role in global developments."

Berlin is also pressing the United Nations to set standards for mining of the Moon, asteroids and other objects in space.

The United States passed a law in 2015 that encouraged private companies to undertake mining work beyond Earth, and gives its firms the right to claim resources they may one day be able to extract from celestial bodies.

Jarzombek helped secure a 269-million-euro increase in planned funding for the European Space Agency (ESA) in 2020-2023. But Germany's total space funding, which includes ESA and national programs, is not expected to rise in that period. It edged slightly lower to 1.57 billion euros in 2019.

The 18-member ESA oversees cooperation on space exploration and launches,

but individual countries have their own research and interests, funded outside the ESA budget.

Matthias Wachter, aerospace expert at the BDI German Federation of Industry, said advances in space were crucial for future technologies such as autonomous driving.

"Germany is limping behind," he said. Any spending plans would have to contend with rising budget pressures and an economic slowdown. Germany is in its 10th year of expansion, but only narrowly avoided recession last year.

Senior executives from Deutsche Bank and Munich Re and others met in Berlin this month to brainstorm ways to fund and insure new space projects.

One problem is Germany's conservative approach to investment and financing as entrepreneurs seek capital, said Sebastian Straube, CEO of investment firm Interstellar Ventures.

Straube is building a 100-million-euro investment fund that will fund projects. He is also working with companies like rail operator Deutsche Bahn to encourage them to support new ventures that build applications taking advantage of increased access to space through satellites in low-earth orbit.

SpaceX Battle

Marco Fuchs, CEO of satellite builder OHB, said Germany needed bigger increases in national space funding to pay for pioneering developments, citing growing competition worldwide.

The company carried out a privately funded commercial mission with China to orbit the moon in 2014.

OHB is a key player in the battle between Europe's new Ariane 6 rocket and the Falcon 9 built by Elon Musk's SpaceX to launch the first of two new OHB spy satellites, called Georg, for Germany's foreign intelligence agency in 2022.

The contract, worth tens of millions of dollars, is drawing political attention after SpaceX and Ariane traded barbs about access to each other's markets, which could presage a transatlantic trade dispute in coming years.

OHB and the German government are expected to select the winner by late 2020, and Fuchs said the decision would be based on many factors, including launch dates and available budgets.

"In the end, it's always a question of the price - or a political decision," he said. (Source: Reuters)

Endangered green sea turtles may be making a comeback in the U.S. Pacific

Beleaguered populations of green sea turtles living in and around Hawaii and American Pacific island territories are increasing in number.

From 2002 to 2015, scuba diving researchers circumnavigated 53 islands, atolls and coral reefs throughout the U.S. Pacific, conducting the first comprehensive survey in that region of the turtles' ocean habitats. Over the 13 years, the divers counted more than 3,400 sea turtles. The vast majority — 90.1 percent — were green sea turtles; only 8.3 percent were hawksbills and 1.6 percent were unidentified.

The number of green sea turtles spotted around Hawaii increased by an average of 8 percent each year, the team reports April 24 in PLOS ONE. Around American Samoa and the Mariana Islands, the turtles' numbers increased by an average of 4 percent per year.



"From a conservationist's point of view, that's pretty phenomenal," says study coauthor Rusty Brainard, an oceanographer based in Honolulu who supervises the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's coral reef ecosystem program.

Green sea turtles (Chelonia mydas) are considered endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. The picture is less rosy for hawksbill turtles (Eretmochelys imbricata), which the IUCN lists as critically endangered. In the United States, both species are protected by the Endangered Species Act.

"We didn't spot enough of hawksbills to be able to analyze their population trends over time. It's a sign that their population is really struggling," says ecologist Sarah Becker of the Monterey Bay Aquarium in California. She coauthored the paper with Brainard and aquarium colleague and conservation ecologist Kyle Van Houtan.

The number of green sea turtles nesting in Hawaii and some Pacific island regions has been slowly increasing over the last two decades. But until now, scientists have had little information on how hatchlings fare once they leave their sandy cradles and venture out into the ocean.

To track turtles and other reef-dwelling organisms, researchers were attached by a line to slow-moving boats that dragged them — in pairs — across stretches of coral reefs. "It's a spectacular way to see the reef system, one hour at a time," Brainard says. He saw turtles young and old, curious and shy. "They're just so graceful," Brainard says. "We'd see them sort of gliding along or sleeping in the caves and overhangs of the reefs."

He also floated past shipwrecks that had leached iron, markedly altering local ecosystems, and "large fishing nets — some of which had probably traveled thousands of miles," Brainard says. "They'd catch and snag on the reefs, breaking off bits of coral in this kind of path of destruction." Turtles sometimes get caught in them, too, he says.

The reptiles face other perils, including warming global temperatures and habitat loss. Last year, Hawaii's East Island — an important green sea turtle nesting site — was all but submerged, at least temporarily, in the wake of Hurricane Walaka.

"But at least — thanks to protections under the Endangered Species Act — they are no longer harassed or harvested for consumption," Brainard says. He suspects that the legal protections help explain why turtle populations appear to be increasing despite the remaining threats.

The new study gives researchers a better sense of how the turtles are doing out in the ocean, says James Spotila, a biologist at Drexel University in Philadelphia who studies sea turtles. "We know the most about the Hawaiian populations," Spotila says. "But some of the remote island areas looked at in this study have really been black boxes."

Those results may be the only information scientists have about in-ocean populations of turtles in and around U.S. Pacific territories for a while, Spotila says. NOAA stopped conducting towed-diver surveys of Hawaii and other Pacific islands in 2017 due to a reallocation of funding.

(Source: sciencenews.org)

Ecologists solve coral reef halo mystery, but questions remain

The ecological forces driving the development of sandy halos surrounding coral reefs are more complex than scientists previously realized.

For years, scientists had observed a mysterious phenomenon. Many coral reefs are surrounded by expansive halos of bare sand, some measuring hundreds of thousands of square feet. Typically, thick meadows of seagrass or algae grow beyond the edge of these halos.

Coral reef halos were first officially observed - and documented in the scientific literature - in the Caribbean, in St. John in 1965 and in St. Croix in 1972.

Until now, scientists' explanation for the phenomena was rather basic.

"They've been known for ages, and have been long assumed to be due to a simple chain of interactions: predators, fish-and invertebrate-eating fish, or herbivores, scare prey, plant-and algae-eating fish, who stay near shelter to avoid the predators and hence graze more heavily around the safety of coral reefs," Elizabeth Madin, assistant research professor at the Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology, told UPI.

But many marine scientists wondered how some halos could grow so large if herbivores were scared to venture very far from the protection of the reef. Indeed, when Madin and her colleagues filmed the behavior of fish around reefs with halos, they found herbivore behavior alone failed to account for the barren sand.



"Plant-eating fishes never ventured as far from the reef as the halo boundary extended," Madin said. "This left us scratching our heads as to why, given that something was obviously casing the halo to extend out as far as it did."

When researchers monitored fish activity at night using GoPro cameras outfitted with special lights, they found an explanation: "bioturbating" fishes that root through the sand, turning up and eating invertebrate prey — "sort of like pigs rooting through mud," Madin said.

All that rooting around dislodges the algae growing

on the sand, expanding the halo.

Analysis of satellite imagery showed halos weren't likely to be larger in marine preserves, where the populations of predator fish are larger. However, scientists found reefs in preserves were more likely to host halos.

"Halo size seems to be dictated in large part by the size of the reef it surrounds, which is logical, yet the specific mechanics for why this is remain unclear," Madin said.

As the planet's oceans warm and become more acidic, and as unsustainable fishing practices proliferate, coral reefs are increasingly threatened. Madin and her colleagues hope their work - published this week in the journal Proceedings of the Royal Society B - will lead to more efficient ways to monitor reef health.

"Right now we're working hard to decode what the halos are telling us specifically about reef ecosystem health," she said. "In other words, we're trying to figure out the answers to the outstanding questions, such as what causes differences in the sizes of halos."

Once scientists can completely explain the mechanisms behind reef halo formation and size, analysis of halos via satellite imagery could be used as a conservation and management tool.

"That's my ultimate goal - and the reason this somewhat mysterious phenomenon has had my collaborators and I captivated for the past few years," Madin said. (Source: upi.com)



an environmental virologist at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver who wasn't involved in the study.

And because microbiologists can only isolate and identify viral species with DNA, viruses with RNA were excluded from the new analysis, despite being thought to make up half of the ocean's virus diversity. "So we're still really only scratching the surface of what's there," Suttle says. (Source: sciencenews.org)

A global survey finds that the Arctic Ocean is a hot spot for viruses

Arctic waters turn out to be teeming with some of the world's smallest entities — viruses.

Water samples taken during a three-year expedition around the world's oceans identified around 200,000 virus species, roughly 12 times the number found in a previous smaller survey. And 42 percent of those viruses were found exclusively in the Arctic, researchers report April 25 in Cell.

The results come from the Tara Oceans global oceanographic research expedition. From 2009 to 2013, researchers dropped tanks off of an aluminum sailboat called Tara to collect 145 water samples from dozens of sites worldwide, at water depths from 0 to 4,000 meters. Scientists collected everything ranging in size from fish eggs down to viruses. Filtering isolated the viruses, which were then genetically compared.

The researchers identified 195,728 virus species parsed into five global regions that are home to distinct viral communities. The most diversity was found in shallow, temperate and tropical waters, followed closely by Arctic waters.

Almost all of the viruses were bacteriophages, which

attack bacteria — not people.

"So you can swim in the ocean and not worry about it," says Ahmed Zayed, a microbiologist at Ohio State University in Columbus.

Bacteriophages and other viruses are credited with killing roughly 20 percent of bacteria in the ocean every day. That process stops carbon in the bacteria from passing up the food chain, and instead releases the carbon back into the ocean for other microorganisms — some of which also consume carbon dioxide. These microbes eventually produce a form of carbon that can't be recycled and stays stored in the ocean.

Viruses may serve an important role in counteracting human-induced climate change by indirectly stashing away carbon in this way, though viruses have rarely been included in climate simulations. Having the global map of virus locations could help scientists know where carbon fallout occurs and increase the accuracy of climate simulations.

But the study gives only a limited view of viruses at play. "There's still swaths of the ocean that haven't been looked at," such as the Western Pacific, says Curtis Suttle,

Oldest human footprint found in the Americas confirmed in Chile: researcher

A 15,600-year old footprint discovered in southern Chile is believed to be the oldest ever found in the Americas, according to researchers.

The footprint was first discovered in 2010 by a student at the Universidad Austral de Chile. Scientists then worked for years to rule out the possibility that the print may have belonged to some other species of animal, and to determine the fossil's estimated age.

Karen Moreno, a paleontologist with the Universidad Austral who has overseen the studies, said researchers had also found bones of animals

near the site, including those of primitive elephants, but determined that the footprint was evidence of human presence.

Moreno said this was the first evidence of humans in the Americas older than 12,000 years.

"Little by little in South America we're starting to find sites with evidence of human presence, but this is the oldest in the Americas," she said. (Source: Reuters)



Tourism in Uruguay closed with a 29% drop in foreign tourists

Tourism in Uruguay reported a drop in the number of foreign tourists. Argentinian visitors, the most important source market for Uruguay, have been hit by the currency crisis and consequently the numbers of travelers. While there were measures in Uruguay focused on mitigating the negative effects (with discounts and sales of Value Added Tax) the blow is still felt.

In the period January-March the amount of incoming foreign tourists dropped by almost 29% in comparison with the same period of 2018. It was the first drop since 2014 and the second biggest since the Ministry of Tourism started the statistics.



According to the numbers, in the first trimester of 2019, 1,092,015 foreign tourists arrived from abroad. It was the second biggest drop since 2002, when the arrival of visitors saw a reduction of 45% (they were a little over 500,000). However, the amount of visitors continued to be above a million, a barrier that was first crossed in 2011 and that was only not reached in 2014 (when about 890,000 visitors entered) and in 2015 (990,000).

Inbound tourism in Uruguay generated \$776 million during the period of January-March, almost \$317 million less (–30%) than in the same period of 2018. It was the first drop for a trimester since 2016 and the most significant drop since the 2002 crisis (then the drop was 44%). That lower billing took place in all the destinations of the country.

The total expense per tourist (\$711 in average) remained almost unchanged and the daily consumption slightly increased (\$110).

The president of the Uruguayan Chamber of Tourism, Juan Martinez, said that: “It was an important drop and it’s worrisome. It affected three-star hotels, middle gastronomy and almost all destinations”.

This scenario will produce an increase of the “strike insurances”, he estimated, and he informed that in the face of this scenario, meetings have already been promoted in order to accomplish reductions in the fees of UTE and OSE for tour operators. In front of a region that is still “complicated”, the union demands to maintain all the tax benefits for tourists, which expire this month.

According to Martinez, “No tourists came from abroad, it was internal tourism and that doesn’t generate foreign currencies. There was movement but not a dollar was moved. Only one day there was 100% occupation in the Thermals; then the coast had between 60% and 65%, and Colonia 88%. There are small companies closing and others thinking about what they’re going to do come winter”.

Hotels and restaurants from the main destinations depend on the cash that they make since December in order to define how they will face the winter. Historic data from the area –available since 1995- show that, on average, half the revenues of a year are made between January and March.

The drop registered in the first trimester in 2019 was explained basically by the Argentinean public, whose influx dropped by about 40% in comparison with the same period last year. It was the second steepest drop since 2002, a year of crisis in Argentina that affected Uruguay.

(Source: Tourism Review)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Old Towns of Djenne

Inhabited since 250 BC, Djenne in central Mali became a market center and an important link in the trans-Saharan gold trade. In the 15th and 16th centuries, it was one of the centers for the propagation of Islam. Its traditional houses, of which nearly 2,000 have survived, are built on hillocks (toguere) as protection from the seasonal floods.



A view of the Great Mosque in Djenne, it is one of the largest mud brick buildings in the world

The cultural property “Old Towns of Djenne” is a serial property comprising four archaeological sites, namely Djenne-Djeno, Hambarketolo, Kaniana and Tonomba, along with the old fabric of the present town of Djenne covering an area of 48.5 ha and divided into ten districts.

The property is an ensemble that over many years has symbolized the typical African city. It is also particularly representative of Islamic architecture in sub-Saharan Africa.

The property is characterized by the intensive and remarkable use of earth specifically in its architecture. The outstanding mosque of great monumental and religious value is an outstanding example of this. The town is renowned for its civic constructions, with the distinctive style of verticality and buttresses as well as the elegant monumental houses with intricate facades.

Excavations carried out in 1977, 1981, 1996 and 1997, revealed an extraordinary page of human history dating back to the 3rd century BC.

(Source: UNESCO)

Iran to celebrate Persian Gulf National Day

1 → The modern strategic importance of the Persian Gulf dates from the mid-19th century, when three great empires confronted each other there: British India, Tsarist Russia and Ottoman Turkey. The British established political control over much of the Persian Gulf in the early 1800s and kept it for 150 years, establishing a tradition of outside involvement that persists today. Britain did not establish formal protectorates (as in the case, for example, of Egypt), but did enter into treaties with local sheikhs offering them protection in return for control over their foreign policy. In 1899, Kuwait, then considered a dependency of the Ottomans, was brought into this system.

After World War I, the political map of much of the Middle East was redrawn as the Ottoman Empire was replaced by modern states, including Turkey, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. The small Arab sheikhdoms on the western shore of the Persian Gulf

were under British protection until 1971 (in the case of Kuwait, 1961). Iran (Persia) was never a colony, and for much of the 19th and 20th century Britain competed with Russia for influence there.

Spanning some 250,000 square kilometers, the Persian Gulf is bounded by the Shatt al-Arab waterway in the north, which forms the frontier between Iran and Iraq, and the Strait of Hormuz in the south, which connects the sea to the Gulf of Oman and the Indian Ocean.

It shares boundaries with littoral states Iran (Persia), Oman, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates. The Strait of Hormuz, connects the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman.

The Persian Gulf is also important as an international trade route connecting the Middle East to Africa, India and China. It has historically been an integrated region characterized by constant interchange of people, commerce and religious movements.



Map by Abraham Ortelius, dated 1580 using the term “Persicus” (MAR MESENDIN formerly Sinus Persicus).

Intl. conference to discuss sustainable tourism in Lut Desert

TOURISM TEHRAN — The University of Birjand, which is edged by the UNESCO-tagged Lut Desert, will be hosting an international conference on sustainable tourism in the vast desert, ISNA reported.

Titled “Lut Desert Tourism, Local and International Opportunities”, the event will explore how to empower local communities and it will also touch upon geo-tourism, attractions, sports tourism, eco-tourism, transportation in the arid land.

“130 papers from countries such as Spain, Italy, Malaysia and India will be presented at the conference, and a workshop on sustainable development in Lut will be held on the sidelines,” said Mohammadreza Majidi, a former Iranian representative at UNESCO.

Majidi also urged the need for running training courses for inhabitants in order to raise awareness of how to preserving this natural environment.

The event will be held on May 1 and 2 under the

Royal food supplier car goes on show in Tehran

HERITAGE TEHRAN — An electric vehicle, which was once supplying food to royal family of the last Shah of Iran, has been put on show at the Sa’dabad Cultural-Historical Complex in northern Tehran.

“On Sunday, a special carriage that used to carry food from a royal kitchen to the [currently known] Mellat Palace Museum [which was once a residence of royal family] went on show for the first time since 40 years ago [when the monarchy fell],” IRNA reported.

The abandoned vehicle was found in a stock where other royal objects and means of transportation were being kept. Later, it



How to make friends while traveling solo

Even in the best cases, traveling alone can get lonely. Here’s how to connect safely with the people you meet along the way.

Experiencing another culture on your own terms, at your own pace, with a budget of your own choosing can be an incredibly rewarding and insightful adventure. But while some may find such a journey liberating, others might worry about safety or a period of solitude in a strange, unfamiliar place. Humans, after all, are social animals.

Prospective solo travelers should know that, despite its label, solo travel does not have to mean you’re alone all the time. There are local communities to safely interact with as well as fellow globe-trotters in a similar position.

A 2016 report from travel research company Phocuswright found that a whopping 72 percent of hostel guests in the United States were traveling alone. Airbnb saw similar a trend in its data, with cities like Ho Chi Minh City, Cologne, and Johannesburg experiencing more than a 130 percent increase in individual bookings in 2016.

With solo traveling growing in popularity, it’s clear there are options to socialize with other travelers — it’s just a matter of putting yourself in the right position to do so. Here are some tactics you can use to meet and befriend people abroad, from tried-and-true methods to innovative new apps and technology.

■ Go on ‘free’ walking tours

The word free is in quotations because, assuming your tour guide is at least half-decent, you should tip them at the end (many earn the majority of their income on commission). But these walking tours can be worth every penny. Not only will the guide give you an informed and hopefully entertaining view of the locale, but you’ll have a chance to interact with other tourists and possibly come away with a new friend.

The leisurely pace in between stops gives you the opportunity to chat with fellow tour-goers, who you may discover are also traveling alone or as part of a small group they’re willing to let you join. Prominent cities often have multiple specialized tours — street art or local cuisine, for example — which provide additional chances to meet people and further learn about the place hosting you.

Several tour companies, like Sandeman’s New Europe or Free Tours by Foot, have outposts in popular cities and are generally safe options for the solo traveler. But don’t count

out smaller or independent tour companies that may be better tailored to specific destinations. Visit the company website and read reviews left by travelers to make sure everything checks out. You can also look at ratings on separate websites like TripAdvisor for a more comprehensive view.

If you’re staying in a hostel, the staff often has relationships with tour companies in the city. A hotel receptionist or concierge would also have recommendations.

■ Use Airbnb to go on unique experiences hosted by locals

Airbnb may be known more for its lodging arrangements, but it also wants to give you something to do at your destination. Airbnb Experiences connects travelers with local guides who lead guests on paid activities ranging from city tours to bar crawls and hobby and skill classes. Launched in late 2016, Experiences quickly became a popular feature.

So what’s the appeal? Similar to walking tours, Airbnb Experiences can be a fun way to mingle with fellow sightseers while gaining firsthand knowledge from experienced locals. And while you do have to pay upfront, costs usually cover expenses like transportation, food or equipment. Each booking page includes information from the host on what items they’ll provide, as well as what items you should bring, like activity-specific clothing or extra cash (for souvenirs, for example).

Since Experiences is embedded on the standard Airbnb platform, you’ll want to show the same caution when booking activities as you would with booking housing. Make sure to read through the description and photos carefully and pay attention to the Experience’s rating and reviews (Airbnb has neat little trophies visible on the page if the Experience has been rated five stars by a certain number of people.) If you have any questions or concerns, Airbnb will put you in touch with the host through its messaging system even if you haven’t booked the activity yet.

■ Connect with like-minded explorers on social travel apps

Prefer to cut out the middleman and connect directly with other travelers? Try your hand at the crop of social networking apps specifically designed for travel. Travello, free on iOS and Android, allows you to discover other travelers nearby, match itineraries for planned trips and join

auspices of Iranian National Commission for UNESCO and the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization.

Lut Desert, which dominates eastern Iranian territory, offers its adventurers epic journeys of breathtaking beauty and wilderness. Amongst its top attractions are giant dunes, shifting sands, salt plains and wind-hewn rocks.

Between June and October, this arid subtropical area is swept by strong winds, which transport sediment and cause aeolian erosion on a colossal scale. Consequently, the site presents some of the most spectacular examples of massive corrugated ridges, according to the UNESCO.

The region has been described in the past as a place of ‘no life’ and information on the biological resources in this area is limited. Nevertheless the property possesses flora and fauna adapted to the harsh conditions including an interesting adapted insect fauna.

underwent a restoring mission under the supervision of a classic cars expert, the report said.

Iran tourism body registered over half a million visits to Sa’dabad’s various museums during the New Year (Noruz) holidays (March 21-April 5), with Mellat Palace Museum, the museum of royal vehicles, the Green Palace, and a museum dedicated to majestic clothing receiving topmost visitors during the period.

Sprawled on about 110 hectares of a mountainside parkland, the Sa’dabad complex was once a royal summer residence during Qajar era (1789–1925) and its subsequent Pahlavi epoch (1925–1979).



groups based on similar interests. You can also create a feed by posting photos and updates.

Tourlina, also free on iOS and Android, is exclusively for women and operates a lot like a dating app by swiping on potential travel companions with similar itineraries and timing. Women can also use the dating app Bumble’s BFF feature to meet platonic companions in the area. Other social media apps are ool options, with region-specific Facebook groups and subreddits to engage with travelers, expats, and locals in your destination of choice.

As with any first encounter brokered through social media, use caution when meeting people in real life. Meet in public spaces and consider video chatting beforehand. Travello also has a block/report feature if anyone conducts themselves inappropriately, resulting in an immediate ban from the app.

■ Stay in hostels

In a world of hospitable hotels and authentic Airbnbs, why do travelers elect to stay in hostels? Two reasons, really: Hostels are cheap and sociable. You’ll find college-esque dormitories with common lounge rooms and kitchens, and sometimes a bar or cafe.

It’s an ideal environment to meet other travelers, and hostel staffs are well aware of this — some will lead city tours or pub crawls designed to foster interaction between hostel mates. Others might host game nights in the common room or arrange family dinners.

(Source: The New York Times)

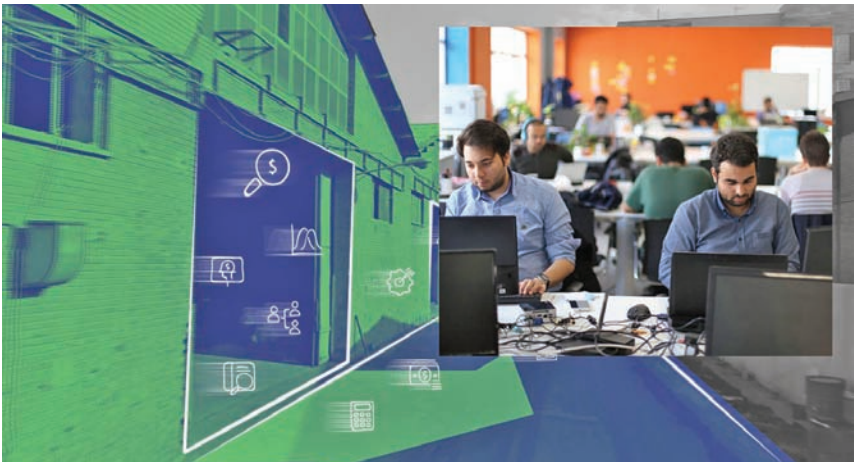
Five innovation factories to be established soon

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** – Innovation factories will be established in five Iranian cities of Mashhad, Tabriz, Isfahan, Shiraz and Yazd in the near future, the head of the Strategic Technologies Center announced, Mehr reported on Sunday.

Innovation factory is a platform that efficiently connects people, knowledge and ideas and at the same time encourages collaboration and innovation. Organizational issues are presented as 'idea challenges'. Inspiring and motivational assignments like these encourage people to share and elaborate ideas. It allows you to utilize collective knowledge and it increases employee engagement.

Esmail Qaderifar said that some Iranian metropolitans plan to establish innovation factories in order to diversify the national innovation ecosystem.

In Mashhad, an old abandoned factory is turning into an innovation factory. The place is now under construction and will probably open during the Iranian calendar month Shahrivar (August 23-September 22), he explained.



The vice presidency for science and technology supports the innovation factories, however they are completely private and will be run by private accelerators, he added. The center is affiliated to the vice presidency for science and technology. The innovation factories focus on the

regional and local priorities and based their activities on them, he said.

Mashhad, as a religious city, focuses on the pilgrimage, souvenir and creative industry for innovation, he explained.

"We plan to sign an agreement in Shiraz during next week in order to break the

ground for establishment of an 18,000-meter factory," he added.

The innovation factories in Yazd and Isfahan are also placed in abandoned factories, he added.

He said that the municipality, governorship and the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development are responsible for establishment of the innovation factories.

The innovation centers are also very important in the entrepreneurship ecosystem, Qaderifar announced.

In Tabriz, two innovation centers are established at the University of Tabriz and Tabriz University of Medical Sciences in next month, he said.

In late February, the vice president for science and technology Sourena Sattari announced the first innovation factory of the country will start running in Tehran in the Iranian calendar month Ordibehesht (April 21-May 21).

Over 3,500 young entrepreneurs with over 10 accelerator centers in different fields will begin their activity in the innovation factory, he said.

Innovation center opens at University of Tehran



TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** – The first phase of an innovation center was completed at the University of Tehran's College of Engineering on Sunday, Mehr reported.

The 30 innovative products, which are available at the center, were also unveiled during the opening ceremony, which was attended by the vice president for science and technology Sourena Sattari.

The University of Tehran is considered as a pioneer academic center, however the innovation center provides a new outlook toward technology development, he said.

By establishing such centers, the universities will gradually turn into third and fourth generations in the near future, he added.

ICT and biotechnology are on high agenda for knowledge-based companies, however, the engineering is third on the list, he added.

The universities can be funded through selling technologies and signing agreements with startups, he said.

"I believe that research results cannot turn into products by the state-run organizations, this is only possible by the investment of the private sector," he said.

The government should invest in cutting-edge technology projects, he said.

During the event, director of the University of Tehran's School of Mathematics, Statistics and Computer Science Majid Nili explained about the innovation center.

The center was built in two years to complete the educational complex with an innovation center, he said.

This is a necessity for transformation in the structure of the university, he added.

The professional courses on skill can develop the culture of innovation at the universities, he concluded.

Service sector holds lion's share of space industry



TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** – The services development sector holds the biggest share of space industry, the head of Iranian Space Agency (ISA) announced.

Morteza Barari said that 80 percent of job creation and economic activities happen in the field of space services.

The universities can pave the way for entrepreneurs and innovative young generation, he said.

The universities should focus on innovation and creative industries and be pioneers through establishment of innovation centers, he added.

Nanotechnology, energy, environment and biotechnology are the fields, which the universities can focus on.

He pointed to the space economy as an important part of the worldwide economy and the knowledge-based companies has the share of 76 percent.

The ISA aims to develop space services, operators and space industry in the near future.

Today 28 knowledge-based companies are working in the field of space technology, he said.

The ISA also plans to develop startups active in the field of GPS, astronomy and space discoveries in the near future, he added.

According to Morgan Stanley, an American multinational investment bank and financial services company, it is estimated that the global space industry could generate revenue of \$1.1 trillion or more in 2040, up from \$350 billion, currently. Yet, the most significant short- and medium-term opportunities may come from satellite broadband Internet access.

It estimates that satellite broadband will represent 50% of the projected growth of the global space economy by 2040—and as much as 70% in the most bullish scenario. Launching satellites that offer broadband Internet service will help to drive down the cost of data, just as demand for that data explodes.

An electric scooter that can get you home when you forget where you are

A British design studio and a Chinese automotive and smart mobility firm collaborated to develop Pal, a smart, electric scooter. Design firm Layer and mobility specialists Nio propose the stylish, single-rider transport as a "near-future concept" solution for growing traffic congestion in large cities, according to Dezeen.

The Pal uses artificial intelligence machine-learning to recognize common routes. The scooter links to the owner's smartphone or smartwatch via Bluetooth, and from the phone to Nomi, Nio's cloud-based A.I. system. Once the system is familiar with a route, the owner can state a destination into a wireless earpiece and the scooter will take the rider home autonomously.

The scooter has a separate motor in each of its four wheel hubs. When you drive Pal by leaning, its pressure-sensitive suspension can vary wheel speeds to speed up, slow down, or turn left or right.

The concept scooter's graphene-coated carbon fiber chassis and steering column are extremely strong and lightweight, which is why formula one race cars use the



material extensively. The scooter's light weight adds to its energy efficiency because it can extend the Pal's range per battery charge.

Pal uses a modular battery that fits in a receptacle on the scooter's steering column. Layer did not give maximum

speed or range specifications, but each scooter would come with a home charger. If one battery charge isn't enough to complete a journey, the owner can swap in a charged battery for the depleted cell.

Nio cars and SUVs have a battery charging port in the trunk. Because the Pal is so light (again, no specifics for weight), the owner can collapse the steering column and lift the scooter in and out of a car trunk. For people who work in a city but live elsewhere, the electric scooter could be an effective last-mile solution. Owners could park in economical lots outside the city center, extract their Pal from the trunk and ride it to work. The scooter's light weight would allow the owner to fold and pull it to their desk or workstation where the battery could recharge during the workday.

"At Layer, we believe that the future is autonomous and sustainable, and it is important to create products that offer more convenience without inconveniencing the planet," said Layer founder Benjamin Hubert.

(Source: digitaltrends.com)

New images show asteroid hit by Japanese spacecraft

Japan's aerospace agency sent a remote device packed with explosives to an asteroid earlier this month. Here's what happened.

The grainy before and after shots show the previously untouched surface of Ryugu, an asteroid about 186 miles from Earth.

The images confirm a milestone in what the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) called "the world's first collision experiment with an asteroid" on Twitter.

JAXA sent a remote device packed with explosives to the asteroid earlier this month. It blasted an artificial crater into Ryugu's surface to try and learn more about the composition and formation of the space rock.

Unlike the surface of the asteroid, which has been exposed to space for billions of years, the crater uncovers untouched material from the earliest days of the asteroid. JAXA tweeted that it expects the crater to lead to "new

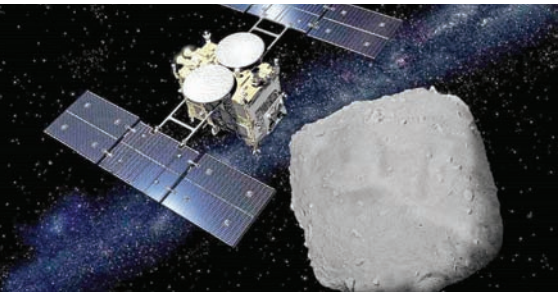
advances in planetary science".

The total impact area of the explosion is approximately 20 metres wide but JAXA says it "did not expect such a big alternation" and the images of the new crater have prompted "a lively debate".

The small device carrying the explosives was deployed from Hayabusa2 - a Japanese spacecraft that was launched in December 2014 and has been stationed near Ryugu since last year.

Teams are now assessing whether it's safe to send the spacecraft to the surface to collect samples. If it's given the go ahead, Hayabusa2 is expected to touchdown sometime after May and return to Earth at the end of the year.

JAXA says the samples, which date back billions of years, from the mission would help scientists "learn about the origin and evolution of Earth, the oceans, and life".



NASA is currently on its own space mission for asteroid samples. The OSIRIS-REx mission was launched in 2018 but is not expected to collect materials from the surface of the Bennu asteroid until 2020.

(Source: news.sky.com)

National flood warning system in the pipeline

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** – The Supreme Council of Space is working on establishment of national flood warning system as a high priority, Mehr reported on Sunday.

The establishment of flood warning system is a necessity for the country and the crisis management working group of the council is providing a comprehensive bill on crisis management in near future, the head of the group Mohammad Masoud Tajrishi announced.

He said that the usage of space technology in natural disaster management is one of the issues, which should be clarified during the event.



Since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year on March 21 provinces of Fars, Lorestan, North Khorasan, Golestan, Mazandaran, Hamedan, Khuzestan, Kermanshah, Semnan, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad and Khorasan Razavi were hit hard by devastating floods incurring a dramatic loss.

Iranian Space Research Center estimates the damage caused by the recent flood to the agriculture sector in Lorestan province through using remote sensing technology.

It aims to assess the damages to crops with sampling and it also provides the Poldokhtar citizens in Lorestan province with 4G network through 50 internet balloon.

Headed by President Hassan Rouhani, the Supreme Council of Space observes activities of Iran Space Agency, which is mandated to cover and support all the activities in Iran concerning the peaceful applications of space science and technology.

Iranian startups receive Rastak Innovation Award

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** – Three Iranian startups were selected during the first Rastak Innovation Award on Sunday, IRNA reported.

The startups were selected from nine startups participated in the event, which is supported by the innovation and prosperity fund.

The Rastak Innovation Award goes to startups, which have great activities in their key fields nationwide and aims to support startups and entrepreneurship ecosystem.

The Smart Medico team won the first award. It provides an app for patients with diabetes. The second award went to the 'Hoom', a startup which is used for smart homes and the third prize went to 'Behzee', a startup provides smart program for better healthy living.

The startup "Cactus" received the honorable mention. The startup provides mobile app for education.

New technique builds sensor structures within chips

Smart devices, including wearable electronics and Internet of Things (IoT) technology, could be equipped with more sensors and bigger batteries, thanks to a new production technique from Nanusens.

Micro Electro Mechanical Systems (MEMS) are a vital component in most electronic devices, as they provide the sensing capabilities that make the technology smart.

However, since every MEMS sensor design is unique, each needs its own specially-developed manufacturing process, making it difficult to quickly ramp up to large volume production.

Now London-based Nanusens has developed a technique to use the same standard production process used to make electronic chips, known as the Complementary Metal Oxide Semiconductor (CMOS) process, to build MEMS sensors.

In this way, the devices can be produced in any fabrication plant, in large volumes, according to Dr Josep Montanyà, CEO of Nanusens.



In the CMOS process, silicon dioxide is etched away to produce the mechanical structure. In the new MEMS process, these structures can include nanoscale moving parts such as springs, which form the sensor.

"You need empty space to allow the movement [of the MEMS device]," said Montanyà. "So we etch away the silicon dioxide very quickly, and leave the metal. In this way we generate the empty spaces we need in order to allow the metal to move," he said.

The use of the CMOS process also allows Nanusens to take advantage of Moore's Law of electronics, meaning they can build smaller, nanoscale sensor devices. Existing MEMS devices, in contrast, are typically one micron or larger in size.

The nanoscale MEMS, or NEMS, structures can be built on the same chip as the electronics needed to control them, with the entire package just 1mm3 in size. In contrast, packages consisting of chips containing conventional MEMS structures, alongside a separate chip for the control electronics, are typically around 4mm3 in size.

The technology is likely to be initially applied to earbuds, where they will free up space for larger batteries with improved operational life. It could also be used in smart phones and wearable devices.

However, the company believes the sensors will ultimately have the most significant impact on the IoT, which has so far been limited by the lack of cheap, mass-produced MEMS sensors, said Montanyà.

"In a sense our technology is an enabler for the massive deployment of IoT," he said. "Because the idea of IoT is that it is everywhere, so the technology must be very small and very low cost, and you must be able to produce it in large quantities."

(Source: theengineer.co.uk)

Afghanistan kicks off grand peace assembly in Kabul

TEHRAN — Thousands of Afghans have got together under tight security in the capital Kabul to hold four days of negotiations aimed at finding ways to strike a peace deal with the Taliban militant group.

President Ashraf Ghani opened the rare gathering, known as a Loya Jirga, under a huge tent in central Kabul on Monday, with some 3,200 tribal elders as well as senior community and religious figures from all over the country in attendance.

"It is a proud moment for me to have representatives from all over the country here and today we are gathered to speak about the peace talks," Ghani said in the opening ceremony.

Much of the capital has been locked down under security measures for the event, which started weeks after the Taliban announced their so-called spring offensive, during which the militant group steps up its attacks across the country.

Opposition leaders and government critics, including former president Hamid Karzai, have however boycotted the event.

They accuse the president of using the grand traditional assembly as a platform to boost his status in anticipation of winning a second term in the presidential election set for September.



Ghani has invited the Taliban, but the militants have rejected the offer and urged others to boycott it.

The group has also alleged that this is an attempt by the government to deceive the country and extend its 'illegitimate rule.'

"Do not participate in the enemy's conspiracy under the name of Jirga; instead

find ways to further sideline the shaky administration of Kabul," Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said in a statement.

The Taliban has, however, held several rounds of talks with the U.S. in Qatar's capital Doha.

U.S. special envoy to Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad signaled progress in the talks last

month, saying the two sides had reached an "agreement in draft" on the issues of troops withdrawal and counter-terrorism assurances.

Conversely, he said in an interview with Afghanistan's largest private television station, Tolo News, that "No agreement will be done if we don't see a permanent ceasefire and a commitment to end the war."

"If the Taliban insist on going back to the system they used to have, in my personal opinion, it means the continuation of war, not peace," he said.

The Taliban's demands are focused on the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the country.

"We are seeking peace and [a] political settlement... We want peace to give us the possibility to withdraw," Khalilzad added.

According to Press TV, the Taliban's five-year rule over at least three quarters of Afghanistan came to an end following the U.S.-led invasion in 2001, but 18 years on, Washington is seeking truce with the militants, who still control large swathes of land.

U.S. forces have remained bogged down in Afghanistan through the presidencies of George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and now Donald Trump.

Indonesia: More than 270 election staff died from fatigue

TEHRAN — Ten days after Indonesia held the world's biggest single-day elections, more than 270 election staff have died, mostly of fatigue-related illnesses caused by long hours of work counting millions of ballot papers by hand, an official said.

The April 17 elections were the first time the country of 260 million people combined the presidential vote with national and regional parliamentary ones, with an aim to cut costs.

Voting was largely peaceful and was estimated to have drawn 80 percent of the total 193 million voters, each of whom had to punch up to five ballot papers in more than 800,000 polling stations.

As of Saturday night, 272 election officials had died, mostly from overwork-related illnesses, while 1,878 others had fallen ill, Arief Priyo Susanto, spokesman of the General Elections Commission (KPU), told Reuters news agency on Sunday.

The health ministry issued a circular letter on April 23 urging health facilities to offer the utmost care to sick election staff, while the finance ministry is working on compensation for families of the deceased, Susanto added.

The KPU has come under fire because of the rising vote-count death toll.

"The KPU is not prudent in managing the workload of staff," said Ahmad Muzani, deputy chairman of the campaign of opposition presidential candidate Pra-



bowo Subianto, reported by news website Kumparan.com.

Prabowo, who independent pollsters said had lost the 2019 polls based on quick counts, has alleged widespread cheating and his campaign claimed some officials punched ballots in favour of incumbent President Joko Widodo.

According to al Jazeera, Widodo's security minister said the allegations were baseless.

Both candidates have declared victory, though quick counts suggested Widodo won the election by about 9-10 percentage points.

The KPU will conclude vote counting and announce winners of the presidential and parliamentary elections on May 22.

Suspected UAE spy held in Turkey commits suicide

TEHRAN — One of the two suspected UAE spies detained by Turkey earlier this month has committed suicide, Turkey's media outlets said on Monday.

The detainee committed suicide in Silivri prison on the outskirts of Istanbul, they said. A source within Turkey's Justice Ministry also confirmed the report.

The two suspects were arrested in Istanbul on April 15 as part of a counter-intelligence investigation.

The pair confessed to spying on Arab nationals on behalf of the United Arab Emirates, a senior Turkish official said, adding that Turkey was investigating whether the arrival of one of them could be linked to the murder of Saudi dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi last year.

"We are investigating whether the primary individual's arrival in Turkey was related to the Jamal Khashoggi murder," the official said, adding the suspect had been monitored for the past six months.

"It is possible that there was an attempt to collect information about Arabs, including political dissidents, living in Turkey,"

Khashoggi — a prominent critic of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman — was killed and his body was dismembered by a Saudi hit squad after being lured into the consulate in Istanbul on October 2, 2018.

Turkey, which said it was in possession of audio evidence of Khashoggi's murder soon after he failed to exit the consulate, has



indirectly suggested that bin Salman ordered his killing.

The Washington Post, for which Khashoggi was a columnist, reported in November last year that the CIA had also concluded that bin Salman ordered his killing.

After weeks of outright denial, the Riyadh regime eventually acknowledged the murder but has attempted since to shift the blame to bin Salman's underlings and away from the prince himself.

International suspicion, however, remains largely directed at the heir to the Saudi throne.

Ankara has demanded that Riyadh extradite the suspects in the case to stand trial in Turkey. Saudi Arabia has refused to do so.

Spain election: Socialist PSOE wins but no clear majority

he governing Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) has won the country's general election with 123 seats after 99.9 percent of the votes were counted.

PSOE's historical centre-right rival, the People's Party (PP), won 66 seats in Sunday's election in Spain.

Speaking to supporters in Madrid, PSOE leader and Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said "the future has won" after his party won about 30 percent of the vote. Turnout was about 75 percent.

Supporters chanted "With Rivera, no!" at the rally, referring to Albert Rivera, the leader of Citizens, a party that considers itself centrist but allied with PP and Vox, leading to further criticism that it is far right.

PP won 66 seats, a decrease of 71 seats from the previous government.

PP leader Pablo Casado told supporters on Sunday evening that the party will "continue to lead the opposition and the centre-right" of Spain.



Citizens won 57 seats, a gain of 25, while Vox made historic gains with 24 seats representing the far right's return to Spanish national politics.

Sanchez announced that he would soon open talks with other political parties to form a coalition.

■ Catalan question

In Catalonia, which has its own language, voters turned out beyond expectations.

The Catalan Republican Left (ERC) - headed by Oriol Junqueras, who is facing trial on charges of sedition, rebellion and embezzlement of public funds over a 2017 referendum on Catalan independence - is projected to win 13 or 14 seats.

That number is unprecedented for the Catalan nationalist party. If ERC agrees to a coalition with PSOE and UP, a government could likely be formed.

However, PSOE leader Pedro Sanchez has taken a tough stance against Catalan independence, saying there would be "no referendum and no independence" during a rally in Barcelona on Friday.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

U.S. warships pass through strategic Taiwan Strait amid tensions with China

TEHRAN — The U.S. military has once again sent warships through the Strait of Taiwan despite China's repeated calls for Washington to refrain from such military moves — one of the several sources of tension in bilateral ties.

Two Arleigh Burke-class destroyers, namely USS Stethem (DDG-63) and USS William P. Lawrence (DDG-110), sailed through the 180-km-wide Taiwan Strait, which separates the self-ruled island from mainland China, on Sunday.

"The ships' transit through the Taiwan Strait demonstrates the U.S. commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific," Commander Clay Doss, a spokesman for the U.S. Navy's Seventh Fleet, said in a statement.

Doss further stated that there were

no unsafe or unprofessional interactions with other countries' vessels during the transit.

According to Press TV, there has been no immediate comment from China, but it usually responds to such measures with anger. Beijing urged other countries last week to refrain from using free and open navigation as a pretext to infringe upon the rights of others.

China's Navy chief Shen Jinlong said on Wednesday that freedom of navigation was a widely recognized concept that should not be misused, in what was interpreted as a clear warning to the United States, which routinely sails warships to and flies warplanes over the territories claimed by China but disputed by other regional countries.

Erdogan: Turkey will either 'live or die' in confronting foreign powers

TEHRAN — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan says Turkey will not surrender to economic terrorism of "foreign powers", vowing to confront "those who are plotting against our people".

"Though challenges we face have reminded us that we should never give up on our ambition to build a big and strong Turkey," Erdogan told a gathering of his ruling AK party in Ankara Sunday.

"We have seen once again that we will either live or die. There is no other way," he added.

The Turkish economy, Erdogan said, has been under attack by foreign powers since the anti-government demonstrations in 2013.

"Economy and security will take priority in the upcoming period. Our economy has

been a target in the past six years," he said.

At least eight people were killed and thousands more injured in demonstrations which followed the announcement of a controversial plan to redevelop a park in central Istanbul back in 2013.

According to Press TV, Erdogan said an attempted coup in July 2016, which Ankara says was orchestrated by U.S.-based opposition cleric Fethullah Gulen, "was also a move to sabotage our economy."

"We believe these dark clouds will dissipate as we take necessary steps to relieve our citizens," Erdogan said.

Turkey has been the target of U.S. sanctions since last summer, when Washington imposed heavy tariffs on imports from the country.

Saudis destabilizing Middle East, paying for U.S.-Israeli crimes: Hezbollah

1→ "Saudi Arabia committed a massacre by executing a number of its citizens without a fair trial and through false confessions. The individuals were charged only because of expressing their views and speaking truth. This is only part of the crimes the Al Saud regime, which has also killed (Shia cleric) Sheikh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr and (renowned journalist) Jamal Khashoggi, and destroyed life in Yemen for more than four years without being penalized," the senior Hezbollah official pointed out.



"The Al Saud is the one who destroyed Syria, introduced (the radical ideology of) Wahhabism, dispatched al-Qaeda, Nusra and their terrorist allies to Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and elsewhere in the Middle East region, and provoked sectarian strife. They are the ones who are sabotaging Libya, Sudan and Algeria. This regime is preventing stability in the region," Qassim commented.

He highlighted that Riyadh has the least respect for the standards of human rights and grossly distorts Islamic teachings.

Global military spending at new post-Cold War high

TEHRAN — Global military expenditure reached its highest level last year since the end of the Cold War, fueled by increased spending in the United States and China, the world's two biggest economies, a leading defense think-tank said on Monday.

In its annual report, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) said overall global military spending in 2018 hit \$1.82 trillion, up 2.6 percent on the previous year.

That is the highest figure since 1988, when such data first became available as the Cold War began winding down.

According to Reuters, U.S. military spending rose 4.6 percent last year to reach \$649 billion, leaving it still by far the world's biggest spender. It accounted for 36 percent of total global military expenditure, nearly equal to the following eight biggest-spending countries combined, SIPRI said.

China, the second biggest spender, saw military expenditure rise 5.0 percent to \$250 billion last year, the 24th consecutive annual increase.

"In 2018 the USA and China accounted for half of the world's military spending," Nan Tian, a researcher with the SIPRI Arms and Military Expenditure (AMEX) program, said.

Sri Lanka on alert for attacks as archbishop slams poor church security

TEHRAN — Sri Lankan security officials have warned that extremist militants behind Easter Sunday's suicide bombings are planning attacks and could be dressed in uniform, as the archbishop of Colombo complained about insufficient security around churches.

The militants were targeting five locations for attacks on Sunday just passed or on Monday, security sources said.

"There could be another wave of attacks," the head of the police ministerial security division (MSD) said in a letter to lawmakers and other officials seen by Reuters on Monday.

"The relevant information further notes that persons dressed in military uniforms and using a van could be involved in the attacks."

According to Reuters, there were no attacks on Sunday and security across Buddhist-majority Sri Lanka has been ramped up, with scores of suspected arrested since the April 21 attacks on hotels and churches that killed more than 250 people, including 40 foreign nationals.

U.S. warships pass through strategic Taiwan Strait amid tensions with China

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Alanyaspor bus crash: Josef Sural killed on bus journey back from Kayserispor

Czech international striker Josef Sural has been killed after a bus carrying several of Turkish club Aytemiz Alanyaspor's players crashed. Sural, 28, died at the hospital where he and six of his team-mates were taken after a bus carrying them back from a game at Kayserispor crashed on Sunday.

Ex-Cardiff and QPR defender Steven Caulker was on the bus and is unharmed physically but emotionally distraught.

Chairman Hasan Cavusoglu claimed the driver had fallen asleep at the wheel.

A second on-board driver was also reportedly asleep when the accident happened around three miles from the club's home city of Alanya. Cavusoglu said the six players other than Sural were not in a critical condition.

Seven of the Super Lig's club's players had rented the private minibus, while the rest of the club's players and staff travelled on a team bus or on their own.

On Twitter, the club posted: "We have learned with deep sorrow that Josef Sural lost his life as a result of an accident carrying seven football players from Alanyaspor."

Ex-Newcastle striker Papiss Cisse also plays for Alanyaspor but it is not known whether he was on board.

Sural joined Alanyaspor from Sparta Prague in January.

He made 20 appearances for his country, last featuring in their Nations League defeat by Ukraine in October.

The Football Association of the Czech Republic said news of Sural's death brought "great sorrow", adding: "We will never forget you."

(Source: BBC)

Wenger hails Leeds' Bielsa for sportsmanship in Villa draw

Leeds United manager Marcelo Bielsa's sportsmanlike decision to allow Aston Villa to score unopposed in Sunday's 1-1 draw is all the more remarkable given what is at stake for the Championship club, former Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger has said.

Leeds, who are looking to secure promotion to the Premier League, netted the opener through Mateusz Klich in controversial circumstances as Villa's Jonathan Kodjia lay injured on the pitch, sparking a melee.

Villa's Anwar Al Ghazi was sent off for his role in the ensuing protests after which Bielsa asked his players to allow the visitors to score unchallenged when the game was restarted.

"It is a remarkable gesture. They are playing to come up to the Premier League and there is something at stake... the whole world has to watch that," Wenger, who left Arsenal in May last year after 22 years in charge, told beIN Sports.

The draw meant that second-placed Sheffield United joined leaders Norwich City in earning promotion to the top flight while third-placed Leeds' hopes lie in winning the Championship play-offs, with West Bromwich Albion and Villa also involved.

The fourth and final spot is yet to be decided with Derby County, Middlesbrough and Bristol City all in contention.

Wenger said Villa had erred by taking their foot off the gas with a player down injured and expecting Leeds to kick the ball out of play. "Only the referee can stop the game. Villa should not have stopped to play. Leeds took advantage of it and that is where they were guilty," the Frenchman added.

"It is a kind of fair play that is usually on the football pitch. Only the ref can stop the game but it is remarkable from Bielsa."

(Source: Mirror)

Fans attempt to mug Napoli's Ounas after match

Napoli midfielder Adam Ounas suffered a cut knee during an attempted mugging following his side's 2-0 victory away at Frosinone.

Ounas was reportedly approached by a group of Frosinone supporters outside the Benito Stirpe stadium, who unsuccessfully attempted to steal his bag.

"Thanks to everyone for your messages, but everything is OK," the 22-year-old wrote on Instagram. "I got my bag back."

The comment was posted as an Instagram story, along with a picture of his recuperated bag and a patch covering his right knee.

The episode capped off a difficult day for Napoli's players after forward Jose Callejon saw his shirt thrown back at him after he offered to give it to a supporter at the end of the game.

Napoli are almost certain to finish the season in second place with Inter eight points behind them in third with four matches remaining. However, their points total of 70 is 21 fewer than they reached under Maurizio Sarri in the previous campaign, while they suffered disappointing, early exits in the Champions League, Europa League and Coppa Italia.

(Source: ESPN)

Onuoha rejects Ibra's 'unacceptable' apology

Nedum Onuoha has rejected an apology from striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic after the two players clashed during La Galaxy's 2-1 win over Real Salt Lake on Sunday.

Ibrahimovic, who scored the winning goal late on, received a yellow card after 60 minutes for grabbing the former Manchester City defender and throwing him to the floor, sparking a fiery confrontation. After the match, the players continued the argument in the dressing room and Onuoha later confirmed that he wasn't willing to make amends with the Swedish forward.

"He came in to apologize after the game, because from 60 minutes in, he's saying to me he's going to do me, he's going to hurt me for that game," Onuoha told reporters. "And this is the guy who's the face of MLS, as he calls himself, but this is the way he plays on the field."

"So I don't care. Someone comes in and tries to do that to me -- you don't say that on the field. I don't care. I'm not going to accept his apology. It's unacceptable."

(Source: Soccernet)

How Ajax young guns upset Champions League rich boys



He's still only 19, but Matthijs de Ligt has already experienced more big football moments than most top-level professionals can hope for in their entire career.

He became the youngest ever captain in a Champions League knockout game when Ajax dispatched Real Madrid in March, following that milestone with a quarterfinal winning goal against Juventus a few weeks later.

Yet what Ajax and de Ligt would achieve should it beat Tottenham in the forthcoming Champions League semifinal would surpass anything the young Dutchman has managed thus far.

In the era of the mega-rich superclubs -- many the play things of billionaires, oligarchs, petro states and distant investors -- that pay eye-watering wages and transfer fees, Ajax has bucked the trend in reaching the latter stages of the Champions League by sticking to its core identity and promoting youth like the impressive de Ligt.

It is now just two games from the final, a run that will provide a welcome boost to the club's coffers. In last season's tournament, organizers UEFA distributed over \$1.5 billion to clubs participating in the competition. Winners Real earned nearly \$100 million, while semifinalists Bayern and Roma respectively took home \$81 million and \$96 million.

■ Creating legends

Not only has Ajax outplayed the reigning champion Real and the much fancied Ju-

ventus, which contains Cristiano Ronaldo in its ranks, but it has played more games and traveled considerably further than any of the teams remaining in the competition.

To put the scale of Ajax's achievement into perspective, the club started its Champions League campaign in July, just 10 days after the 2018 World Cup final, and almost two months before the other semifinalists -- Tottenham Hotspur, Barcelona and Liverpool -- played their first games in the group stages.

Ajax's wage bill is also a fraction of most clubs it has competed against in the Champi-

Mercedes success is boring, says Sebastian Vettel



Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel says Mercedes consistent success in Formula 1 is "boring".

The world champions have taken one-two finishes in the first four races of 2019 - after winning the past five drivers' and constructors' titles.

"Boring, isn't it?" Vettel said. "So boring. It's not just four races. It has been four years, more or less."

But the German, 31, believes Ferrari have the potential to challenge Mercedes this year. "[We have to] work harder, work better. We are pushing as hard as we can," Vettel, who won four consecutive titles with Red Bull from 2010 to 2013, said.

"But you need to respect that they are doing phenomenally well and getting their cars most of the time in the right place."

"But I'm confident. I believe in this team and I know we can improve. I think we have a good car. We just haven't manage yet to put it always where it belongs, so it is difficult to have the trust and the feel, but I am sure it is going to turn around."

Vettel said Ferrari were knew they had a quick car but were struggling to get the best out of it.

"It's like a Rubik's Cube," he said. "We just need to solve it. We have a lot of people who can do the Rubik's Cube in a couple

of minutes. We have really clever people but we are working on a large-size Rubik's Cube."

Team boss Mattia Binotto added: "Obviously four races into the season, no win for Ferrari, four wins for Mercedes, no doubt they are very strong."

"Certainly they have got a slightly better car, but I think that the gap is not so big and the points are not reflecting the true potential of the cars."

Binotto pointed to the pace shown by Ferrari's other driver Charles Leclerc, who dominated in Azerbaijan at the weekend until crashing in second qualifying on Saturday, as evidence of the team's potential.

"With Charles, we [had] the potential for pole, and if you've got a car fast enough to score potentially the pole, you've got a good car overall," he said.

Leclerc also lost out on a potential win after dominating in Bahrain, at the second race of the season, when he suffered an engine problem that dropped him from the lead to third in the closing laps.

The 21-year-old, who finished fifth in Baku on Sunday after starting eighth on the grid, said: "The performance was there to do pole position but it was my mistake."

(Source: BBC)

Liverpool's Van Dijk wins PFA player of year award



Liverpool center-back Virgil van Dijk was named as England's PFA Player of the Year for 2019 on Sunday.

Van Dijk succeeded Liverpool teammate Mohamed Salah in winning the award, voted for by his fellow players and saw off competition from Manchester City striker Raheem Sterling. But Sterling, 24, was named the Professional Footballers' Association Young Player of the Year, following on from City colleague Leroy Sane.

Van Dijk joined Liverpool from Southampton for £75 million (\$97 million, 87 million euros) in January 2018.

The 27-year-old Dutchman has been an ever-present for Liverpool in their bid to dethrone City as Premier League champions this season, with Sterling's side one point clear of the Reds at the top of the table with just two games left to play.

Van Dijk has starred in a hugely improved Liverpool defence that has kept 20 clean sheets and conceded a mere 20 goals in the current campaign.

"It's pretty difficult to put into words," said Van Dijk, the first defender to win the award since Chelsea's John Terry 14 years ago.

"I think it's the highest honor you can get as a player to get voted player of the year by the players you play against every week."

than purchase them.

After a number of barren years -- this season marked the first time Ajax had progressed from the Champions League group stage since 2006 -- a fresh batch of superstars has once again come through the famed Ajax "De Toekomst" academy.

The Egyptian striker, Mido, who starred for both Ajax and Tottenham during his 13-year playing career told CNN that the Ajax secret is how they teach young players "to be brave" while giving them the belief that they belong at the highest level. A high degree of technical competence is also instilled in all young players that come through the Ajax system.

A challenge the Dutch club always faces, however, is losing the gems it hones to wealthier rivals from Europe's bigger leagues. Mido speaks of his own experience when the team he starred in -- which featured the likes of Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Rafael van der Vaart, Christian Chivu, Nigel de Jong, Steven Pienaar and Maxwell -- was broken up.

It looks likely that a number of the current Ajax team could move on come the end of the season. Midfielder Frenkie de Jong has already agreed to join Barcelona while a number of major clubs are rumored to be interested in de Ligt.

If it does not win the Champions League, Ajax is also likely to face another lengthy run of qualifiers just to reach the group stage.

(Source: CNN)

Premier League top-four contenders limp towards line

Tottenham, Chelsea, Arsenal and Manchester United all failed to muster a win for the second consecutive Premier League weekend as the contenders for a place in next season's Champions League stumble towards the finish line.

Spurs, in third place behind runaway pacesetters Manchester City and Liverpool, are best-placed to secure a fourth straight season of Champions League football.

Their 1-0 win over Brighton on Tuesday is the only time in the past 10 games involving the four sides that one of them has won.

Chelsea are in pole position for fourth, two points ahead of Arsenal, with United's chances now looking slim -- they are a point behind Arsenal with a significantly inferior goal difference.

■ Tottenham - 70 points

A first defeat at the club's new stadium, against West Ham on Saturday, means Spurs have now lost 12 times in the league this season.

Yet it has still been a campaign of overachievement by Mauricio Pochettino's men.

Despite not signing a single player, spending most of the season at their temporary home of Wembley, and losing talismanic striker Harry Kane for two prolonged spells through injury, Spurs are still the best of the rest in the Premier League behind City and Liverpool and have reached the Champions League semi-finals.

"The stress and the fatigue arrived, We are competing with circumstances that are not the best," admitted Pochettino after a sixth defeat in 10 league games.



Spurs' skeleton squad have understandably ran out of gas, but thanks to the profligacy of their rivals, one more win from their final two games against Bournemouth and Everton will guarantee much-needed Champions League cash again next season.

■ Chelsea - 68 points

Maurizio Sarri launched an uncharacteristically staunch defence of his first season in charge at Stamford Bridge after a 1-1 draw away to United on Sunday consolidated his side's place in the top four.

"We played the final in the League Cup, we are fighting for the top four, we are in the semi-finals of the Europa League. I think we have done a good season."

Sarri has had his troubles this season. He publicly criticised

his players' mentality followed capitulations on the road at Arsenal, Bournemouth and Everton, while his demand for the loan signing of Gonzalo Higuain in January has reaped precious little reward.

■ Arsenal - 66 points

Much of the good work done by Unai Emery over nine months to rebuild the Gunners in the first season since Arsene Wenger's departure has come undone over three defeats to Crystal Palace, Wolves and Leicester in eight days.

The defensive issues that dogged Wenger's final years in charge still need to be resolved, while Emery constantly chops and changes his formation and personnel in midfield and attack.

A three-time Europa League winner with Sevilla, that competition may now prove Arsenal's best route back to the Champions League but a tough tie against Emery's old side Valencia awaits in the semi-finals.

■ Manchester United - 65 points

Despite a run of seven defeats in nine games, United remarkably still had a good chance of hauling themselves into the top four had they held onto an early lead against Chelsea on Sunday.

However, United's current malaise is personified by a dramatic dip in form for goalkeeper David de Gea, who has so often been his side's saviour in recent seasons.

A trip to hapless Huddersfield and Cardiff's visit to Old Trafford on the final day of the season at least offer an excellent chance to lift the mood heading into the summer.

(Source: AFP)

Croatia Olympic chief Zlatko Mateša meets Iranian top sports officials

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — The Croatian Olympic Committee (COC) President Zlatko Mateša is in Iran to meet the Iranian top sport officials.

In a meeting held in the National Olympic Committee of Iran headquarters, the two committees inked a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to boost sports cooperation between two countries.

Mateša was warmly welcomed by Iran NOC President Reza Salehi Amiri in the meeting and they predicted a bright future for sports cooperation between two parties.

Mateša also held a meeting with Iranian Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Masoud Soltanifar.

During the visit, the COC President awarded Luka Modric No. 10 jersey to Soltanifar.

"We look forward to deepening cooperation and building stronger ties between Iran and Croatia. Iran can help Croatia in sports including weightlifting, taekwondo, wrestling, karate and wushu and Croatia is sporting powerhouse in athletic, gymnastic, swimming and water polo. We have to promote the exchange of programs, experiences, skills, and knowledge to support our athletes," Soltanifar said.

Mateša also said Croatia is looking forward to further strengthen the bilateral cooperation with Iran.

"We are here to boost sports collaboration between two countries. We can exchange coaches and athletes and hold seminars in sports education. Branko Ivankovic (Persepolis coach) is one of the popular sports characters in Croatia and we are happy there is a connection between two nations by football," he said.

Zlatko Mateša also met the Iranian handball and basketball federations' presidents and signed MoU with them to boost cooperation in these sports.



Farhad Majidi appointed Esteghlal coach



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Farhad Majidi has been named as new head coach of Esteghlal football team on Monday until the end of the season.

Majidi, 42, will lead the Iranian Blues in the remaining third matches in Iran Professional League (IPL) and two matches in the 2019 AFC Champions League group stage against Qatar's Al Duhail and Al Ain of the UAE.

Majidi started his coaching career as assistant in Esteghlal in early January.

The former Rapid Wien striker replaced German coach Winfried Schäfer in Esteghlal.

Esteghlal have little chance of winning

the IPL title after suffering a defeat against Padideh in Mashhad Saturday night, which left them in the third place, six points behind leaders Persepolis.

The Tehran based football team also have a difficult task to book a place in the ACL knock out stage, as they sit bottom of the table of Group C with just four points from four matches.

Al Hilal have nine points at the top while Al Duhail sit second with seven points.

Majidi, who is a fan favourite at the club, gets his first test against Esteghlal Khuzestan in domestic action on Wednesday and will face Al Duhail in the 2019 AFC Champions League on Matchday Five.

Dick Advocaat linked with Iran job: report



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Veteran Dutch coach Dick Advocaat is the latest big name to be linked with the Iran job.

According to Scottish newspaper The Sunday Post, Iranian football federation want to take the 71-year-old as their national coach when he stands down from his role as FC Utrecht head coach in June.

The Dutch also is in the frame to succeed Alex McLeish as Scotland coach, who was sacked earlier this month.

Advocaat was successful as a football player and as a coach, including three stints with the Netherlands national team.

He has coached a number of clubs in the Netherlands and abroad (including the Russian club Zenit Saint Petersburg, with which he won the 2008 UEFA Cup Final), as well as the national teams of a number of countries, including South Korea, Belgium and Russia.

Iran are without coach after parting ways with Carlos Queiroz in late January.

The Portuguese coach stood down after nearly eight years as Team Melli coach following his team's 3-0 loss to Japan in the semi-finals of the Asian Cup.

Morocco French coach Herve Renard also is a candidate to take charge of Iran national football team.

Azmoun brace puts Zenit on verge of Russian title



Zenit St Petersburg moved to within touching distance of a fifth Russian league title on Sunday when Iran international Sardar Azmoun scored twice in a 4-2 win over Samara.

The victory kept Zenit eight points ahead of Lokomotiv Moscow with just four games left to play.

As well as Azmoun's double, Samara skipper Taras Burlak put through his own goal with Igor Smolnikov adding a fourth. Lokomotiv edged Yenisei Krasnoyarsk 2-1 to keep their slim hopes alive with Krasnodar, who beat CSKA Moscow 2-0, in third, three points further back.

Azmoun opened the scoring in the ninth minute, tapping home a cross by Yuri Zhirkov.

In the 30th minute, Azmoun netted his second of the match and 12th of the season to join CSKA's Fyodor Chalov on top of the league scorers chart.

Five minutes later, Artem Dzyuba shot was diverted into his goal by Burlak.

Samara refused to surrender, however, and left winger Denis Tkachuk scored twice within the space of four minutes to make it 3-2 at half-time.

But the visitors' hopes of a shock recovery disappeared in the 78th minute when Ramil Sheidaev was sent off for a second bookable offence.

Smolnikov rounded off the scoring in the first minute of added time to secure Zenit's win.

"It was quite a surprise when Samara scored twice late in the opening period," said Zenit manager Sergei Semak.

"We felt the pressure until Smolnikov scored the fourth goal but nevertheless we won deservedly."

(Source: AFP)

German FA to investigate after Dortmund's Sancho hit by lighter

The German FA (DFB) has told ESPN FC that it has opened an investigation after Borussia Dortmund's Jadon Sancho was hit by a lighter thrown from the stands during the 4-2 home defeat to Schalke on Saturday.

England international Sancho and his teammates were celebrating near the travelling Schalke fans after BVB took a 14th-minute lead when he was hit and needed treatment for a minor head injury.

Dortmund police have filed charges against an "unknown perpetrator who threw a lighter at Jadon Sancho from Schalke's stand," authorities told

ESPN FC.

As Sancho was being treated Schalke began a move that ended with them being awarded a penalty by a VAR review, but Dortmund have said they will not appeal against the result.

The DFB is now set to punish Schalke for the behavior of their fans, who displayed a banner calling for the release of Sergei W. the man sentenced to prison for the bomb attack on Dortmund's team bus in 2017, and also used pyrotechnics.

Former Dortmund player Marc Bartra, injured in the bus attack, called the banner "intolerable" on Twitter, writing: "Rivalry might be one thing,



but demanding freedom for someone who tried to take the life of 28 people is another thing."

Schalke have apologized for the "distasteful display," telling ESPN FC

they "reserve the right to take further steps against those displaying the banner."

Dortmund fans are also under scrutiny for a banner with an anti-gay slogan directed at Schalke fans, while both clubs could face consequences after supporters clashed following the final whistle.

Meanwhile, the DFB has banned Dortmund captain Marco Reus for two games following his red card on Saturday.

Germany international Reus, sent off for a challenge on Suat Serdar, will return for the final match of the season, right-back Marius Wolf, sent off moments later, was given a three-match ban.

(Source: ESPN)

Violence in Iranian football needs to stop

1 -> To prevent the recurrence of such incidents, there is a need to take it seriously. Coordinated measures by federation of football, government, security authorities and football clubs might be useful. Weak security procedures and ineffective management have paved the way for violence.

English football was once plagued with violence between supporters. The English football association introduced new measures to prevent rival fans from conflict. Stadiums were re-designed so that visiting supporters are confined to one area with its own entrance and exit.

New ticketing systems also required English supporters to give their contact details when purchasing tickets. This allowed individual buyers to be traced back to their seats. The new system made it possible for officials to identify potential conflict areas before violence occurred.

In Iran, integrating similar ticketing system would need the government's backing to improve infrastructures in stadiums around Iran. This ranges from sophisticated magnetic scanners to an elaborate camera system.

The clubs themselves should also take responsibility and play an active role in stamping out violence among their supporters.

Violence and abusive language won't disappear overnight. Fundamental steps are needed to eliminate these issues from football little by little.

Minister congratulates wrestling team on championship

IRNA — Minister of Sport and Youth Masoud Soltanifar in a message congratulated championship of Iran's Greco-Roman wrestling team.

The message reads that congratulations to the Iranian brave men who greeted the Iranian nation with honor, dignity and joy in this sensitive juncture as well as to the Iranian dignified people whose children hoisted the Iranian flag with an exemplified bravery. "I appreciate the national team, technical staff and members of the wrestling federation and wish them dignity and good health," Soltanifar said.

Iranian wrestlers gained four gold medals and three bronze ones to crown champion in 2019 Asian Greco-Roman Wrestling Championships in Xi'an, China on Sunday.

Iran had ranked sixth in the previous edition of the competitions.

Trabzonspor to extend Majid Hosseini's contract

TASNIM — Turkish top-flight football club Trabzonspor are going to extend the contract of their Iranian defender Majid Hosseini.

The 23-year-old defender joined the Turkish club on a three-year contract in the summer and received a salary of 500,000 euros for each season.

Now, gazetendamga.com.tr has reported that Trabzonspor have shown interest in extending the defender's contract.

Trabzonspor coach Ünal Karaman is pleased with Hosseini and it was learned that the parties will come together to sign a new contract. It's expected the Turkish club to sign a long-term contract with Hosseini without options.

Cannavaro steps down as China PR head coach

Shanghai: Italian World Cup winner Fabio Cannavaro has resigned as head coach of China PR after just two matches in charge, both 1-0 home defeats.

The 45-year-old Cannavaro made the announcement on social media and said it was to focus on his family and his job as coach of Chinese Super League (CSL) side Guangzhou Evergrande.

"With due respect for China as a great country, I feel it's necessary to announce my decision to give up my position as the Chinese men's coach," Cannavaro wrote on Weibo.

Cannavaro was appointed Marcelo Lippi's successor in mid-March. Fellow Italian Lippi stepped down after the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019 where China PR's campaign ended in the quarter-finals following a 3-0 defeat to Islamic Republic of Iran.

(Source: AFP)

FIBA U16 Americas Championships 2019 Official Draws set for Tuesday

The International Basketball Federation of the Americas (FIBA Americas) announced that the Official Draws of the FIBA U16 Americas Championship 2019 and the FIBA U16 Americas Women's Championship 2019 are set for April 30.

The Casa Olimpica of Puerto Rico in San Juan will host the ceremonies. The Draws will be made available on FIBA's YouTube channel and the official website of both events.

The FIBA U16 Americas Championship 2019 will be played June 3-9 in Belem, Brazil and will feature Argentina, Canada, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Uruguay, USA and host Brazil.

The pairs of the FIBA U16 Americas Championship 2019 Official Draw are:

1. USA - Canada
2. Mexico - Uruguay
3. Puerto Rico - Argentina
4. Brazil - Dominican Republic

The FIBA U16 Americas Women's Championship 2019 will be played June 16-22 in Aysen, Chile and will feature Brazil, Canada, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Puerto Rico, USA and host Chile.

The pairs for the FIBA U16 Americas Women's Championship 2019 Official Draw are:

1. USA - Canada
2. Brazil - Mexico
3. Ecuador - El Salvador
4. Chile - Puerto Rico

The top four teams from each continental championship will qualify to the FIBA U17 Basketball World Cup 2020.

(source: Fiba)

INTERNATIONAL DAILY

www.tehrantimes.com

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» Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603

» www.eshterak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co.
Tel: 88911433

» Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com

» Printed at: Hamshahri No. 3 - ISSN: 1017-94

Tehrantimes79

Tehrantimesdaily

No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran
P.O. Box: 14155-4843
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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

To redress the wrong of the oppressed and to gladden the hearts of the sorrowful is the best expiation of great sins.

Imam Ali (AS)

Leader urges culture ministry to produce quality books for younger generation

A R T **TEHRAN** — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei urged the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance to put out quality books for the younger generation.



Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei visits the 32nd Tehran International Book Fair on April 29, 2019. (Leader.ir)

He made the remarks in a visit to the 32nd Tehran International Book Fair on Monday.

“The culture ministry should try to put out good books with valuable materials for the younger generation,” said Ayatollah Khamenei who was accompanied by Culture Minister Seyyed Abbas Salehi.

“We should not be concerned over the distortion of information by the West about freedom of expression in Iran,” he said and added, “Western countries are suffering from censorship of books but they do not want to acknowledge it.”

Ayatollah Khamenei praised Revayate Fat’h Publications for publishing “Farhad’s Footprint”, a biography of a Zoroastrian soldier who was martyred during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

He also expressed his admiration of Ofoq Publications for its books from the world’s classical literature, including Charles Dickens’ “A Tale of Two Cities”.

The Tehran International Book Fair is currently underway at Imam Khomeini Mosalla and will run until May 4.

Iranian choir to highlight Dvorak’s “Requiem” at Tehran concert

A R T **TEHRAN** — The Iran Philharmonic Choir plans to perform Czech composer Antonin Dvorak’s “Requiem” during a concert at Tehran’s Vahdat Hall on Thursday.

“Requiem” is a funeral Mass scored for soloists, choir and orchestra, which was composed in 1890 and performed for the first time on 9 October 1891, in Birmingham, England, with the composer conducting.

Iranian pianist Karen Mehrabian will accompany the 100-person choir during the performance, which will be conducted by Alireza Shafaqinejad.

University of Tehran to honor Georgian Iranologist Grigol Beradze

A R T **TEHRAN** — A number of Iranian and foreign scholars will come together in a session at the University of Tehran on Wednesday to honor Georgian Iranologist Grigol Beradze.



Beradze, who is a lecturer at the Tsereteli Institute of Oriental Studies of Ilia State University in Tbilisi, who is mostly famous for his in-depth studies on the Safavid and Qajar dynasties.

American historian Rudi Matthee, Dutch Iranologist Willem Floor, Georgian scholar George Sanikidze, Georgian Ambassador Ioseb Chakhvashvili and Iranian scholars Rasul Jafarian, Mansur Sefatgol and Gudarz Rashtiani are scheduled to attend the meeting.

Danish film festival to open in Tehran on Wednesday

A R T **TEHRAN** — A Danish film festival will open at the Film Museum of Iran in Tehran on Wednesday.

The festival, which is scheduled to run for four days, will also be organized in the four other Iranian cities of Kashan, Isfahan, Shiraz and Yazd at the same time, the Iranian Youth Cinema Society, the organizer of the program, announced on Sunday.

The festival will be held in collaboration with the Embassy of Denmark in Tehran.

Lotte Svendsen, commissioner for children’s films at the Danish Film Institute, is scheduled to deliver a short speech about the Danish film industry during the opening ceremony of the festival, which will be attended by Danish Ambassador Danny Annan.

The lecture will be followed by screening director Jesper Westerlin Nielsen’s 2016 drama “The Day Will Come”.

Short films “10 Minutes of My Life” by Denmark-based Iranian filmmaker Reza Rezazadeh, “Exit” by Michael Gug Kongshaug and “Whale Valley” by Guomundur Arnar Guomundsson, and the documentary film “The President from the North” by Lars Feldballe-Petersen will be screened in the opening day.

The festival will go on with screening a lineup of six other films, including the documentaries “Big Time” by Kaspar Astrup Schröder and “The Great Game” by Andreas Dalsgaard.

The lineup also includes the animated movie “Circleen, Coco and the Wild Rhinoceros” by Jannik Hastrup and the feature-length films “I Am William” by Jonas Elmer, “Land of Mine” Martin Pieter Zandvliet and “The Shamer’s Daughter” by Kenneth Kainz.



Martin Pieter Zandvliet’s acclaimed war drama “Land of Mine” will be screened during a Danish film festival in Iran.

Gharibpur to restage “Khayyam” opera puppet show in Tehran



A scene from the “Khayyam” opera puppet show by Behruz Gharibpur.

A R T **TEHRAN** — Director Behruz Gharibpur plans to restage the “Khayyam” opera puppet show with his Aran Puppet Theater Group at Tehran’s Ferdowsi Hall on Wednesday.

The puppet show focuses on the life story Omar Khayyam, the Persian mathematician, astronomer and poet who lived during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

Composer Amir Behzad, vocalist Mohammad Motamedi and conductor Farnush Behzad will also collaborate in the puppet opera.

In earlier July 2017, the group

performed the opera puppet at Ferdowsi Hall.

Khayyam, a Persian mathematician, astronomer and poet, was renowned in his own country and in his own lifetime for his scientific achievements, but is chiefly known to English-speaking readers through the translation by the English writer Edward Fitzgerald of a collection of his quatrains in “The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam”.

Gharibpur has previously staged the puppet shows “Hafez”, “Rumi” and “Macbeth”, all of which have been warmly received in Iran and at international events.

World turns out for record “Avengers: Endgame” movie debut

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Fans around the globe packed movie theaters for the debut of “Avengers: Endgame” over the weekend, pushing total ticket sales for the Walt Disney Co superhero spectacle to a stunning \$1.2 billion and crushing records in dozens of countries.

“Endgame” generated an unprecedented \$350 million in the United States and Canada from Thursday night through Sunday, according to Disney estimates. The three-hour action spectacle that revealed the fates of Iron Man, Thor and other popular comic-book heroes also made history in China, Brazil, France, Egypt, South Africa and 38 other markets.

In China, the world’s second-largest movie market, “Endgame” collected \$330.5 million since its debut on Wednesday.

The historic weekend helps put Disney on course for what analysts say looks like an unparalleled year. The company is set to release “The Lion King”, “Toy Story 4” and several other potential blockbusters in the coming months.

“Endgame” is unique because it is the culmination of a story told in 22 Marvel Studios films that have drawn crowds to cinemas for a decade.

Audiences “have proven over and over again that they care about these characters,” said Cathleen Taff, Disney’s head of theatrical distribution. “I think they wanted to see how this epic story resolves itself.”

“Endgame” stars Robert Downey Jr., Chris Hemsworth, Scarlett Johansson and others as a group of superheroes battling the villain Thanos, played by Josh Brolin.

Just days ago, the movie industry was divided on whether “Endgame” had a shot

at hitting \$300 million in the domestic market. The movie blew past that level and landed far above the previous record of \$257.7 million set a year ago by “Avengers: Infinity War.”

That film ended with a cliffhanger in which many heroes appeared to turn to dust, stoking anticipation for “Endgame.”

To meet demand, theaters added show-times and sold out shows at odd hours such as 7 a.m. AMC Entertainment, operators of the world’s largest theater chain, kept some locations open for 72 hours straight to keep running “Endgame”.

Even the lofty estimates from box office prognosticators proved too low.

“What we didn’t count on is that fans would show up happily at three in the morning for a three-hour movie,” said Paul Dergarabedian, senior media analyst at measurement company Comscore. “We are in completely uncharted territory here.”

“Endgame” proved to be a global cultural phenomenon.

A sign at a London subway station urged riders not to talk about the movie’s plot so they would not spoil it for others, according to a photo posted on Twitter by Disney Chief Executive Bob Iger.

Some fans in China paid more than 500 yuan, or \$74.14, for “Endgame” tickets on the gray market, far more than the average 60 yuan average price at cinemas nationwide.

In Hollywood, Susan Macias, 44, watched all 22 Marvel films at the historic El Capitan Theatre in a sold-out marathon that concluded with “Endgame.”

“It was well worth the three days of being in there,” Macias said afterward. “I’m just full of emotions.”

Parisian gallery displays collection by Iranian photographers



A poster for “Iran Photo (Inside & Outside)” in Paris.

A R T **TEHRAN** — A collection composed of works by 20 young Iranian photographers living inside and outside of the country is on display at the gallery of the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris.

Zahra Jahanbakhsh is the curator of the exhibition titled “Iran Photo (Inside & Outside)”.

Ghazal Amidi, Soha Asadi, Sadra Baqeri, Hamed Farhangi, Mohsen Kaboli, Mehdi Moradpur and Sina Shiri are among the participating artists whose works have been selected for the showcase, which will be running until May 7.

In addition, two books by Iranian

photographers, Maryam Zandi and Kaveh Kazemi, are due to be introduced at the gallery on May 3, while selections of high-quality photos will be offered to the visitors.

The two books are “The 1979 Islamic Revolution” by Zandi and “Revolutionaries, the First Decade” by Kazemi.

The event has been organized by the Badguir Association in collaboration with the Embassy of France in Tehran, Asar Gallery and Nazar Publications.

Badguir is an association, which aims to present and promote modern and contemporary artists’ activities from the Middle East and Iran in France and Europe.

As war rages, Tripoli art gallery opens in rundown old city

TRIPOLI (Reuters) — As a new war reached the Libyan capital, businessman Mustafa Iskandar opened an art gallery and cultural center, hoping to draw attention to a long-neglected old city in need of revival.

One of the best preserved in North Africa with monuments going back to the Romans, Tripoli’s old city has been rundown for years, with garbage filling the narrow streets and its ancient white buildings in dire need of repair.

Most Libyans who can afford it have long moved out of the old city to more modern districts of Tripoli, home to 2.5 million. But Iskandar bought a derelict house close to the landmark Roman Mark Aurelius arch, investing one million dinars (\$720,000) to refurbish it as a gathering point for artists.

He sent an invitation to embassies and artists but in the end diplomats did not come, having fled the city as eastern Libyan forces started a campaign to take the capital using ground forces and jets.

It didn’t dampen the enthusiasm of the businessman, who still lives in the old city, a settlement once inhabited by Ottomans and later Italian colonialists, with Muslims, Jews and Christians living for centuries in harmony.

“I want to give a signal for people to come back to the old city where I grew up and still live,” said Iskandar, who works for a Danish firm.

He hung paintings and moved in old furniture collected for years in Europe for his center, which is located next to a hotel that was once bustling with tourists who used to come to Libya until

Muammar Gaddafi was toppled in 2011.

Under Gaddafi, authorities restored a handful of old buildings and were planning a larger rehabilitation project when the 2011 uprising broke out, stopping the work.

Little has happened since then, given the country’s chaos, but officials hope to reopen the national museum housed in the Red Castle from the Ottoman era, closed since 2015 over security concerns.

“We are trying,” said Mohamad Farraj Mohamad, the head of the museum’s antiquities department, when asked whether the museum will open next year after a rehabilitation.

For that, French experts who have been advising Libya on how to improve the exhibition need to be willing to come back once the fighting is over to help as the ancient authority lacks funding and expertise.

In the old city, a group of young people organize walks to explore sites and build ties with the remaining inhabitants, many of which are West African workers or poor Libyans.

Relying on their own funds and donations, they repainted a rundown wall in white, a small start for what they hope will be a rehabilitation in the future.

“We are trying to raise awareness of the heritage of the old city” said Hiba Shalabi, founder of the #SaveTheOldCityofTripoli campaign. “We are building relations with people in old city and look up in archives information about history of houses.”