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File photo

Larijani: Sanctions intended to sow 'international confusion'

TEHRAN — Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani said on Sunday that the U.S. is seeking to sow "international confusion" by taking harsh sanctions measures against Iran.

Larijani also said the U.S. administration's actions against Iran shows that Washington is in a state of "confusion".

The comments by Larijani came two days after the U.S. State Department announced that Washington will not renew two of sanction waivers which allowed Russia and the European nations to do business with Tehran. One of the two waivers allowed Iran to store excess heavy water produced in the uranium enrichment process in Oman. The other one allowed Iran to swap enriched uranium for raw yellowcake with Russia. →2

Zarif: Sanctions are 'economic terrorism'

Iran's foreign minister discusses U.S. sanctions and foreign intervention in the region.

In July 2015, after more than a decade of on-and-off negotiations, world powers reached a nuclear deal with Iran.

Under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, Iran agreed to eliminate its stockpile of enriched uranium and reduce centrifuges. In return, all UN Security Council and multilateral sanctions were lifted.

But not everyone was happy with the deal, including Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who said the deal was a "stunning historic mistake", as well as U.S. Republican presidential candidates at the time.

The campaign against the Iran nuclear deal succeeded when Donald Trump moved into the White House. →2

Israel escalates violence with continued bombardment of Gaza

TEHRAN — A fresh flare-up of violence in the Gaza Strip caused by deadly Israeli airstrikes and retaliatory Palestinian rocket attacks has entered its third day, prompting the United Nations to raise alarm at the "dangerous escalation."

Tensions erupted on Friday following the killing of four Palestinians, two in an Israeli air raid on southern Gaza and two during the regime's live fire at anti-occupation protesters near a fence separating the blockaded coastal enclave from the occupied territories.

The Israeli military claimed that its initial aerial assault had come in response to the wounding of two of its soldiers by Palestinian gunfire near the Gaza fence. →13



PERSPECTIVE

Roohullah Ghasemian
Journalist

Countdown to a full-scale battle in Idlib

Damascus is now ready to take back the Syrian city of Idlib and start moving toward the east of Euphrates River to regain the control of that region as well.

Terrorists who were located on the eastern and western outer limits of Damascus, never thought that Syrian army can regain the control of those parts out of their hands, but the Syrian army drove them out and the same thing will happen in Idlib and eastern parts of Euphrates River.

From some time now, the Syrian army has started dispatching men, weapons and equipment to areas including the city of Idlib, the northern limits of Hama, the west of Aleppo and the north of Latakia, so that it can get back Idlib and other regions in northern Syria.

Meanwhile, the Syrian army has announced that after liberating Idlib, the east of Euphrates River will be their next goal, the area where militants backed by U.S. are currently staying.

The difficulty of Idlib battle, U.S. and allies' military movements

It must be noted that Idlib offensive is not going to be an easy battle and it requires precise and well-organized military operations; on one hand, the most extremist groups from all over the Syria are now ambushed in this area, on the other hand, U.S. and its allies will make their best effort to frustrate the Syrian army.

Despite the difficulty of Idlib battle, and the fact that U.S. and its allies will try their best to block the Syrian army, it is clearly going to be a climactic battle as it can reveal the final outcome. Each side that wins in military domains will also win in political domains. Now, Syrian army, backed by Russian air force is ready for a quick strike to liberate the city of Idlib.

Now, it seems that U.S. is worried that the Syrian army seizes control of these areas because U.S. and its allies used to leverage their influence in such areas to put pressure on Damascus; U.S. is especially worried because Idlib offensive will be the last step in wiping out terrorism from Syria.

With wining the Idlib battle, the militant groups and all their supporter will lose their leverage against Syrian army. →6

Intl. community, Arab world's silence towards Gaza, more deadly than the Israeli attacks

By Fatemeh Salehi

TEHRAN (MNA) — The silence of the international community and the Arab states towards the Zionist regime's attacks on the Gaza Strip is more deadly than the Zionist attacks.

While Zionist brutal attacks against the Gaza Strip have left at least 9 martyrs and dozens injured, Zionist regime continues its brutality against the Palestinians without any concern about the international negative reactions.

?Despite the attacks of the Zionist regime against the various regions of the Gaza Strip, there is not any protest by international community against Tel Aviv's brutal attacks, except some countries or institutions which reacted.

The United Nations has only asked the sides to stop these attacks by expressing a concern about Zionist's attacks. The UN special coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, in a statement, called for restraint and asked all parties to avoid dangerous aggravation of the situation in Gaza and loss of Palestinian's life.

In this regards, UN special coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov said that we call on all parties to reduce tensions immediately and return to an understanding that has existed for several months.

Those who seek to ignore these understandings are responsible for the conflict which will have serious consequences for all parties, he added.

Meanwhile, as usual, the U.S. supported the Zionist regime's brutality again, as the U.S. Foreign Ministry criticized the Palestinian resistance missile against the Zionist airstrikes! U.S. Foreign Ministry asked the cessation of hostilities by issuing a statement without any reference to the sustained attacks of the Zionist regime's fighters against the Gaza Strip.

In the meantime, the silence of the Arab world is, in turn, a significant issue. Although the Arab countries have not been able to take a serious position against the Palestinian issue and the Zionist regime, but the coincidence of this silence with whispers about the announcement of the American plan of "Deal of the Century" after Ramadan shows the readiness of these countries to accompany the occupiers and the White House. →6

Israeli delegation to visit Saudi Arabia next year

TEHRAN- An Israeli delegation is going to pay an official visit to Saudi Arabia next year, amid the oil-rich kingdom's warming ties with the Tel Aviv regime following years of clandestine contacts.

"For the first time, a Jewish delegation will visit Saudi Arabia in response to the Muslim World League invitation, said the Saudi secretary general of the League, Sheikh Muhammad Bin Abdul Karim Issa, who declared the visit will take place in January 2020," Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a post published on its Arabic-language Twitter page.

The report came only a few days after Lebanese daily Arabic-language newspaper al-Akhbar said Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman had reportedly offered Palestinian Authority chief Mahmoud Abbas 10 billion dollars in return for accepting U.S. President Donald Trump's controversial proposal for peace between the Israelis and Palestinians, dubbed "the deal of the century."

according to Press TV, Akhbar noted that Abbas had turned down the offer, saying supporting the deal would be "the end of his political life."

Citing leaked diplomatic reports based on conversations between the two Arab politicians, the paper noted that the reports -- written by the Jordanian envoy to Ramallah, Khaled al-Shawabkeh -- were based on briefings with a number of Palestinian officials.

The Palestinian Authority chief said political realities prevented him from accepting the so-called peace plan, emphasizing that he could not make concessions regarding Israeli settlements, the "two-state solution" and Jerusalem al-Quds.

Abbas also underscored that the Americans would not provide any written proposals, but would adopt a tactic similar to the 1917 Balfour Declaration that led to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories.

Trump's so-called "peace plan" has been dismissed by Palestinian authorities ahead of its unveiling at the end of the holy fasting month of Ramadan and the formation of the new Israeli cabinet, most likely in June.

Speaking in the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah on April 16, Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh lashed out at Trump's initiative, asserting that it was "born dead."

Shtayyeh noted that negotiations with the U.S. were useless in the wake of the country's relocation of its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem al-Quds, which Palestinians consider the capital city of their future state.



IRNA/Ehsan Fazli

Rice cultivation begins in northern Iran

Cultivation of rice has begun in the northern province of Mazandaran.

The photo depicts paddy fields in the city of Sari, capital of Mazandaran.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, rice is the staple food in Iran. The total area under rice is more than 600,000 ha and rice is grown in 15 provinces. However, more than 80 percent of rice area is distributed in the two northern provinces of Mazandaran and Gilan.



REPORT

Ramin Hossein Abadian
Mehr News Agency
journalist

Saudi coalition violating Stockholm Agreement about Yemen

Months after the Stockholm Agreement about Yemen, Saudi Arabia and its allies including United Arab Emirates (UAE) are still continuing their brutal attacks on defenseless Yemeni civilians. Meanwhile, human rights organizations have warned against the sharp deterioration of Yemen security situation.

Over the several months after reaching an agreement about ceasefire in Yemeni city of Al Hudaydah, Saudi regimes and its allies have numerously violated the ceasefire.

However, due to the passivity of United Nations against the ongoing crisis in Yemen, the Saudis have continued committing crimes in the country.

Saudi Arabia's coalition started its brutal attack against the defenseless Yemeni citizens in March 2015; over this period, however, UN has not fulfilled any of its organizational, legal and humanitarian duties to defend Yemeni people and have passively observed the Saudi crimes against innocent civilians.

It seems that UN has decided not to use its authority and jurisdiction to stop the Saudi's mass murders because the country has powerful allies out of the region.

Now that the Saudis have blatantly broken the ceasefire and has completely abandoned the Stockholm Agreement, the UN still passively observes these violations despite its role as the main defender of human rights around the world. This is especially shocking because Stockholm agreement was ratified in UN Security Council.

Despite the media blockage in Yemen, the inside reports from Yemen tell of a humanitarian crisis in the country.

For example, according to the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef), "while Yemen cant receive humanitarian aid, over 11 million Yemeni children suffer from hunger and under-nutrition. Every 10 minute, a Yemeni child die from a preventable disease."

Meanwhile, the Saudis have come up with malicious ideas to get out of this crisis. For example, they have deployed thousands of young Africans in Yemeni city of Aden, so that the belligerent occupying forces, specially the UAE, can use these new forces as a replacement for Sudanese mercenaries. →6

U.S. to grant Iraq waiver to trade with Iran: envoy

POLITICAL desk

TEHRAN — The Iranian ambassador to London has said that the United States is going to grant Iraq waivers to continue trading with Iran.

Quoting unnamed Iraqi sources, Hamid Baidinejad wrote on Twitter on Sunday that the U.S. has set a condition for Iraq to issue the waivers.



According to Baidinejad, the waivers will be granted if the Iraqi government signs a deal with the American energy giant ExxonMobil by mid-June.

In the meantime Iraq has been pushing for new economic ties with the United States.

Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi has held a phone conversation with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo over boosting bilateral ties and cooperation in various field, as well as Iraq's desire to transfer American technology into Iraq.

A statement issued Saturday by his office said that Abdul Mahdi received a phone call from Pompeo in which he "stressed the importance of boosting cooperation between the two friendly countries and deepening economic relations."

Abdul Mahdi expressed his country's "desire to transfer American technology and expertise into Iraq to create job opportunities and develop its vital sectors," the statement said.

Abdul Mahdi also affirmed the importance of boosting efforts by the two sides to resolve "the final negotiations and the signing of the (One Package) project with the U.S. ExxonMobil company to develop the Iraqi energy sector," the statement said without giving further details about the project.

During the phone call, Abdul Mahdi reviewed the results of his European tour, which included Germany and France, as well as discussing other important files of common interests, it said.

Abdul Mahdi returned Friday to Baghdad from his European tour, during which he visited France and Germany and signed cooperation agreements, including the signing of a roadmap deal valued around 14 billion dollars of contracts in total with Germany's Siemens to rebuild Iraq's electricity infrastructure following years of war.

European parties to JCPOA condemn U.S. disloyalty

POLITICAL desk

TEHRAN – The European signatories to the 2015 Iran deal have censured recent decisions by the United States to stop sanctions waivers for Iran's oil exports and to impose restrictions on the country's exports of enriched uranium.

"We ... take note with regret and concern of the decision by the United States not to extend waivers with regards to trade in oil with Iran," Britain's Foreign Office said in a joint statement with its German and French counterparts and the European Union (EU) on Saturday, according to the New York Times.



"We also note with concern the decision by the United States not to fully renew waivers for nuclear non-proliferation projects," Britain's Foreign Office added.

The U.S. State Department announced in statement issued on Friday that "Iran must stop all proliferation-sensitive activities, including uranium enrichment, and we will not accept actions that support the continuation of such enrichment."

Under Iran's 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Tehran is limited to keeping 300 kilograms of uranium enriched up to 3.67 percent. As part of the JCPOA, Iran is allowed to sell any enriched uranium above that threshold on international markets in exchange for natural uranium, with Russia a key player.

On May 8, 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump announced that he would abandon the JCPOA, reached between Iran and six world powers – the U.S., the UK, France, Russia, China and Germany.

Under the JCPOA, Iran agreed to limit parts of its peaceful nuclear program in exchange for the removal of all nuclear-related sanctions.

Washington's new decision to restrict Iran's enriched uranium exports came after the Trump administration said in a statement on April 22 that, in a bid to reduce Iran's oil exports to zero, buyers of Iranian oil must stop purchases by May 1 or face sanctions.

The move ended six months of waivers, which allowed Iran's eight biggest buyers -- Turkey, China, Greece, India, Italy, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan -- to continue importing limited volumes.

Larijani: Sanctions intended to sow 'international confusion'

1 → Larijani said since the U.S. moves in designating the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) as terrorist organization and reducing Iran's oil sale by zero have reached nowhere, it decided not to extend two other sanctions waivers.

'Psychological operation on Iran'

Larijani went on to say that there is no limit for unreasonable remarks by U.S. officials, calling U.S. sanctions against Iran as part of a psychological warfare.

"There is no end to the U.S. officials' illogical comments. They are involved in psychological operation instead of politics," he said at an open session of parliament.

President Hassan Rouhani also said on Saturday that the U.S. has launched "war on hope" by tightening sanctions measures against Iran.

"They seek to break our hope but we should break their hope," he said during a speech marking Teacher's Day.

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.

Talks with U.S. will lead to more pressure on Iran: interior minister

POLITICAL desk

TEHRAN — Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli said on Sunday that in the current situation, talks with the U.S. will lead to more pressure on Iran.

"We should boost resistance. They should come to the conclusion that they have no other way but to get along with us. They put pressure on us through oil, assuming that they can reduce oil sale to zero. However, the Islamic Republic of Iran will stand against them," he said during a conference.

He noted that Iran will not negotiate with the U.S. given its "cruel pressure" and violation of the 2015 nuclear deal.

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 said.

Also, in remarks on August 13, 2018, Leader



of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said there will be no 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."

Rouhani said in September 2018 that the Trump administration constantly sends messages to Iran to begin negotiations.

"From one side, they put pressure against the Iranian people and on the other side they send us messages through various methods that we should come and negotiate together," he said.

Iranian Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani said on April 29 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.

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. In November the U.S. allowed sanctions waivers for countries such as China, India and Turkey to continue importing oil from Iran, however it announced on April 22 that if any country buys oil from Iran it will be sanctioned.

Larijani said Iran sat at the negotiating table for 12 years that finally produced the nuclear deal, officially known as the JCPOA, but Trump revoked it.

Russia vows to continue cooperation with Iran despite sanctions

By staff and agency

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov has said that Moscow will continue cooperation with Iran, including in the nuclear field, despite the U.S. sanctions.

"No threat of new sanctions will stop our legitimate and mutually beneficial cooperation with Iran. We have been living under U.S. anti-Russia sanctions since 2012. It is clear that over this period there has been a serious adaptation to this illegal trick by the United States," he told Sputnik on Saturday.

Iran has an even bigger experience on how to live under the U.S. sanctions, he added.

"Therefore, we perceive threats of this kind calmly, we do not succumb to blackmail and we will systematically expand and develop our cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran, including in the atomic energy sector in full compliance with international law and the national legislation of our countries, regardless of what U.S. colleagues are undertaking, realizing, as they believe, their right to the extraterritorial application of their national legislation," Ryabkov stated.

The U.S. State Department announced on Friday that Washington will not renew two of sanctions waivers which allowed Russia and the European nations to do business with Tehran. One of the two waivers allowed Iran to store excess heavy water produced in the uranium enrichment process in Oman. The other one allowed Iran to swap enriched uranium for raw yellowcake with Russia.

The new sanctions measures, which are in line with Washington's "maximum pressure" on Iran, came days after the U.S. ended sanctions waivers for the remaining importers of the Iranian crude oil.

Iran reached a deal with Russia on the first stage of the Bushehr project — the Bushehr 1 — in 1992. In 2014, Russia and Iran signed an agreement to build the second and third reactors for the Bushehr plant.

Austria rejects Washington's sanctions on Iran

POLITICAL desk

TEHRAN – The Austrian Ambassador to Iran, Stefan Scholz, has said that Vienna rejects the U.S. sanctions against Tehran and seeks to expand ties and cooperation with the Islamic Republic.

"The important point for us is that we all reject the U.S. secondary sanctions and see them as unacceptable," Fars quoted Scholz as saying in a meeting with the Iranian commercial officials in the southern province of Fars.

He noted that Austria seeks to strengthen cooperation with Iran, especially in economic area.

"What the world is witnessing now is the resistance of the great Iranian nation in different periods of time and they have been able to live through sanctions," Ambassador Scholz said.

The U.S. announced on April 22 that Washington has decided not to extend waivers allowing major importers to continue buying oil from Iran. The waivers ended on May 2.

The U.S. State Department also announced on Friday that Washington will not renew two of sanctions waivers which allowed Russia and the European nations to do business with Tehran. One of the two waivers allowed Iran to store excess heavy water produced in the uranium enrichment process in Oman. The other one allowed Iran to swap enriched uranium for raw yellowcake with Russia.

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.

"What the world is witnessing now is the resistance of the great Iranian nation in different periods of time and they have been able to live through sanctions," Ambassador Scholz says.

IRGC Chief: Enemies fatigued, to crumble soon

POLITICAL desk

TEHRAN — Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Hossein Salami said that enemies of Iran have been exhausted, reassuring that Tehran's foes will sooner or later crumble because of their internal decays.

Salami, during a meeting with Defense Minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami on Saturday, said Iran's foes had been tired out, the Fars news agency reported.

"Our enemies are fatigued today. They look sturdy but have decayed from within. They will crumble sooner rather than later although they are trying to deny that fact," the commander said.

On April 22, the United States ended sanctions waivers for the remaining countries importing oil from Iran.

Salami said the enemies are using all their means and capacities to pressure Iran, adding "America cannot restrict our livelihood."

The United States cannot restrict Iran's sources of livelihood as oil sales do not constitute the Islamic Republic's sole source of income, the top general stated.

"Our livelihood has not been predicated on oil."

The IRGC chief also said that the sanctions



can be turned into an opportunity to increase internal capabilities.

Salami also hailed achievements of the Defense Ministry as the symbol of self-reliance against the enemy, saying that despite sanctions, the country has achieved more breakthroughs in the defense sector.

During the Saturday meeting, General Hatami, for his part, wished success for Salami as the new chief of the IRGC.

Hatami pledged that the Defense Ministry would be supportive of the IRGC more strongly and efficiently than ever.

Salami also held a meeting with Intelligence Minister Mahmoud Alavi on Sunday afternoon.

During the meeting, General Salami said the Intelligence Ministry and the IRGC Intelligence Organization are "watchful eyes of the revolution and the Islamic system and are complementary to each other."

Health minister: Claim that sanctions not targeting medicine sector is a big lie

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — The Iranian health minister has dismissed as "a big fat lie" the U.S. government's claim that its sanctions have not targeted the Islamic Republic's health sector and imports of drugs.

Speaking to reporters in the northwestern city of Zanjan on Sunday, Saeid Namaki highlighted the problems facing the country in the area of pharmaceuticals and said, "The U.S. cruel sanctions have targeted our country and people in all sectors."

"The Americans' claim that they did not impose sanctions on drugs and (medical) equipment is a big fat lie," he explained.

He went on to say that the Americans have closed ways to transfer money for everything, even humanitarian assistance sent by compatriots living abroad.

Earlier this week, Iranian First Vice-President E'shaq Jahangiri said the "inhumane" move by the U.S. government to impose severe sanctions on the Islamic Republic has put the health of the Iranian people and regional nations at risk.

Addressing the 7th World Health Summit Regional Meeting 2019 on the southern island of Kish on Monday, Jahangiri deplored Washington's acts of sabotage against Iran's medicine sector and said the U.S. move to threaten international pharmaceutical companies not to cooperate with Iran has prevented the purchase and imports of needed medicines.

"...we believe that given the role of Iran in providing a large part of the pharmaceutical needs of regional countries, the sanctions on Iran's health sector is tantamount to sanctions on the health sectors of regional countries," the vice president remarked.

In a speech in February, President Hassan Rouhani said Iran exports drugs to neighboring and non-neighboring countries and even to Europe.

In November, the Middle East's biggest pharmaceutical factory specializing in the production of anticancer drugs was inaugurated in Iran.

As the U.S. sanctions against Iran have made it difficult for the people of the country to have access to some medications such as anticancer drugs, the factory is providing a wide range of such medicines for patients.

Iranian experts have in recent years made great headways in using modern medical technology to cure a broad range of diseases inside the country, making Iran a top destination for medical tourism.

Zarif: Sanctions are 'economic terrorism'

We have not lived 7,000 years if we had escaped from bullies, Iran's chief diplomat says

1 → The U.S. withdrew from the deal in 2018, and announced that it would reimpose sanctions on Iran.

"Certainly, Iran does not want confrontation and escalation but we have not lived 7,000 years by escaping from those who want to bully us," Zarif told Al Jazeera.

Iran insisted it would remain in the nuclear deal and so did other signatories such as France, Germany, and the UK.

But tensions between the U.S. and Iran have escalated; the U.S. recently classified Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as "terrorists", and Iran responded in turn, labelling U.S. troops in the Middle East as "terrorists".

Unilateral sanctions have also affected Iran's economy, and the U.S. recently tightened them by ending sanction waivers for countries buying oil from Iran, threatening Iran's already struggling economy, whose oil production has decreased from 2.5 million barrels per day (bpd) in 2017 to as little as 1.3 million bpd.

In response, Iranian leaders have threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz, a major thoroughfare for oil shipments, but their economy remains vulnerable.

The country's foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, says the U.S. sanctions are "economic terrorism".

"They want to put pressure on the Iranian people in order to change their policy. That is the way the United States has acted for 40 years and, particularly since President Trump came to office, it violated a commitment by another U.S. president, President Obama," Zarif said.

He said that the sanctions won't have any "political effect" and that Iran has developed various schemes with partnering countries to help protect themselves.

"One of them will be in the long run to the detriment of the United States and I think that is becoming increasingly popular and that is not to use dollars for your transactions. Second is an instrument that we are developing with the Europeans, we have already developed with our neighbors and we have developed them with the Chinese and that is not to engage in transfer of money across the borders which is where the United States would step in and will try to twist the arms of people who are engaged in it, illegally and unlawfully."

According to Zarif, the U.S. has been swayed by foreign interests.

"I believe the United States is not serving U.S. interests. More than the United States, it is serving Israeli interests. And unfortunately, there are a couple of people in our region who have aligned themselves with Israeli interests," he said, listing the crown princes of Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi, Mohammed bin Salman and Mohammed bin Zayed.

"So this is a cabal ... who are pushing the United States and President Trump into conflict and into disastrous situations and they will be the first to suffer the consequences, unfortunately."

"Unfortunately, there are a couple of people in our region (crown princes of Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi) who have aligned themselves with Israeli interests," Iran's chief diplomat says.

Leader's representative visits slaughterhouse in Brazil

POLITICAL desk **TEHRAN –** Hojatoleslam Reza Taqavi, the Leader's representative in the Agriculture Ministry, has visited the biggest slaughterhouse of the JBS company in Brazil's Campo Grande.

During the visit which lasted more than four hours, top JBS managers presented Taqavi, who was accompanied by a delegation, with the process of meat production, the Agriculture Ministry website reported on Thursday.

They explained that the slaughterhouse produces high-quality halal meat for Iran under supervision of religious and sanitary experts.

10 of the 35 slaughterhouses owned by the JBS in Brazil produce halal meat for the Islamic Republic, they said.

The cleric, who has travelled to Brazil to supervise the halal slaughtering of livestock, also visited the Halal Center of the Islamic Republic in Brazil.

He urged the employees of the center to be transparent in their jobs and to observe decency and ethics.

The personnel of the center also introduced themselves and explained their tasks and responsibilities.



Leader's representative meets leader of Orthodox Christians in Brazil

Taqavi then met with the leader of the Orthodox Christians in Brazil, Archbishop Mansour Damaskinos, in Sao Paolo.

He pointed out that establishing relations between the clerics of Abrahamic religions would bring followers of divine religions closer together.

All of the wars happening in recent years were because of staying away from spirituality, he said.

Those who have killed Iraqi and Syrian people should not be regarded as Muslims, Taqavi stated.

He further said that the message of Islam is "peace, humanity and service to people" and that Islam does not condone killing and destruction.

The Leader's representative also traveled to Foz do Iguacu to meet with the representative of the Pope and leader of the Catholic Christians in Brazil.

During the meeting, he called for closer relations between Muslim and Christian religious scholars, saying the scholars can play an effective role in strengthening relations.

Taqavi also said religious minorities in Iran live in quite peace and security.

Christians, Zoroastrians and Jews have representatives in Iran's parliament, he remarked.

He then said the Islamic Republic is a strong proponent of peace and has never favored war. "But we will stand up to whoever attacks us and threatens our interests."

Islam has taught us not to tolerate oppression, he said, adding, "We do not hold enmity toward any country and if we have a problem with the U.S., it is because of the oppression it has inflicted upon us over the years."

MP warns of U.S. plot to push Iran to the extreme

POLITICAL desk **TEHRAN –** Chairman of Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee has warned of U.S. plots to push Iran into an extreme approach on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), commonly known as the Iran nuclear deal.

Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh said the U.S. is trying to force Iran to leave the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) or stopping its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency, ISNA reported on Sunday.

"The U.S. goal, by imposing new nuclear-related sanctions, is to force Iran into quitting its cooperation with Agency and leaving the NPT, so that Iran's case would fall under the Chapter 7 of the United Nations Charter," he said, referring to the Trump administration's move on Friday to impose sanctions on Iran's export of enriched uranium.

Iran should not define its policies and foreign relations based on its response to the United States' hostile approach, the top lawmaker underscored.

He added, "Iran needs to increase its level of uranium enrichment to over 20% within the framework of the JCPOA and according to the IAEA's statute, without taking a hardline stance in this regard."



Such an approach had once brought the world to the negotiating table with Iran, which resulted in the signing of the JCPOA in 2015, he remarked.

Falahatpisheh suggested that Iran could instead engage in talks with the IAEA and other parties to the JCPOA for producing uranium with the purity of 20 percent.

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. In November, the U.S. allowed eight countries, including China, India and South Korea, to limitedly buy oil from Iran. However, on April 22, it suddenly announced that if any country imports oil from Iran after May 1 will be subject to U.S. sanctions.

Iraqi official urges world to stand up to U.S. anti-Iran sanctions

POLITICAL desk **TEHRAN –** A top Iraqi official has called on the international community to stand up to the U.S. unlawful sanctions against Iran.

In an interview with IRNA published on Sunday, Iraqi Deputy Minister of Construction and Housing Estabraq Ibraheem Alshok said the U.S. sanctions against Iran have no legal or international justification.

Pointing to the strong ties between Iran and Iraq, he said the sanctions will have no effect on Tehran-Baghdad ties.

Iraq will comply with all its commitments between Iraqi private sector and Iranian companies, he stated.

Alshok also underlined the importance of expanding cooperation between Iran and Iraq in line with mutual interests.

Referring to over 1,200 km common border, he said both countries enjoy extended economic relations and have signed many contracts for joint venture investment.

He went on to say that U.S. sanctions against Iran will have dangerous consequences for the world since they promote unilateralism.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Alshok urged the world, especially the United Nations and its Security Council, to stand against extremist acts and put an end to atrocious acts.

On May 8, 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew from the JCPOA, a move which was condemned by other parties to the 2015 agreement.

Trump's choice has faced opposition from the international community, namely Russia, China, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the European Union Foreign Policy Chief Federica Mogherini.

Trump playing a dangerous game in Iran: NY Times

The New York Times says the Trump administration "is playing a dangerous game in Iran".

In a commentary written by its editorial board and published on May 4, the Times said this game risks a "serious miscalculation" by either Iran or the United States.

Following is an excerpt of the article headlined "Trump Dials Up the Pressure on Iran":

President Trump has made no secret of his desire to isolate and impoverish Iran. After withdrawing last year from the nuclear deal negotiated by the Obama administration and five other nations, Trump launched his campaign of "maximum pressure" designed to change Iran's behavior — and perhaps its leadership.

Mr. Trump dialed up the heat (just recently) again by lifting waivers that had allowed eight countries (including China, India, South Korea and Turkey) to continue importing limited quantities of Iranian oil. Most of these countries have worked to reduce such purchases, but the Trump administration demanded that they end them outright or face American financial sanctions. On Thursday, Turkey said it couldn't find other suppliers quickly enough to meet the deadline.

The goal, pressed most forcefully by the national security adviser, John Bolton, seems clear: to strangle Iran's economy and lay the ground for regime change. Although Saudi Arabia has promised to stabilize the market by making up for Iranian oil losses, there is a risk the effort could backfire, triggering a hike in world prices.

"Trump rushed to designate the IRGC terrorist before the Israeli election on April 9 to benefit Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu."

Ending the oil sale waivers is just the latest twist of the screw. Last month, Trump added Iran's most powerful military force, the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, to the United States list of foreign terrorist organizations. It marked the first time an official military organization of a foreign state was so designated.

Details of the new policy haven't been sorted out, a result of Trump's rushed effort to announce the decision before the Israeli election on April 9 to benefit Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The George W. Bush and the Obama administrations decided against the terrorist listing after the Pentagon raised concerns that the move could pose risks to American troops stationed abroad. Trump rejected similar advice. Shortly after he labeled the Revolutionary Guards terrorists, Iran retaliated by slapping the same designation on American forces in the Middle East.

The administration has been considering imposing sanctions on European, Chinese and Russian entities working with Iran in nuclear field.

Iran is still abiding by the 2015 agreement which put strict limits on its nuclear program, according to the International Atomic Energy Agency, which monitors its compliance. But the pressure campaign is strengthening hard-liners in Tehran, and there are signs that Iran's leaders may withdraw.

The Trump administration is playing a dangerous game in Iran, risking a serious miscalculation by either side. Even enemies can find ways to talk. Establishing a channel for heading off potential conflicts should be a priority.

Brazil ready to help Iran in sanctions time: ambassador

KERMANSHAH (IRNA) – Brazilian ambassador to Tehran has described Washington's anti-Iran sanctions as unfair, emphasizing that Iran can count on Brazil in handling the difficult situation.

"Some Brazilian banks have transactions with Iranian banks, but if there is any problem in transferring currencies and investments of the Brazilian companies in Iran, we can overcome the problems through barter trade," Rodrigo de Azeredo Santos said in a meeting with local officials in the western province of Kermanshah on Sunday.

Referring to a meeting he had with Iran's health minister, the ambassador said, "We reached good results for exporting hospital and medical equipment with the state-of-the-art technology to Iran."

The ambassador also welcomed cooperation between Brazil and Kermanshah on petrochemical, water, agriculture and mining, pledging to set the ground for Brazilian and Kermanshah businesspersons.

Trade exchanges between Iran and Brazil over past year stood about $2.5 billion, with Iran's imports forming the bulk of the trade.

Brazil also re-exports some $2 billion worth of products of other countries to Iran.



Rouhani extends thanks to Iranian Red Crescent Society



POLITICAL desk **TEHRAN –** President Hassan Rouhani has offered his gratitude to the staff of the Iranian Red Crescent Society for their efforts, especially during the recent floods which inundated most provinces across the country.

In a message on Sunday, ahead of World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day, Rouhani also praised director of Iran's Red Crescent Society Ali Asqar Peyvandi, IRNA reported.

"Because of the sacrifices made by the Red Crescent Society, especially in the recent floods, I thank all authorities of the society, especially you," Rouhani said, addressing Peyvandi.

Earlier, Peyvandi presented a report on the challenges that rescuers have so far dealt with like the deadly 2017 earthquake in western Iran, the Yasuj air crash and drought in Sistan-Baluchestan Province.

The floods caused by unprecedented flash rains in various parts of Iran in March and early April claimed the lives of scores of people and inflicted huge damage on the infrastructure, including bridges and roads.

Two million people were affected by the floods and hundreds of thousand people are living in tents.

Also on November 12, 2017, a fatal earthquake with a magnitude of 7.3 on the Richter hit the provincial city of Salas Babajani, killing 620 people and injuring about 12,000 others.

15 think tanks voice concerns over provincial parliamentary polls

POLITICAL desk **TEHRAN –** 15 Iranian think tanks have voiced concerns over the motion to change parliamentary elections from local to provincial level, saying the move would decrease voter turnout.

In an open letter to Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani, the think tanks said the move is contrary to general election policies and would have "catastrophic" social, political, legal and security consequences, Mehr reported on Saturday.

They further said it would deepen the rift among ethnic, linguistic and religious groups, and would pose a threat against national security.

It would "block the people's communication links with the establishment and would radicalize the public atmosphere," they argued.

The think tanks called on the lawmakers to avoid partisanship and haste, and to make well-considered decisions in order to safeguard the country's interests.

Riyadh failed to fulfil promise regarding Mina incident: Qazi Askar

POLITICAL desk **TEHRAN –** Ali Qazi Askar, the Leader's former representative for Hajj affairs, says Tehran has recently sent a letter to Riyadh to remind the Saudi kingdom of its promise to pay damages to the families of victims of the tragic Mina incident.

Qazi Askar said so far Saudi Arabia has failed to pay any compensation to families of victims of the incident, Tasnim reported.

A tragic human crush during the Hajj rituals in 2015 killed thousands of pilgrims in Mina.

Saudi authorities gave an initial tally of 770 deaths and then stopped updating that figure, even as official counts from individual countries whose nationals had died in the incident rose to the thousands in total.

Election headquarters publishes timetable for parliamentary polls



POLITICAL desk **TEHRAN –** The Interior Ministry election headquarters has published the timetable for the next parliamentary elections, Mehr reported on Sunday.

According to the timetable, the candidates will have until December 7, 2019 to register. Then the Guardian Council begins vetting registered candidates and will release the names of candidates deemed eligible to run by December 18.

Disqualified candidates will have four days to object to the Guardian Council, after which the council will study complains and announce the final list on February 11.

The candidates will have 8 days to spend on the campaign trail, ending on February 19, and then the elections will be held on February 21, 2020.

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	224057.3
IFX	2663.52

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,985 rials
GBP	55,327 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	$70.85/b
WTI	$61.94/b
OPEC Basket	$70.98/b
Gold	$1,280.20/oz
Silver	$15.01/oz
Platinium	$875.05/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Iran all set to sell oil in a 'gray market'

ENERGY desk

TEHRAN – Iran is mobilizing all its resources to sell its oil in a gray market, countering unjust and illegitimate U.S. sanctions, IRNA quoted Deputy Oil Minister Amir-Hossein Zamaninia as saying on Sunday.

"This is not smuggling. This is countering sanctions which we do not see as just or legitimate," Zamaninia said in a conference held at the Islamic Azad University of Tehran.

"Of course, we will not be able to sell 2.5 million barrels of oil like when the sanctions were removed, so we should optimize the country's financial system by controlling and management," the official noted.

Referring to the Europe's financial mechanism for trade with Iran (known as INSTEX), the deputy minister said, "In Europe, everyone supports the nuclear deal, calling for its continuation. They denounce the U.S.'s withdrawal from this agreement, but they cannot do much [in practice]."

The official also mentioned the possibility of Iran's withdrawal from the nuclear deal, saying, "It [the nuclear deal] is not a contract that we could not get out of, it is a political consensus that each side could leave but there are prices to be paid."



In May last year, the U.S. brought back sanctions on Iran after withdrawing from the Iran nuclear deal which was struck in 2015.

The United States told buyers of Iranian oil to stop purchases by May 1 or face sanctions, ending six months of waivers that had allowed Iran's biggest customers to import limited volumes.

'Iran self-sufficient in constructing power plants'

ENERGY desk

TEHRAN – Iran is completely self-sufficient in constructing any type of power plants, IRIB reported on Sunday, quoting MAPNA Group's managing director.

"Achieving this level of knowledge and technology, the country is now able to export services and technology in almost all related industrial areas," Abbas Aliabadi said in a press conference.



The official mentioned the unjust U.S. sanctions on Iran, saying, "The hardships inflicted by U.S. sanctions has made us achieve this level of technology. All the equipment and technology used in construction of power plants is now built inside the country."

Referring to the design and construction of the MGT-40 turbine by Iranian experts, the managing director added "This medium-sized turbine is in class C, and can be used to supply energy in various sectors of oil, gas and power industries."

MAPNA Group is a conglomerate of Iranian companies involved in development and execution of thermal and renewable power, oil and gas, railway transportation and other industrial projects as well as manufacturing main equipment.

Tehran to host intl. stationary, engineering expo in early July

ECONOMY desk

TEHRAN – The sixth edition of Iran's International Exhibition of Stationary and Engineering is due to be held during July 2-5 at Tehran's Shahre Aftab International Exhibition Center, IRIB reported.

According to the exhibition organizers, more than 100 exhibitors are expected to participate in this year's event.

The exhibition covers various categories related to stationary and engineering sectors including writing and drawing materials and equipment, engineering equipment, different types of adhesives, promotional gifts, office supplies, children's intellectual games and entertainment, as well as school and office bags and suitcases.

Malaysia set to see new wave of China FDI

We can expect a fresh stream of investments from China following the revival of ECRL and Bandar Malaysia, as well as Dr. Mahathir's recent productive trip to Beijing.

After Prime Minister Tun, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad and President Xi Jinping held a Malaysia-China bilateral meeting on April 25, a journalist who had worked in Beijing for four years Whatsapped me a photograph of both leaders greeting each other happily.

"So happy, both of them. Xi rarely smiles like that," the journalist remarked in her message.

Both had strong reasons to be happy to meet each other.

For the past 12 months, Malaysia-China relations had been frosty and choppy due to the suspension of several key China-linked projects by the government of Dr. Mahathir, who overthrew the previous administration in the May 2018 general election.

After becoming premier for the second time, Dr. Mahathir mercilessly attacked China-linked mega projects launched by former premier Datuk Seri Najib Razak, alleging corruption, collusion and overpricing in the contracts.

But just before visiting China for the second time during his current premiership, the 94-old leader made a U-turn on two major projects and the prospects for normalised bilateral ties suddenly brightened up.

On April 12, Malaysia revived the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) project after renegotiating its cost down to RM44bil from RM65.5bil. It subsequently reinstated the Bandar Malaysia project, with a revised total gross development value of RM140bil.

Restoring these two China-linked projects was important for Beijing ahead of the April 25-27 summit, as they are vital projects under Xi's signature Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

For Dr. Mahathir, this visit to Beijing also meant luring more foreign direct investment (FDI) and getting China to commit to buying more palm oil.

Before the trip, there were indications that the outspoken Malaysian leader would be accorded the highest honor. He was scheduled to share his views on two occasions: at the BRI top leaders' roundtable on April 26 and the high-level forum on April 27.

(Source: The Star Online)

Tehran, Damascus willing to expand customs, trade co-op

ECONOMY desk

TEHRAN — In a meeting between Mehdi Mir-Ashrafi, the head of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), and Samer al-Debes, the Chairman of Chamber of Industry of Damascus and its Countryside, the two sides expressed eagerness for the expansion of customs and trade ties between Iran and Syria.

Addressing the meeting, Mir-Ashrafi said, "We are trying to facilitate bilateral trade through removing the existing barriers and problems", Shada reported.

Stressing that Syria is a strategic partner of Iran, the Iranian official suggested establishment of a joint task force for following up the process of removing the barriers, which was welcomed by the Syrian side.

Samer al-Debes, for his part, expressed his country's willingness for boosting economic and trade cooperation with Iran and said that planning should be made so that necessary facilities will be created for the two sides' businessmen for conducting bilateral trade.

In a business forum held between Samer al-Debes and his accompanying delegation and some Iranian officials, private sector directors and businessmen at the place of Iran



chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) on May 1, the two sides had explored the ways for the expansion of bilateral trade.

The business forum which marked the two countries' sixth gathering in the past six months was also attended by the Chairman of Iran-Syria Joint Economic Committee Keyvan Kashefi, Hassan Danaiefar, the senior advisor to Iran's first vice president in Syria and Iraq affairs, as well as the Syrian Ambassador to Tehran Adnan Mahmoud.

During the gathering, several senior officials delivered speeches and afterwards the two sides' companies held B2B meetings to get to know each other and acquire information on their potentials and capacities

Addressing the business forum, Samer al-Debes expressed gratitude for Iran's efforts in helping his country regain peace and stability and noted that the Islamic Republic is Syria's top trade partner and first priority in reconstruction of the war-torn country.

The official pointed to some positive meetings which he had with senior Iranian officials on enhancement of economic ties between the two countries' private sectors and noted that the Syrian government will take all necessary measures to remove the existing barriers and facilitate trade for the two sides' businessmen.

"We need to raise awareness and pave the way for the two sides' private sectors to get to know each other's potentials and capabilities", he noted.

Exchanging trade delegations and holding specialized exhibitions in the two countries was offered by al-Debes as a way to achieve the above goal.

CBI allocates €2b for imports of basic goods, medicine since March

ECONOMY desk

TEHRAN— The Central Bank of Iran (CBI) has allocated €2 billion for the purchase of basic goods and medicine since the start of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2019), Mehr news agencyreported.

Since the beginning of the current Iranian year, over €2.2 billion were distributed by the Central Bank of Iran and exporters in the secondary market for the purchase of raw materials and intermediation services of the country's industrial sectors.

The CBI also allotted €2 billion for the purchase of necessity goods and medicine in the mentioned period.

The Central Bank of Iran stressed that it would make every effort to provide the necessary forex for the country's real needs in the face of U.S. sanctions.

Wages in a labor-surplus economy: The case of Jordan

With unemployment approaching rates last seen in the early 1990s, a question that arises is whether "wages are too high".

Jordan Times stated that deferring the answer for later, it is generally difficult to assess whether the average wage in the economy is high or low unless one uses specific macroeconomic approaches that are often chosen with a good dose of ideology. Two examples from the recent euro crisis make this point clear. Greece cut wages by 25 per cent with little beneficial effect on growth and employment. Portugal did not reduce wages but growth resumed in two short years after its crisis and unemployment quickly reached levels not seen in the last two decades.

Where economic theory is on firmer grounds is in assessing wages from a microeconomic, private sector, perspective. However, there is a caveat: The commonly used theory of wage determination is more relevant for high income economies with little informal employment. It states that firms recruit workers up to the point where workers' contribution to revenue is equal to the prevailing market wage that is determined by the interaction between the collective demand for labor by firms and the decisions collectively made by individuals whether to work or not.

Under such conditions, if there any unemployment arises, it will be due to time lost searching for a job or switching between jobs or because of some transitory and cyclical changes of the economy.

A problem with this theory is that it predicts that in a labor-surplus economy the prevailing wage would be zero. More realistically, the market clearing wage will be set at a barely subsidence level just enough for survival from one day to another. And Jordan is, indeed, a labor surplus economy arising among others from demographics (high fertility), policies (migration), geopolitics (refugees) and low demand for labor due to uncertainty and pessimistic expectations.

Obviously, the conventional approach is clearly not a good description of Jordan. Moreover, it applies to wage determination when all workers have identical education and skills. When workers are different, those who have more education or skills will be employed at the prevailing wage. Workers who are less well-endowed will be unemployed. In Jordan, many unemployed are highly educated.

So, the case of Jordan requires more heuristic approaches. One relevant indicator is the relationship between wages and productivity. The ratio of wages-to-productivity in Jordan is amongst the lowest in the world, 42 percent, compared with an average of 45 percent in Arab countries and east Asia and 53 percent in South Asia.

First Announcement

IN THE NAME OF GOD

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING

INTERNATIONAL TENDER NO. 98-02/105

Tender Holder:
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING (IRIB)

Subject of Two-Stage Tender:
Supply of Equipment and Development of an Infrastructure management system (DCIM) according to the tender documents

Deadline of Receiving Documents:
As of publishing second announcement of advertisement latest by the business hour dated on **Sunday May 12, 2019.**

Place of Receiving Documents:
Secretariat of Tenders' Commission, Technical Purchasing (KALA) Dept., Media Technology and Development Deputy Office, Bldg. No. 2, IRIB, Jam-e Jam St., Vali-e Asr Ave., Tehran

Type and Amount of Guarantee for Participating in Tender:
The amount of **USD 24,900** which should be in the form of extendable bank guarantee

Time and Place of Delivering Priced Bid:
The sealed A, B & C packages/envelopes should be submitted within one main envelope marked with tender number no later than **15 p.m.** on **Wednesday June 12, 2019** and submitted to the Secretariat of Commission of Tenders.

Time and Place of Opening Envelopes
The date of opening envelopes A&B is at **8:30 a.m.** on **Sunday June 16, 2019** in the office of Vice President of IRIB Planning and Financial Resources and opening of envelope C will be after technical evaluation.
It should be noted that bidders should hold license from the authorized bodies.

For more information, please contact the following phone numbers: **0098-21-22166313**
It is obvious that cost of publishing two advertisements shall be borne by the winner of tender.

Public Relations Dept. of IRIB

Iran's offshore oil production steady: IOOC



ENERGY desk **TEHRAN –** The managing director of Iranian Offshore Oil Company (IOOC) said the country's offshore oil production hasn't experienced any reduction and some of the May cargoes have been loaded to be shipped, Bloomberg reported.

"The latest batch of crude was loaded three days ago." Hamid Bovard said at a press conference, without elaborating on the volume or the destination.

"Exports are underway as planned", he added.

U.S. President Donald Trump unilaterally pulled Washington out of the 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. The waivers ended on May 2.

According to the official, more than 130 million barrels of oil were exported from Iran's offshore fields in the fiscal year that ended March 20.

A tender to raise production at the Forouzan oil field will be finalized by the end of June. Its development requires an additional 300 million-euro ($336 million) investment, he said.

Iran has about 100 billion barrels of oil in 40 offshore fields in the Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman, Bovard added.

Persian Gulf Star Refinery's capacity to reach 540,000 bpd



ENERGY desk **TEHRAN —** Daily processing capacity of Iran's Persian Gulf Star Refinery is going to reach 540,000 barrels per day (bpd) by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2020), according to the managing director of the refinery.

Mohammad-Ali Dadvar put the refinery's current processing capacity at 400,000 bpd, Tasnim news agency reported on Sunday.

"Receiving this amount of feedstock is a record for the world's largest gas condensate refinery", he said.

Dadvar noted that the increase in the capacity comes as the fourth phase of the refinery is going to be focused on capacity optimization and fault elimination of existing phases.

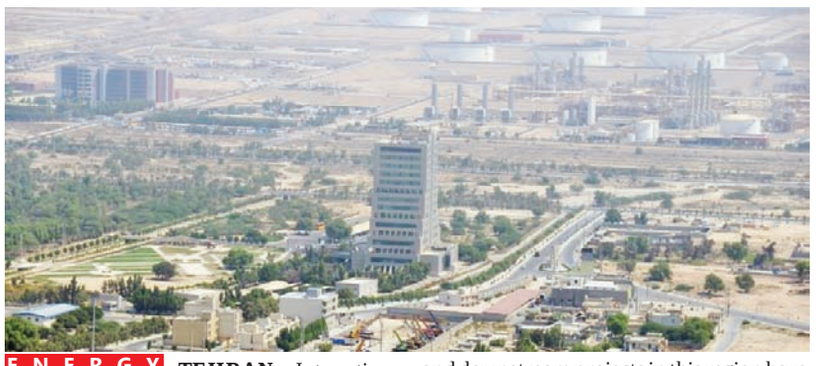
The third phase of Persian Gulf Star Refinery (PGSR), in south of Iran, was put into operation in early January.

Persian Gulf Star Refinery in the southern province of Hormozgan is the first of its kind designed based on gas condensate feedstock received from South Pars gas field which Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf.

Construction of the refinery started in 2006, but the project was delayed as the result of some mismanagement and also financial limitation due to the West-led sanctions against Iran.

Persian Gulf Star, the Middle East's largest processing facility for gas condensate, is planned to play a big role to turn Iran into an exporter of gasoline.

'Interaction with Iran in favor of world economy'



ENERGY desk **TEHRAN—** Interaction with Iran is in the interest of the international economy and global trade, managing director of Pars Special Economic Energy Zone (PSEEZ) stressed.

Seyyed Pirouz Mousavi made the remarks in a meeting with economic advisers from Belgium, Japan, South Africa and Azerbaijan in Tehran on Saturday, IRNA reported.

The official said that the Islamic Republic of Iran has always wanted to work with all countries, and the Oil Ministry is ready to actively cooperate with the countries in the fields related to the development of this industry.

Referring to the interest and cooperation of some of the world's leading oil companies to invest in the PSEEZ, he said that significant reserves and economic advantage of upstream and downstream projects in this region have always been considered by companies such as Total, Eni, Gazprom, Petronas, Hyundai and Daimler.

Mousavi said the area is close to the international waterway of the Persian Gulf, and infrastructure such as the port and the airport is an opportunity to invest in upstream and downstream industries.

The managing director of Pars Special Economic Energy Zone said the region would be Persian Gulf energy hub in a not-too-distant future and emphasized that there are 24 refineries, 30 petrochemical units, two specialized and special zones in Parsian and Lamerd, which are a huge capacity for investors and undoubtedly cooperation in this field can guarantee energy supply.

China invests in game-changing Arctic LNG project

By Tim Daiss

Russia's second-largest natural gas producer, independent player Novatek, has signed up key participation from two state-owned Chinese oil majors in its massive Arctic LNG 2 project. The deals were inked at the Second Belt and Road Forum for International Co-operation held in China.

This cements Novatek's position as Russia's leading liquefied natural gas (LNG) developer, moving it a step ahead of the country's two state-backed companies, Rosneft and Gazprom. China National Offshore Oil Corp. (CNOOC) and China National Oil and Gas Development Co. (CNODC), a unit of China National Petroleum Corp. (CNPC), signed up to acquire 10 percent each in the project. CNOOC is also China's largest offshore oil and gas producer and developer.

Novatek's chairman, Leonid Mikhelson, welcomed CNOOC's involvement, saying China was "one of the key consuming markets for our LNG sales." He added that Arctic LNG 2 would be a "game-changer" in the global gas market and noted the company's experience from its Yamal LNG project as a demonstration of its ability to carry out operations in the Arctic.

The entry of the CNPC unit, meanwhile, was described by Mikhelson as an "important milestone" for Arctic LNG 2, while he noted the Chinese company's participation in Yamal LNG.

The accumulated experience

The "accumulated experience of working together is a solid basis for the successful implementation of our new LNG project," he said. No details have been given yet for the price the Chinese companies paid.

French oil major Total also invested in Arctic LNG 2 in March. Novatek, in its first-quarter results, said the sale of a 10 percent stake in the project had resulted in a net gain of $4.8 billion.

China was instrumental in making the Yamal LNG work. In addition to the participation of CNPC, which acquired a 20 percent stake in 2013, the Silk Road Fund (SRF) purchased a 9.9 percent stake for $1.21 billion in March 2016. SRF also provided a 15-year loan worth some $813 million.

Additionally, CNPC signed up to a 20-year off-take agreement, covering 3 million tons per annum (mtpa) of Yamal LNG's production, indexed to the Japanese Crude Cocktail (JCC) price, the leading LNG pricing benchmark in Asia.

The Russian funding

The Export-Import Bank of China (China Eximbank) and the China Development Bank (CDB) also provided loans, of $10.4 billion and $151 million in 2016. This came on top of a $4 billion loan from Russian funding.

The Arctic LNG 2 project will cover three production trains, each with 6.6 mtpa worth of capacity. An all-important final investment decision (FID) on the project is anticipated later this year, with the first LNG delivery slated for the end of 2023, around the time when most analysts forecast that global LNG markets will pivot from its current overhang to a possible shortage of the super-cooled fuel.

Chinese LNG demand could reach 80-100 mtpa by 2025, according to various industry forecasts, up from 53.7 million tonnes in 2018. Rising demand for the fuel is part of Beijing's drive to clean up the air quality of the country's largest cities, which have been plagued by high air pollution levels for years.

This drive has seen an explosion of demand in recent years that has been increasingly met by imports, including U.S.-sourced geopolitically charged gas imports that have also been embroiled in the ongoing trade war between Washington and Beijing. Overall demand for gas is expected to climb to 620 bcm by 2035, according to CNPC, up from at 280.3 bcm in 2018.

The oil major has also predicted that domestic production will amount to 300 bcm by 2035, up from 161 bcm last year. This will mean an expansion in imports from 124.7 bcm in 2018 to 320 bcm in 2035.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Weakening Iran not in Moscow's favor: Russian energy expert

ENERGY desk **TEHRAN—**The director of Center for Energy and Security Studies (CENESS) of Russia says that although Iran's oil sanctions may share the country's quota among other countries, this will not benefit Moscow, because Kremlin does not want to weaken its strategic partner in the region.

Anton Khlopkov, in an interview with the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), pointed to the U.S. approach toward independent states, and noted, "Russia must be careful not to accompany U.S.' anti-Iranian plans because the United States wants to confront the great powers who are opposing its polices individually and overcome them.

The Russian expert, stating that the United States has focused its actions against Iran at this juncture, made the remark that Washington has been struggling to hit the country in several stages, the last one to date, is to abolish Iran's oil exemptions for purchases of eight countries.

The Russian energy expert highlighted, "It is clear that China and Turkey regard the U.S. oil sanctions as illegal and typical examples of bullying in the international arena".

"Trump wants to exert pressure on Iran and tell the world that Washington has enough power to punish any country that opposes its policies", Khlopkov went on to say.

"It is clear that Russia, as the world's largest oil producer, will play an important role in implementing the anti-American plan", said the director of Center for Energy and Security Studies.

He noted that in addition to increasing pressure on Iran,



the United States has pursued its anti-Russian policies and has imposed 65 sanction packages against Russia.

Russian expert added that Trump has focused its efforts on four independent and sovereign countries, including Russia, Iran, China and Venezuela, and a variety of measures against these countries are taking place in the political, military, economic and energy fields.

He went on to say that although with Iran's punishment, the country's oil production quota could be shared between other countries, but this would be detrimental for Russia because Iran might be weakened as its strategic partner in the region, while Moscow in no way wants to run such a scenario.

Khlopkov said that Iran has proven to be a key partner for Russia in the fight against international terrorism in solving the Syrian problem, and in other matters, the cooperation between Moscow and Tehran will be significant and valuable.

The Russian expert noted that Russia must stand against American anti-Iranian plans and refrain from accompanying its actions, and that such an approach should be coordinated with Russia and Iran via the political consultations in order to further influence.

The director of Center for Energy and Security Studies said that the level of cooperation and relations between Iran and Russia is excellent, expressing the current trend will be expanded with the cooperation and coordination of the two countries in the regional and international arena and the development of relations in bilateral frameworks.

U.S. President Donald Trump announced on May 8, 2018 the United States' withdrawal of Iran nuclear deal and restored the U.S. sanctions against Iran in November. Nevertheless, Iran and other countries agreed to JCPOA, including Russia, China, Britain, Germany and France are still committed, and the International Atomic Energy Agency has repeatedly stated Iran's commitment to this agreement.

The U.S. continued its anti-Iranian measures, including putting the name of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) in the list of terrorist groups, and lifting the exemption of eight buyers of Iranian oil and announced it would work to zero Iran's sales of its oil.

OPEC is facing an existential crisis

By Cyril Widdershoven

Global oil market fundamentals are looking particularly bullish, from the OPEC+ production cuts, to the constraints of exports in Nigeria and the U.S. sanctions on Iran and Venezuelan.

While oil price volatility has increased thanks to financial analysts putting an emphasis on Trump's apparent Twitter agreements with OPEC leaders, market fundamentals are still very bullish. Until the global market realizes that U.S. oil storage reports are not the be all and end all for oil prices, volatility will remain.

There is a new threat looming though as OPEC+ prepares to meet at its June 25-26th Ministerial Meeting in Vienna.

The internal cohesion of OPEC is being called into question at present, as several major member countries are facing not only external sanctions but threats of a total internal implosion of their respective regimes.

The removal of U.S. waivers for leading oil importers of Iranian oil and gas is putting the Tehran regime under severe pressure. While Trump's target of reducing Iranian production to zero is unrealistic, the impact of the sanctions is undeniable. No new oil contracts have been reported between Iran and its main clients, China and India, since the sanctions.

It seems that the fear of indirect sanctions by the U.S. is already having its desired result, Iran's hydrocarbon exports have been hit hard and seem to have no response.

At the same time, Iran's staunchest supporter in OPEC, Venezuela appears to be on the brink. Confronted by U.S. sanctions and increased political support from Arab and European countries for opposition leader Guaido, Venezuela is a facing an economic meltdown as its hydrocarbon sectors come to a standstill.

In recent days the situation here has worsened as the opposition, supported by parts of the Venezuelan armed forces and security services, has openly started a rebellion to remove current president Maduro. The latter remains in power, but mainly due to Russian, Chinese and Turkish support. Iran's Latin American partner is heading for a possible civil conflict of unknown proportions.

Based on these two key OPEC producers, at least on paper, OPEC's internal structure is fragmenting. The Saudi-led OPEC+ production cut strategy is still in place, but it is partly successful due to the negative repercussions of the sanctions on Iran and Venezuela. The high level of compliance with the agreement (128%) is based on the loss of these particular volumes. At the same time, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Russia, are sticking to their roles, cutting as needed. Optimism about Iraq is based on uncertain assumptions, while Libya's overall situation is highly volatilie.



To top up OPEC's internal issues, Africa's main oil producer Nigeria reports that it is not even able to sell some of its cargoes. Nigerian sources stated on May 2 that around 20 Nigerian oil cargoes are not sold, even after severe price cuts. Nigeria has already reduced its selling prices of a basket of May-loading crude oil grades, mainly as buyers were not showing an interest in contracts for cargoes offered at and above a premium of $2 compared to dated Brent. At present, Nigeria's major grades, including Bonny Light and Qua Iboe, Forcados and Escravos, saw a decrease of around 20 to 25 cents compared with April. At the same time, Nigeria has been hit by several force majeurs, such as that declared by oil major Shell on exports of Nigeria's major Bonny Light stream after the closure of one of two export pipelines, while Amenam, operated by Total, is also under force majeure. The main reason for this is not a lack of demand from China or India, but from European clients.

In the coming weeks, as analysts focus on production figures, storage volumes and demand, OPEC will be focusing on defusing pressure to increase production, while at the same time the Saudi-led faction will likely confront the Tehran-Venezuela (and possibly Iraqi) axis. Iran has openly threatened to undermine OPEC's stability if no support can be gathered before the June meeting. In several statements to the press, Iran's oil Minister has warned that OPEC is in danger of collapse. Tehran threatens at present to take all necessary measures to block oil and gas flows from OPEC members that are supporting the U.S. sanctions regime. At the same time, Tehran has warned to take measures against countries trying to fill in the supply gap left by Iran. Zanganeh reiterated the latter during a meeting with OPEC secretary general Barkindo in Tehran. Barkindo reacted by saying that OPEC will do its utmost to depoliticize oil and gas policies of the organization. OPEC's SG statements however look very bleak in light of the growing heat in the conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Zanganeh is counting on Iraq, Libya and Venezuela to keep the pressure on Riyadh an Abu Dhabi, not to fully support U.S. sanctions. The meeting in June will be crucial. Geopolitical pressure, combined with an aggressive power projection of Iran in the Middle East (Iraq, Syria, Libya), leaves less room to maneuver for Arab countries than before. Tehran's hope to keep Moscow on its side also seems to be backfiring as Russia openly is behind OPEC+ cuts, while backing Saudi-UAE's efforts in Libya.

In many ways this appears to be a repeat of the 2018 meeting of OPEC in Vienna. The main difference will be that Tehran has lost much of its internal OPEC powers, due to the departure of Qatar and the implosion of Venezuela. Tehran doesn't hold any real cards anymore, even the threat of military action in the Gulf or elsewhere will backfire. The cartel is heading for a rearrangement of powers, a rearrangement in which a new actor may be taking part. Moscow is still heading for an official agreement with OPEC, threatening to topple any Iranian future in the cartel for a very long time. Putin's need for Iran is gone, new power plays are already in place, in which Riyadh, Abu Dhabi and Libya are much more prominent.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Intl. community, Arab world's silence towards Gaza, more deadly than the Israeli attacks



1 → In addition, the silence of Saudi Arabia, which claims the leadership of the Arab and Islamic world, is significant against the most important issue of the Islamic world. Of course, Saudi Arabia cannot be expected more than this silence which itself caused the greatest humanitarian crisis in Yemen and sacrificed thousands of civilians, including women and children. Saudi Arabia has been the promoter of "Deal of the Century", and has recently offered a billion-dollar bribe to Palestinian leaders to accept the deal.

The Palestinian resistance groups showed well that by relying on their internal and missile power during the Israeli past aggression against the Gaza Strip, Zionist's army had to retreat.

The notable feature of these conflicts was Palestinian resistance groups' missile capabilities, even without any Arab supports that have already agreed with the American and Israeli sides behind the scenes despite their false claims of being worried about Palestine.

Countdown to a full-scale battle in Idlib



1 → After the liberation of Idlib, the Syrian government can go back to its normal state before the crisis and it means that the people who supported this seven years' war against Syria will have to leave Syria, empty-handed and Damascus will be the true winner of this war.

This is obviously not the results that U.S. wants, so they will resort to everything, including using chemical weapons to impede the movement of Syrian army.

Experts also believe that Idlib battle will be intense and will lead the war toward a quick end.

War in Syria which started from Aleppo and Qalamun Mountains two years ago, is now nearing its end in Idlib that is the last area held by terrorists.

Idlib is now the stronghold of all rebels and terrorists coming from all different regions. This battle will be much more complicated than the last ones and it means making any prediction would be difficult and should be on hold until the following days, however, Damascus is firmly determined to recapture every region in Syria.

Saudi coalition violating Stockholm Agreement about Yemen



1 → Despite the aggressive attacks from Saudi Arabia and its allies and the fact that Stockholm Agreement is losing almost all its effects, Yemen defense keeps growing stronger. In past couple of years, Yemen's defense force has become much stronger and has startled the Saudi and UAE forces.

A couple of weeks ago, Yemenis unveiled their new domestically-made Badr-F ballistic missile. Unveiling this missile will change the power balance in Yemen; by achieving this great military success, Yemenis have now substantially increased their defense capability against attacks of Saudi Arabia and its allies.

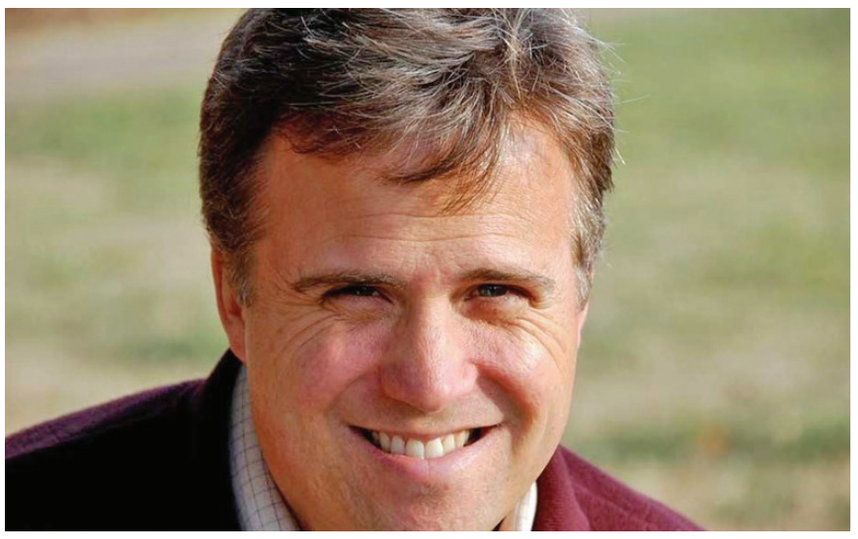
This military success will definitely change the battle in favor of Yemen. In the past few years of Saudi invasion to Yemen, Yemeni opposition have kept gaining momentum and every day gives a greater surprise to the Saudi forces.

And now more than ever, unveiling Badr-F ballistic missile can give Yemen a winning edge against the Saudi invasion.

Yemen made this military advancement while U.S. keeps giving weapons to Saudi's invading coalition and seemingly has no intention to stop supporting Saudis' crimes against humanity.

Finally, it seems normal that the internationally-prohibited weapons, including cluster munitions that are now fired at Yemeni people, are majorly made by U.S. and UK.

Nations need to block U.S. sanctions on Iran: Nobel nominee



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – A prominent American author, who is a five-time Nobel Peace Prize nominee, deplored recent "criminal" moves by the US government to increase economic sanctions on Iran and said the world should block Washington's embargoes.

Nations Need to Block US Sanctions on Iran: Nobel Nominee

"Obviously the people of the United States need to demand an end to criminal and immoral collective punishment of an entire population -- understanding that 'punishment' here does not imply guilt," David Swanson, who is based in Virginia, said in an interview with the Tasnim News Agency.

"...The nations of the world need to reject this US aggression," he said, adding, "The United Nations needs to block sanctions and wars on Iran, Venezuela, and everywhere else."

David Swanson is an author, activist, journalist, and radio host. He is executive director of WorldBeyondWar.org and campaign coordinator for RootsAction.org. Swanson's books include War Is A Lie and When the World Outlawed War. He blogs at DavidSwanson.org and WarIsACrime.org. He hosts Talk Nation Radio. He is a 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 Nobel Peace Prize Nominee. Swanson was awarded the 2018 Peace Prize by the US Peace Memorial Foundation.

US President Donald Trump's administration renewed five of seven sanctions waivers that allow Russia and European nations to conduct civilian nuclear cooperation with Iran but revoked the other two as part of its pressure campaign against Tehran, according to the US State Department. Washington also stopped issuing waivers to buy Iranian crude oil on Thursday. Before the US moves, Iranian officials, including Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri, had warned against their consequences. What is your assessment of the developments and how do you think about Iran's possible reaction to the US decision?

A: Obviously the people of the United States need to demand an end to criminal and immoral collective punishment of an entire population -- understanding that "punishment" here does not imply guilt.

Obviously the nations of the world need to reject this US aggression. But it really doesn't matter who burns that oil or who profits from it -- in any event it kills us all by destroying the earth's climate.

So, the world needs to provide Iran (and everywhere else) with clean sustainable energy, and reparations, and equal rights.

As you know, Zarif was recently in the US. In multiple interviews with US media outlets and a roundtable with reporters in New York last week, he made the case that a group dubbed "the B-Team" was goading the US toward conflict with Iran, not Trump. The B-team is a group of advisers and foreign leaders whose names share the same letter: National Security Adviser John Bolton, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin "Bibi" Netanyahu, Saudi Arabia's de facto leader Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), and the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (MBZ). What is your take on Zarif's remarks? How do you assess the message of his trip to the US?

A: Yes, eager warmongers are pushing Trump for war. But he appointed his team of US warmongers -- the very worst ones he could find. And he is responsible for what they do or do not do. The United States has a single executive and a system for holding that person accountable called impeachment. It also has a cowardly and corrupt Congress that will not use that system -- or will pervert it for the purpose of advancing lies about Russia, which will backfire, thereby in the end, protecting Trump rather than holding him accountable. The United Nations needs to block sanctions and wars on Iran, Venezuela, and everywhere else.

Zarif recently said he plans to visit North Korea in the near future. What do you think about possible objectives behind his trip and do you think that it would have links with his recent trip to the US?

A: I think it should be done very carefully and be very well thought out, because something dramatic will be needed to counter the predictable childish propaganda in the United States which will declare Iran and North Korea guilty of having met with North Korea and Iran, respectively.

How the Pentagon took ownership of Trump

By WILLIAM ASTORE

Asiatimes —Donald Trump is a con man. Think of Trump University or a juicy Trump steak or can't-lose casinos (that never won). But as president of the United States, one crew he hasn't conned is the Pentagon. Quite the opposite, they've conned him because they've been at the game a lot longer and lie (in Trump-speak) in far biglier ways.

People condemn President Trump for his incessant lying and his con games – and rightly so. But few of us Americans condemn the Pentagon and the rest of the national security state, even though we've been the victims of their long con for decades now. As it happens, from the beginning of the Cold War to late last night, they've remained remarkably skilled at exaggerating the threats the US faces and, believe me, that represents the longest con of all. It has kept the military-industrial complex humming along, thanks to countless trillions of taxpayer dollars, while attempts to focus a spotlight on that scam have been largely discredited or ignored.

One thing should have, but hasn't, cut through all the lies: the grimly downbeat results of America's actual wars. War by its nature tells harsh truths – in this case, that the US military is anything but "the finest fighting force that the world has ever known." Why? Because of its almost unblemished record of losing, or at least never winning, the wars it engages in.

Consider the disasters that make up its record from Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s to, in the 21st century, the Iraq war that began with the invasion of 2003 and the nearly 18-year debacle in Afghanistan – and that's just to start down a list. You could easily add Korea (a 70-year stalemate/truce that remains troublesome to this day), a disastrous eight-year-old intervention in Libya, a quarter-century in (and out and in) Somalia, and the devastating US-backed Saudi war in Yemen, among so many other failed interventions.

In short, the US spends staggering sums annually, in essence stolen from a domestic economy and infrastructure that's fraying at the seams, on what still passes for "defense." The result: botched wars in distant lands that have little, if anything, to do with true defense, but which the Pentagon uses to justify yet more funding, often in the name of "rebuilding" a "depleted" military.

Instead of a three-pointed pyramid scheme, you might think of this as a five-pointed Pentagon scheme, where losing only wins you ever more, abetted by lies that just grow and grow. When it comes to raising money based on false claims, this president has nothing on the Pentagon. And worse yet, like America's wars, the Pentagon's long con shows no sign of ending. Eat your heart out, Donald Trump.

Eternal MADness

"So many lies, so little time" is a phrase that comes to mind when I think of the 40 years I've spent up close and personal with the US military, half on active duty as an air force officer. Where to begin? How about with those bomber and missile "gaps," those alleged shortfalls vis-à-vis the Soviet Union in the 1950s and 1960s? They amounted to Chicken Little-style sky-is-falling hoaxes, but they brought in countless billions of dollars in military funding. In fact, the "gaps" then were all in our favor, as the US held a decisive edge in both strategic bombers and nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).

Or consider the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin Resolution that served to authorize horrific attacks on Vietnam in retaliation for a North Vietnamese attack on US Navy destroyers that never happened. Or think about the consistent exaggeration of Soviet weapons capabilities in the 1970s (the hype surrounding its MiG-25 Foxbat fighter jet, for example) that was used to justify a new generation of ultra-expensive American weaponry. Or the justifications for president Ronald Reagan's military buildup of the 1980s – remember the Strategic Defense Initiative (aka "Star Wars") or the MX ICBM and Pershing II missiles, not to speak of the neutron bomb and alarming military exercises that nearly brought us to nuclear war with the "Evil Empire" in 1983.

Or think of another military miracle: the "peace dividend" that never arrived after the Soviet Union imploded in 1991 and the last superpower (you know which one) was left alone on a planet of minor "rogue states."

And don't forget that calamitous "shock and awe" invasion of Iraq in 2003 in the name of neutralizing weapons of mass destruction that didn't exist or the endless "global war on terror" that still ignores the fact that 15 of the 19 September 11 terrorist hijackers came from Saudi Arabia.

And this endless long con of the Pentagon's was all the more effective because so many of its lies were sold by self-serving politicians. Exhibit 1 was, of course, John F Kennedy's embrace of that false missile gap in winning the 1960 presidential election. Still, the Pentagon was never shy in its claims. Take the demand of the USAF then for 10,000 – yes, you read that right – new ICBMs to counter a Soviet threat that then numbered no more than a few dozen such missiles (as Daniel Ellsberg reminds us in his recent book, The Doomsday Machine).

To keep the USAF happy, secretary of defense Robert McNamara settled on a mere 1,000 land-based Minuteman missiles to augment the 54 older Titan II ICBMs in that service's arsenal, a figure I committed to memory as a teenager in the 1970s. And don't forget that some of those missiles were MIRVed, meaning they had multiple nuclear warheads that could hit many targets. It all added up to the threat of what, in those years, came to be called "mutually assured destruction," better known by its all-too-apt acronym, MAD.

And the Pentagon's version of madness never ends. Think, for instance, of the planned three-decade US$1.7 trillion "modernization" of the US nuclear triad now under way, justified in the name of "overmatching" China and Russia, "near-peer" rivals in Pentagon-speak. No matter that America's current triad of land-based, submarine-based, and air-deployed nukes already leave the arsenals of those two countries in the shade.

Reason doesn't matter when the idea of a new cold war with those two former enemies couldn't be more useful in justifying the through-the-ceiling $750 billion defense budget requested by President Trump for 2020. The Democrats have pushed back with a still-soaring budget of $733 billion that accepts without question the "baseline" minimum demanded by Pentagon officials, a level of spending Trump once called "crazy." Talk about resistance being futile.

In other words, when it comes to spending taxpayer dollars, the Washington establishment of both parties has in essence been assimilated into the Pentagon collective. The national-security state, that (unacknowledged) fourth branch of government, has in many ways become the most powerful of all, siphoning off more than 60% of federal discretionary spending, while failing to pass a single audit of how it uses such colossal sums.

All of this is in service to what's known as a National Defense Strategy (NDS) whose main purpose is to justify yet more prodigious Pentagon spending. As Vietnam War veteran and professor at National Defense University Gregory Foster wrote of the latest version of that document:

"In the final analysis, the NDS is an unadulterated call for a new Cold War, with all its attendant appurtenances: more gluttonous defense spending to support escalatory arms races in all those 'contested domains' of warfare; reliance on bean-counting input measures (weapons, forces, spending) for determining comparative 'competitiveness'; reinforcement and reaffirmation of the sacrosanct American way of war; and the reassuring comfort of superimposing an artificially simplistic Manichaean worldview on the world's inherent complexity and thereby continuing to ignore and marginalize actors, places, and circumstances that don't coincide with our established preconceptions."

Such a critique is largely lost on Donald Trump, a man who models himself on perceived tough guys like Andrew Jackson and Winston Churchill. During the 2016 presidential campaign, he did, at least, rail against the folly and cost of America's wars in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan. He said he wanted better relations with Russia. He talked about reinvesting in the United States rather than engaging in new wars. He even attacked costly weapons systems like the sky's-the-limit $1.4 trillion Lockheed Martin F-35 fighter.

Suffice it to say that, after two-plus years of posing as commander-in-chief, strongman Trump is now in essence owned by the Pentagon. America's wars continue unabated. US troops remain in Syria and Afghanistan (despite the president's stated desire to remove them). Relations with Russia are tense as his administration tears up the Cold War-era Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty negotiated by Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev.

What to make of Trump's visible capitulation to the Pentagon? Sure, he's playing to his conservative base, which is generally up for more spending on weaponry and war, but like so many presidents before him, he has been conned as well. The con-man-in-chief has finally met his match: a national-security state that, when you consider its record, has had far greater success at lying its way to power than Donald J Trump.

The biggest lie of all

Now, let's take a hard look at ourselves when it comes to weaponry and those wars of "ours." Because the most significant lies aren't the ones the president tells us, but those we tell ourselves. The biggest of all: that we can continue to send young men and women off to war without those wars ever coming home.

Think again. America's shock-and-awe conflicts have indeed come home, big time – with shocking and awful results. On some level, many Americans recognize this. PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) is now a well-known abbreviation. A smaller percentage of Americans know something about TBI, the traumatic brain injuries that already afflict an estimated 314,000 troops, often caused by IEDs (improvised explosive devices), another abbreviation it would have been better never to have to learn.

Wounded Warrior projects remind us that American veterans continue to suffer long after they've come home, with roughly 20 of them a day taking their own lives in a tragic epidemic of suicides. Meanwhile, surplus military equipment – from automatic weapons to tank-like MRAPs (mine-resistant ambush-protected vehicles) – made for the mean streets of Iraq are now deployed on Main Street, USA, by increasingly militarized police forces. Even the campus cops at Ohio State University have an MRAP.

Here, Americans would do well to ponder the words of Megan Stack, a war correspondent for the Los Angeles Times who drew on her own "education in war" when she wrote: "You can overcome the things that are done to you, but you cannot escape the things that you have done." She was undoubtedly thinking about subjects like the horrors of Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, torture at the Central Intelligence Agency's "black sites," cities rubblized in the Greater Middle East, and refugees produced by the tens of millions. Somehow, sooner or later, it all comes home, whether we as Americans admit it, or even realize it, or not.

"Here is the truth," Stack notes:

"It matters, what you do at war. It matters more than you ever want to know. Because countries, like people, have collective consciences and memories and souls, and the violence we deliver in the name of our nation is pooled like sickly tar at the bottom of who we are. The soldiers who don't die for us come home again. They bring with them the killers they became on our national behalf, and sit with their polluted memories and broken emotions in our homes and schools and temples. We may wish it were not so, but action amounts to identity. We become what we do.... All of that poison seeps back into our soil."

And so indeed it has. How else to explain the way Americans have come to tolerate, even celebrate, convenient lies: that, for instance, Tomahawk missile strikes in Syria could make a feckless figure like Donald Trump presidential or even that such missiles are beautiful, as former NBC Nightly News anchor Brian Williams once claimed. Imagine if leading media and political figures boasted instead of taking on the Pentagon, reining in its ambitions, and saving taxpayers trillions of dollars, as well as countless lives here and overseas.

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European horror of French protests

By Saeed Sobhani

TEHRAN — The French protests have come in for the twenty-fifth consecutive week. The continuation of the protests shows that the EU will not have a calm future! Many analysts from European affairs believe that the continuation of the recent protests in France could affect the results of the European parliamentary elections.

Accordingly, the continuation of these protests can reduce political participation in the elections and lead to the defeat of traditional European parties.As it could be expected, the current protests in France against Emmanuel Macron's policies didn't come to an end, but we're rather witnessing the spread of these protests to other parts of Europe. The anti-capitalist protest of the French citizens is now spreading to other European countries.

According to many European analysts, the unrests will also reach other member states of the Eurozone. In this case, European officials will face with a massive crisis, the starting point of which has been "France". It might have been supposed that the new wave of general crisis in Europe would start from countries such as Greece and Spain (which are the main symbols of the economic crisis in the Eurozone). However, we can see that this time, the wave was started from Paris! Undoubtedly, the scope of this crisis is far more extensive than the previous socio-economic crises in Europe, and European authorities are going to have a hard line in managing the new crisis.

The failure of European authorities to curb the economic crisis is one of the main reasons for European citizens' grievances.The fact is that since 2007 (the time for the beginning of the economic crisis in Europe) we have seen severe austerity policies being adopted in the Green Continent. After 11 years, such policies led to nothing but a rollback of the United Europe, and the continuation of the crisis in the Eurozone. France's unrests had also affected the Benelux region (Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg). Obviously, some other European countries, including Spain, Italy and Greece, will face new upcoming events. These countries continue to pursue austerity policies to reduce public spending, reduce external debt and etc.



The failure of European authorities to curb the economic crisis is one of the main reasons for European citizens' grievances.The fact is that since 2007 (the time for the beginning of the economic crisis in Europe) we have seen severe austerity policies being adopted in the Green Continent.

we are witnessing a new wave of massive protests. The protesters, like the French demonstrators, demand a reduction in the retirement age, the removal of the head of state and, most importantly, the withdrawal of their countries from the European Union.

What is important now is the effect of French protests on European parliamentary elections.The protests are increasing at a time when the European Parliamentary elections will be held soon (in 2019). Right now, nationalist groups and far-right extremists across Europe are pursuing widespread changes inside their countries' political and social system. Under such circumstances, Europe's traditional parties, including conservative (right-wing) and social-democratic parties, are at high risk. The failure of the candidates for the French Socialist and Conservative Party in reaching the final round of the 2017 presidential competitions, and the victory of the extremist and anti-EU movement of the Alternative for Germany (AFD) for the first time in the parliament, are all signs of the deterioration of Europe's current structure in the near future. The fact is that many European citizens' demands were limited to the stop of austerity policies, but it was before the French protests! Now the equation is basically different from the previous times! Withdrawing from the European Union and substituting the current governments with those that oppose the existence of the Eurozone has become one of the main demands of the protesters. Consequently, the French protests, in addition to exacerbating the security and social crises in Europe, have been the source of political crises on the Green Continent.

Definitely, many European governments will be seriously affected by the spread of new protests in the Green Continent. This is while the governments of Germany and France no longer have the power to control and manage the crisis (as they used to do before).

As it was mentioned, the beginning of the new round of the Europe's general crisis from France (traditionally one of Europe's pioneering players) has complicated the equations in Europe to a large extent. In this situation, the EU leaders don't have a common understanding of the existing crises, besides, they have even problems in formulating those crises, and this is going to make the mire more frightening for them.

Finally, the European Union will not have any peaceful days ahead. If the current European politicians do not make fundamental reforms in this collection, power in the hands of the nationalist movement in Europe may have fallen! A topic for Europe's leaders is a nightmare.

Venezuela needs dialogue, not civil war

TEHRAN (FNA) — The United States has intensified its signals for military action against Venezuela after its orchestrated coup failed. These signals could be a hoax or may really indicate Washington's plan, yet neither possibility would help solve the problems of the Latin American nation. Rather, the US intervention wrecks havoc on the country as has been the case everywhere else.

Perennial hawk John Bolton seems to be salivating at the possibility of the US invading the major South American country, while Mike Pompeo has been telling the press at every opportunity that if the US decides an attack is required "that's what the United States will do."

This should stun no one. What happened in Syria and Libya is now repeating itself in Venezuela: Failed opposition uprising, rebellion, coup attempt, street and community violence, and human suffering of biblical proportions – with everyone sanctimoniously fighting over the carcass of their capital with no light at the end of the tunnel.

The only difference in this dark imagining is that the Venezuelans are yet to follow opposition leader Juan Guaido's call to take to the streets with tanks and guns in a bid to target the army and force elected President Nicolas Maduro from power.

If contemporary history is any indication, all that could change in the blink of an eye if the government, the opposition, and the people of Venezuela fail to learn the lesson from Syria and Libya and reflect on the human and socio-economic costs of those pointless wars. If they similarly snap, the final phase of stability could slip away and foreign-backed civil war could blow everyone up. It could turn the oil-rich nation into a failed state and a hellhole for international competition – the likes of which we have already seen in Syria and Libya.



With that in mind, all parties to the current political skirmish still have a choice. They should reverse the current destructive course and end their verbal attacks and threats far and wide. This includes the self-proclaimed president in charge, Guaido, who is calling for US military intervention.

Here, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo can shout otherwise until he is blue in the face, but the timing of the failed coup attempt on April 30 was suspicious. Although it is difficult to get accurate information in the age of "fake news," reports suggest that the US was probably behind the attempted coup near the La Carlota air base in Caracas.

So it's no surprise that US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and others have claimed that prior to the coup "the US got together a deal with the Supreme Court chief justice, the defense minister, and the head of the presidential guard." President Donald Trump, on his Twitter, has also expressed support for the coup, urging the Bolivarian National Armed Force to join the action.

The good news is that this put many in Venezuela on notice, as a consequence of which the foreign-backed opposition couldn't sell the attempted coup d'etat as a boon to so-called democratic transition. The increasingly cynical public saw the external support as another pathway to regime decapitation in Caracas. Even the small group of members of the army who led the failed uprising are now apologetic, sayig they were "pressured and deceived".

This has to be the reason why the United Nations Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, is doing the right thing to call for a new dialogue and reconciliation, and why the international civil society guards against any foreign attempt to turn up the heat and undermine the South American country's sovereignty.

Armed uprising and coup will only make the situation worse in Venezuela, with no consideration for socio-economic realities on the ground. It will escalate the current crisis and deepen the major divisions in the South American society and the wider region.

Nonetheless, the rule of law must prevail in order for all-encompassing political dialogue and reconciliation to begin. In between, foreign interventionists must be dreaded and opposed if they surface on the Venezuelan border.

Both those in support of and against the government have a duty to welcome the UN's move against the coup and military intervention and believe that their efforts must focus only on a political solution. It's an engagement also supported by democratically elected President Maduro and his Day of Dialogue, which goes beyond the main political actors to include civil society leaders and communities at large.

U.S. anti-China policy against own interests

Global Times — Former US vice-president and Democratic presidential front-runner Joe Biden recently said China is not "bad folks" and China is not "competition for us." His remarks have sent waves across the US. People from President Donald Trump to core members of his team, including Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, have lashed out at Biden.

Biden also holds strong values-based prejudice against China. He insists that the reasons China does not pose a threat to the US are that China has its hands full dealing with its domestic and regional problems, such as tensions in the South China Sea, poverty in its western areas and corruption.

It is very likely that Biden, as the Democratic 2020 presidential front-runner, will adjust his narrative on China under pressure from Republicans and conservative forces.

The current US administration deems China as its strategic competitor, as with a few US elites. But some people have brought the China threat theory to an extreme. That Biden, a veteran politician, publicly sang a different tune from the Trump administration at least shows he and some US elites believe the China threat theory played up by Washington has gone too far.



China is the world's second-largest economy and still growing. US right-wing elites are concerned that the strength of China will exceed that of the US. Therefore, Washington feels it a big issue as to what kind of country China is and what China's development means to the US.

The problem is the US administration is dealing with this issue in a simplistic and extreme approach and seems to lack the ability to understand China and craft sensible policies.

People like Pompeo hyped hostility and pushed forward extreme China policies. If China's policymakers react like their US counterparts, a new Cold War may soon take shape.

Kiron Skinner, director of policy planning at the US State Department, said recently the rivalry between the two is "a fight with a really different civilization and a different ideology." But should different civilizations fight with each other? Is such a fight destined to be zero-sum?

Since the US adopts an ideologically aggressive gesture, China has long felt threatened. But with China's growing strength, it has begun to feel that the US does not have such a strategy as to overthrow China, and more people believe the two countries can avoid a strategic collision.

Washington views China as its strategic competitor and launched a trade war against China, which has altered Chinese society's view toward the US. What China and the US mean to each other depends on how they interact with each other. If the US carries out forcible containment against China, then China has no other option but to take all necessary countermeasures.

With BRI, China creates new paradigms without shunning legacy

Global Times — In March, Italy signed a memorandum of understanding on the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), becoming the first G7 country to join the scheme. How will Italy's participation facilitate further China-EU cooperation? How can Italy dispel concerns from its US and EU allies? Global Times (GT) reporter Wang Wenwen talked to Nicola Casarini (Casarini), a senior fellow and head of Asia Research of Rome-based Istituto Affari Internazionali, over these issues.

■ As Italy joins the BRI, there must be something in it for Italy. What benefit could Italy gain and what does Italy want to achieve?

A: Italy wants, in my opinion, three things from China. The first one is to increase market access for companies, in particular for made-in-Italy products. The expanding middle class in China is very much interested in buying and consuming certain kinds of products, in particular, luxury products. And Italy is a very important producer of these products.

The second point is to have more Chinese investments under the BRI framework. It means a lot of infrastructure, but also other kind of investments.

And the third, which is linked up to what Italy wants to achieve, is also some form of commitment that China may be willing to intervene in financial markets if Italy faces some turbulence in placing its debt. Now Italy is going through an economic situation which is not easy. And there could be some problems in financial markets for Italian bonds. Italy would like to diversify its reliance on partners and allies and have also China as a potential partner that could help Italy economically and financially, if it is needed. Of course, this could also be in the interest of China, both economically and politically.

■ Both the US and the EU are rattled by Italy's decision. What are their concerns?

A: First of all, the US is in a global battle for supremacy with China, which has to do not only with trade, but also technology. It means that the US looks at China as a competitor challenging the dominant position of the US in the international system. Besides that, the US and the EU share the same concerns. This has something to do with the way the BRI is developed.

■ How will Italy override such concerns?

A: Italy will override it by saying that the MOU recently signed with China could also serve as a model for other advanced nations. Because the language contained in the MOU is in line with Western norms and principles, and consistent with the EU strategy for Eurasian connectivity. That's why the Italian government believes that this could be a model for other G7 nations and other big EU countries.

The EU is concerned not about the content of the MOU. This is a kind of MOU that I could call the second-generation MOU for advanced nations, like Italy. The problem for the EU is the way the Italian government has approached the issue. Italy did not inform and consult with the EU before the negotiation process, which means it decided to adopt a bilateral approach and break ranks with the rest of the bloc.

■ What experience could China draw from Italy's signing?

A: What convinced Italy to join was that after many negotiations, the Chinese government accepted to sign an MOU in which principles and norms are in line with Western standards.

I think the Chinese government is changing now. They have understood the need to calibrate and change certain things. That's why Italy and China signed a very advanced MOU. China can also learn to think different ways and adjust the thing in order to take into consideration the needs of the other side.

■ What is the prospect of China-Italy cooperation under the framework of the BRI?

A: Democracies, particularly Italian democracy, are used to having lots of governmental changes, which means I doubt this government will remain in power in six months. This Italian government was the perfect government for the signature but not the implementation. For the implementation of the MOU, you need a different government.

Because the most important party in the coalition is against big infrastructure projects. It is called the Five Star Movement. They have more than one third of the votes in the parliament, but they are against those infrastructure projects that would link, for instance, the port of Trieste to the rest of Europe. They are against high-speed railway connections. There could be soon a different government in Italy, led by a center-right coalition.

But in any case, the next government will have a different approach toward China. They may probably be less China-friendly but more useful for implementation of the MOU. In other words, the next Italian government, if a center-right one, will treat China the way EU does. But it will implement infrastructure projects needed for the implementation of the MOU.

■ According to the recent document of the EU Commission "EU-China: A strategic outlook," it defines China as a "negotiating partner." What does this notion convey in terms of the EU's attitude toward China?

A: It means that bilateral relations depend on the issue. And there will be cases where if the EU and China cannot find a compromise, there will not be any more continuation of the negotiations. I think it is a change of position from the European perspective.

But this does not mean China's importance in the EU has declined. On the contrary, China is even more important for the EU. IEUIt's the approach which has changed. I think Europe has become a bit more like Trump in its approach to China, a bit more tough.

■ The EU Commission published its Strategy on Connecting Europe and Euro-Asia, which is believed to be the European version of and a challenge to the BRI. Is there any potential for the two to cooperate?

A: Yes. First of all, it is, in my opinion, the response to the BRI, not the challenge, because challenge is that you try to stop anywhere you see. In this case, the Eurasia Connectivity Strategy welcomes all kinds of strategies for connectivity, as long as they are in line with internationally accepted standards and norms such as transparency rules, a level-playing field, reciprocity, labor and environmental standards. As long as the connectivity strategy of a country is in line with that, the EU is happy to collaborate and to join the forces. There are already plans both in Brussels and in Beijing to find some cooperation projects.

This could be in the long-term interest of China. When China created the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and at a certain point decided about the governing principles, it adopted a Western-style model. Because of that, you had countries like the UK, Germany, France, Italy joining as founding members of the AIIB, and the AIIB has become an example of China being able to create something new, alternative, for instance, to the World Bank, but at the same time, able to operate and work with internationally accepted standards and norms. And so far, it's a kind of success story.

China is at a stage where it believes that there is a need to create alternative institutions and initiatives. But when these initiatives meet with existing norms and principles created by the West, they benefit China. And this will be the example that China can give also to the world: to create something new, but without throwing away what works.

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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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Scientists accidentally designed an incredibly accurate ozone detector

Researchers originally designed the ROZE instrument to detect hydroxyl, which rids the atmosphere of methane. But tests showed the instrument was surprisingly good at measuring ambient levels of ozone -- better than the best available commercial ozone detectors.

"When we started this development effort, ozone was the farthest thing from our minds," NASA research scientist Tom Hanisco said in a news release.

In his attempts to track hydroxyl levels, Hanisco deployed a technique known as gas filter correlation spectroscopy, which works by filtering out the wavelengths that interact with -- or, are absorbed by -- hydroxyl.

An air leak in the device's cavity, which scientists intended to fill with hydroxyl, caused technical difficulties. Instead of producing hydroxyl, the instrument produced ozone. "Ozone interfered, but we did a few quick numbers to see actually how much ozone we could see. As it turned out, the instrument was supersensitive to this molecule," Hanisco said.

When Hanisco and his research partners conducted tests, they determined the re-named Rapid Ozone Experiment instrument was 100 times more precise than the best ozone-detecting devices.

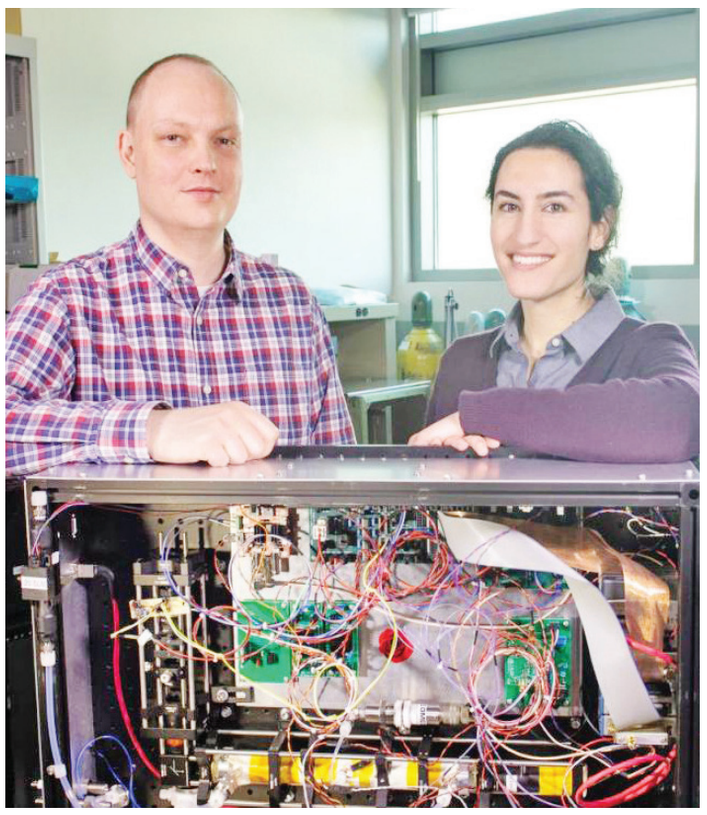
In the stratosphere, ozone is essential. The molecule blocks ultraviolet rays. Closer to Earth's surface, in the troposphere, ozone is a pollutant. It's presence aggravates respiratory diseases that are responsible for thousands of deaths every year.

Ozone is produced in the troposphere when pollutants emitted by cars, power plants and other industrial sources react with nitrogen oxides in the presence of sunlight.

Hanisco expects the new ozone-measuring technology to be used to measure the precise movements of ozone, in order to more accurately estimate the lower atmosphere's ozone budget.

"EPA has models that can predict how much ozone will form," NASA scientist Reem Hannun said. "But these models don't really know how fast it's being deposited. If we don't know the rate, we can't accurately model how ozone moves from one area to the next, or how long it will stick around once formed."

(Source: UPI)



Researchers Andrew Swanson and Reem Hannun, pictured here, helped NASA scientist Tom Hanisco build a device intended to measure hydroxyl. Turns out, it was much better at tracking ozone levels. Photo by NASA/W. Hrybyk

Extinct human lineage settled the Tibetan Plateau long before modern humans

A jawbone unearthed in a holy cave in China reveals that an extinct, mysterious human lineage was likely the first to occupy the high Tibetan Plateau, and not modern humans as previously thought, a new study finds.

This is the first confirmed fossil evidence of this ancient lineage found anywhere other than the Siberian cave where the group was first discovered. The findings, however, suggest that many other fossils of this lineage may have already been unearthed, unbeknownst, in China.

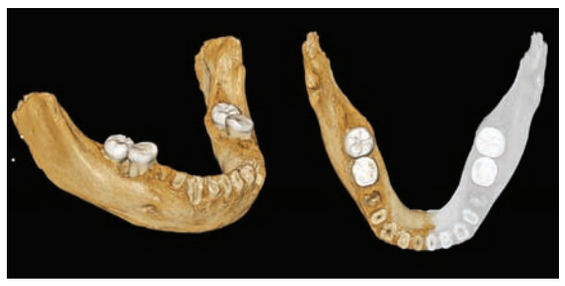
Modern humans are the only surviving branch of the human family tree, but others lived alongside modern humans in the past and even interbred with them, leaving behind DNA in the modern human genome. These archaic lineages included not only the Neanderthals but also the mysterious Denisovans, three groups of which left a genetic legacy stretching from Siberia to Australia.

Until now, all the Denisovan fossils that scientists had were a few scraps from Denisova Cave in the Altai Mountains in Siberia. Now researchers have discovered the right half of a Denisovan lower jaw in a cave more than 2,000 kilometers from the site in China.

The fossil described in the new paper was discovered in 1980 by a Buddhist monk meditating in Baishiya Karst Cave, which lies at the foot of a limestone cliff in Xiahe, China. Baishiya, which means "white cliff," is a holy site where local people regularly pray, and they even sleep in the cave for several days if they are sick, said study co-author Dongju Zhang, an archaeologist at Lanzhou University in China.

The monk could tell the fossil was unusual, since it did not have normal human anatomy and was "half-bone, half-stone," Zhang said. Given its extraordinary nature, the monk donated it to a holy man, the Sixth Gungthang Living Buddha Jigme Tenpai Wangchuk, who then passed it on to scientists at Lanzhou University.

The researchers found a heavy crust of carbonate rock on the jawbone, likely accreting onto the fossil from mineral-laden cave water. Radioisotope dating the carbonate revealed the fossil was at least 160,000 years old, meaning it dated to the middle of the Pleistocene, the epoch often called the Ice Age.



The jawbone is the largest Denisovan fossils discovered to date, helping scientists compare its anatomy with that of other lineages. It displays very large molars, a robust shape and a lack of a developed chin, features it shares with Neanderthals and other archaic humans. However, certain features are distinct from those of Neanderthals, such as the shape of the roots of some of the teeth. One of the molars was still erupting from the jawbone, suggesting it came from an adolescent. The scientists could not detect any traces of DNA preserved in this fossil. However, in one of the molars, they found highly degraded collagen proteins, which study co-author Frido Welker, now a molecular anthropologist at the University of Copenhagen in Denmark, thought might help identify which human lineage the fossil came from.

All proteins are strings of amino acids whose sequences are determined by the DNA used as their blueprints. By analyzing the amino acid sequences of the fossil's proteins, the researchers deduced that the genetic sequences they originated from matched known Denisovan DNA.

The cave's high altitude of 3,280 meters might help solve a puzzling aspect of the Denisovan genome -- they had a genetic variant, also seen in modern populations of the Tibetan Plateau such as Sherpas and Tibetans that would have helped them cope with the lack of oxygen at high altitudes. "Denisova Cave is only about 700 meters from the ground, not at all at high altitude," said study co-author Jean-Jacques Hublin, a paleoanthropologist at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany. "Now we have an explanation for this mutation -- Denisovans or a related population probably lived a long time on the Tibetan Plateau, and this mutation got fixed in their genomes."

Until now, "everybody thought the first humans colonizing challenging environments such as the high altitudes of the Tibetan Plateau were modern humans, who had complex technologies and complex societies," Hublin said. "But at best, modern humans arrived there 40,000 years ago. Our findings show that Denisovans may have lived there 160,000 years ago, right in the middle of what's known as Isotopic Stage 6, which is a glacial episode. That really blows my mind -- who wants to live on the Tibetan Plateau during a glacial episode?"

"There's a strong bias in much of our thinking -- we believe that only modern humans are clever enough to go certain places or live in certain ways," said population geneticist Murray Cox at Massey University in New Zealand, who did not take part in this research. "It's clear we've overestimated our uniqueness. Archaic humans like Denisovans were clearly much more resourceful and adaptable than we have given them credit for."

The scientists are now examining other fossils and artifacts from the cave. They also noted that the Denisovan jawbone resembles fossils of uncertain origin previously discovered in China and off the coast of Taiwan.

"That suggests that other Denisovan remains are sitting in museums around the world, and we just need to put the right label on them to get a better idea of what Denisovans looked like," Cox said. "It's increasingly likely that we already have lots of Denisovan remains, and far from Denisova Cave itself."

Future research may examine both the proteins and DNA from fossils. "Methods that look at protein rather than DNA are going to be especially important for studying remains from warmer regions, where DNA does not tend to survive long," Cox said.

The scientists detailed their findings online May 1 in the journal Nature.

(Source: Inside Science)

Black hole may have swallowed neutron star, say astronomers

Astronomers may have spotted a neutron star being swallowed by a black hole for the first time, marked by a belch of gravitational waves rippling across the cosmos.

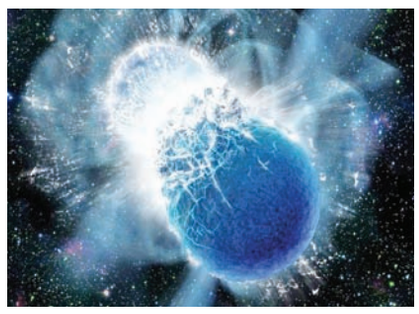
If confirmed, the detection by the twin Ligo detectors in the US and the Virgo detector in Italy would be the first evidence that black holes and neutron stars can pair up in binary systems. The observations could also reveal new details about the nature of such dramatic mergers, including whether the neutron star was ripped apart before crossing the black hole's threshold or whether it slid seamlessly into oblivion.

Patrick Brady, spokesman for the Ligo collaboration and professor of physics at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, said the signal from the possible collision, which took place on 26 April, needed further analysis before the team could be confident it was a real event rather than a random blip in the background noise. "It's like listening to somebody whisper a word in a busy cafe, it can be difficult to make out the word or even to be sure that the person whispered at all," he said. "It will take some time to reach a conclusion about this candidate."

He put the chances of the observations being a glitch in the data at 14%.

Ligo and Virgo pick up the tiny ripples in the fabric of space and time that are sent out across the cosmos when two massive objects collide. The possible detection came just a day after the Ligo and Virgo detectors identified a cataclysmic merger of two neutron stars for only the second time. Since the beginning of their third observational campaign on 1 April, the detectors have also spotted three black hole mergers. Neutron stars are the smallest, densest stars known to exist. They are about 12 miles wide, and a teaspoon of neutron star material has a mass of about a billion tonnes. They have a smooth crust of pure neutrons, 10bn times stronger than steel. They are the collapsed remnants of giant stars, after a supernova explosion – even more massive stars go on to form black holes.

When two neutron stars collide, they not only send out gravitational waves but also light, meaning that if astronomers are able to swivel their optical telescopes to the right bit of sky in time they can also pick up the explosive aftermath in light waves.



The location of the possible neutron star and black hole merger, which is estimated to have taken place 1.2bn light years away, has been narrowed down to about 3% of the total sky – but that is still a vast region.

"All the astronomers are now chasing an unfortunately enormous patch of the sky to see whether there's some light that has switched on at that time," said Prof Alberto Vecchio, director of the Institute of Gravitational Wave Astronomy, University of Birmingham.

Detecting a flash of radiation could reveal crucial details about the size of the objects and the nature of the merger. Counterintuitively, the biggest black holes are the least dense and the gravitational pull at the edge of these objects is least fierce, so a neutron star colliding with a very large black hole might simply vanish from view. "The neutron star would just dive in and nothing happens, that's it," said Vecchio. By contrast, for a smaller black hole, the gravity close to the event horizon would be so fierce that it could shred the neutron star, gobbling it up in several chunks. "Then you'd have this extremely dense material travelling at a fraction of the speed of light," said Vecchio, which he said could release spectacular blasts of radiation that could be spotted by telescopes on Earth. Since Ligo began observing in 2015, its sensitivity has been increased significantly meaning it is now making several detections a month. This increases the chances of it spotting previously unseen exotic objects which have been theoretically predicted, such as boson stars or mini black holes.

"We're opening a new window on the universe and this will hopefully bring us a whole new perspective on what's out there," said Brady.

(Source: The Guardian)

Ancient relative of the blue-tongued skink found in Australia

Paleontologists in Australia have unearthed the complete skeleton of an ancient lizard, an early relative of modern blue-tongued and social skinks. Analysis of the remains -- the most complete lizard fossil yet discovered in Australia -- suggests the 15-million-year-old reptile was remarkably similar to modern lizards.

Scientists described the new species, Egernia gillespieae, this week in the journal Vertebrate Palaeontology.

"This creature looked like something in-between a tree skink and a blue-tongued lizard," Kailah Thorn, PhD student at Flinders University, said in a news release. "It would have been about 25 centimeters long, and unlike any of the living species it was equipped with robust crushing jaws."

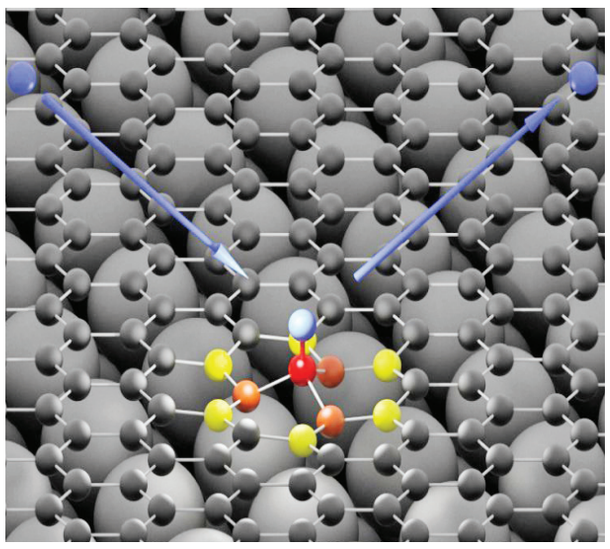
Scientists conducted DNA and anatomical analysis of ancient and modern skinks to pinpoint the timing of the new lizard's evolutionary origins. Paleontologists determined the lizard emerged from the skink genus Egernia around 25 million years ago. "The new fossil is unusually well-preserved, with much of the skull, and some limb bones, all from a single individual," Thorn said. "It belongs to the genus Egernia, a modern species in this group which are often called 'social skinks' and are known for living in family groups, sharing rocky outcrops and hollow tree stumps."

Though similar to modern skinks, the ancient lizard boasted a unique jaw and set of teeth -- a broad jaw and rounded teeth conducive to crushing.

The ancient lizard was found among fossil deposits in the Riversleigh World Heritage site, located in northwest Queensland. Researchers named the new lizard species after Anna Gillespie, a paleontologist at the University of New South Wales, who has led dozens of excavations inside the heritage site. "I have been preparing the Riversleigh fossil material for quite a few years now and lizard bones are rare elements," Gillespie said. "When the jaw appeared and was quickly followed by associated skull elements, I had a good feeling it would be a significant addition to the Riversleigh reptile story."

(Source: UPI)

Stickier than expected: Hydrogen binds to graphene in 10 femtoseconds



Graphene is an extraordinary material consisting of pure carbon just a single atomic layer thick. It is extremely stable, strong and conductive. In electronics, however, graphene has crucial disadvantages. It cannot be used as a semiconductor, since it has no bandgap. Now researchers have produced an ''atomic scale movie'' showing how hydrogen atoms can chemically bind to graphene to produce a bandgap in one of the fastest reactions ever studied.

The hydrogen atom (blue) hits the graphene surface (black) and forms an ultra-fast bond with a carbon atom (red). The high energy of the impinging hydrogen atom is first absorbed by neighboring carbon atoms (orange and yellow) and then passed on to the graphene surface in form of a sound wave

Graphene is celebrated as an extraordinary material. It consists of pure carbon, only a single atomic layer thick. Nevertheless, it is extremely stable, strong, and even conductive. For electronics, however, graphene still has crucial disadvantages. It cannot be used as a semiconductor, since it has no bandgap. By sticking hydrogen atoms to graphene such a bandgap can be formed. Now researchers from Göttingen and Pasadena (USA) have produced an "atomic scale movie" showing how hydrogen atoms chemically bind to graphene in one of the fastest reactions ever studied.

The international research team bombarded graphene with hydrogen atoms. "The hydrogen atom behaved quite differently than we expected," says Alec Wodtke, head of the Department of Dynamics at Surfaces at the Max Planck Institute (MPI) for Biophysical Chemistry and professor at the Institute of Physical Chemistry at the University of Göttingen. "Instead of immediately flying away, the hydrogen atoms 'stick' briefly to the carbon atoms and then bounce off the surface. They form a transient chemical bond," Wodtke reports. And something else surprised the scientists: The hydrogen atoms have a lot of energy before they hit the graphene, but not much left when they fly away. Hydrogen atoms lose most of their energy on collision, but where does it go?

To explain these surprising experimental observations, the Göttingen MPI researcher Alexander Kandratsenka, in cooperation with colleagues at the California Institute of Technology, developed theoretical methods, which they simulated on the computer and then compared to their experiments. With these theoretical simulations, which agree well with the experimental observations, the researchers were able to reproduce the ultra-fast movements of atoms forming the transient chemical bond. "This bond lasts for only about ten femtoseconds -- ten quadrillionths of a second. This makes it one of the fastest chemical reactions ever observed directly," Kandratsenka explains.

"During these ten femtoseconds, the hydrogen atom can transfer almost all its energy to the carbon atoms of the graphene and it triggers a sound wave that propagates outward from the point of the hydrogen atom impact over the graphene surface, much like a stone that falls into water and triggers a wave," says Kandratsenka. The sound wave contributes to the fact that the hydrogen atom can bind more easily to the carbon atom than the scientists had expected and previous models had predicted.

The results of the research team provide fundamentally new insights into chemical bonding. In addition, they are of great interest to industry. Sticking Hydrogen atoms to graphene can produce a bandgap, making it a useful semiconductor and much more versatile in electronics.

The effort involved in setting up and running these experiments was enormous, revealed Oliver Bünermann, project group leader at the University of Göttingen. "We had to carry them out in ultra-high vacuum to keep the graphene surface perfectly clean." The scientists also had to use a large number of laser systems to prepare the hydrogen atoms before the experiment and to detect them after the collision. According to Bünermann, the excellent technical staff in the workshops at the MPI for Biophysical Chemistry and at the University of Göttingen were essential to the project's success.

(Source: Science Daily)

Hubble spots a stunning spiral galaxy

NGC 2903 is located about 30 million light-years away in the constellation of Leo (the Lion), and was studied as part of a Hubble survey of the central regions of roughly 145 nearby disk galaxies.

Few of the universe's residents are as iconic as the spiral galaxy. These limelight-hogging celestial objects combine whirling, pinwheeling arms with scatterings of sparkling stars, glowing bursts of gas, and dark, weaving lanes of cosmic dust, creating truly awesome scenes -- especially when viewed through a telescope such as the NASA/ESA Hubble Space Telescope. In fact, this image from Hubble frames a perfect spiral specimen: the stunning NGC 2903.

NGC 2903 is located about 30 million light-years away in the constellation of Leo (the Lion), and was studied as part of a Hubble survey of the central regions of roughly 145 nearby disk galaxies. This study aimed to help astronomers better understand the relationship between the black holes that lurk at the cores of galaxies like these, and the rugby-ball-shaped bulge of stars, gas and dust at the galaxy's center -- such as that seen in this image.

(Source: Science Daily)

New tourism route to link inland desert with Caspian Sea

TOURISM desk **TEHRAN** — Iran's tourism body is considering to create a new tourism route, which will connect an inland desert to the Caspian coasts, CHTN reported on Sunday.

"A [sightseeing] project that connects a desert landscape to the Caspian Sea will create a new itinerary between the northern provinces and the deserts such as one in Semnan province," Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization Director Ali-Asghar Mounesan said.



Mounesan who doubles as vice president also called for strengthening of tourism infrastructure in northern Mazandaran province by the means of constructing high-standard hotels.

"We need [existing] tourist attractions to become more active across the province and we also consider to develop maritime tourism in Mazandaran," he added.

"Investors can plan to establish residential centers, tourist attraction projects in Mazandaran in order to turn individual travels to group ones."

Iranians made over 74 million overnight stays during the two-week New Year (Noruz) holidays, started March 21, with Mazandaran being amongst their top destinations. Last year, over 11 million domestic holidaymakers visited the northern province from March 18 to 30, 2018. Mazandaran is home to over 70 eco-lodges and some 3000 villages.

4,500-year-old cemetery and sarcophagi discovered by Giza Pyramids

A 4,500-year-old cemetery has been discovered southeast of the famous Giza Pyramids, the Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities announced on May 4.

Several tombs and burials were discovered in the cemetery, with one of the oldest tombs holding the remains of two individuals — one named "Behnui-Ka" and another named "Nwi." Their sarcophagi were found intact and their remains are likely inside; however, no information on them has been released. Analysis of the tomb's artifacts and hieroglyphic inscriptions revealed that the two men lived almost 4,500 years ago, during what historians often call the Fifth Dynasty, a time after the Giza Pyramids had been built.

According to those inscriptions, Behnui-Ka was a priest and judge who held a number of titles, including a lengthy one that calls him "the purifier of kings: Khafre, Userkaf and Niuserre." Khafre was a pharaoh who ordered the construction of one of the Giza Pyramids, while Userkaf and Niuserre were pharaohs who ruled Egypt during the Fifth Dynasty.

Nwi also held a number of titles, including "chief of the great state," "the overseer of the new settlements" and "the purifier of King Khafre," according to the inscriptions found in the tomb. Analysis of the inscriptions and titles is ongoing.

(Source: Live Science)

ROUND THE GLOBE

Gebel Barkal and sites of the Napatan region

Gebel Barkal and the sites of the Napatan region is comprised of five archaeological sites on both sides of the Nile in an arid area considered part of Nubia, Sudan.

Together they cover an area more than 60 km long. The sites (Gebel Barkal, Kurru, Nuri, Sanam and Zuma) represent the Napatan (900 - 270 BC) and Meroitic (270 BC - 350 CE) cultures of the second kingdom of Kush.



They include tombs, with and without pyramids, temples, burial mounds and chambers, living complexes and palaces. They exhibit an architectural tradition that shaped the political, religious, social and artistic scene of the Middle and Northern Nile Valley for more than 2000 years (1500 BC- 6th Century CE).

The pyramids, tombs, temples, palaces, burial mounds and funerary chambers set in the desert border landscape on the banks of the Nile, are unique in their typology and technique.

The remains, with their art and inscriptions, are testimony to a great ancient culture that existed and flourished only in this region.

Gebel Barkal has been a sacred mountain since New Kingdom times (ca. 1500 BC). The Egyptians believed that their state god Amon resided in this "Holy Mountain". Today, the mountain is locally named (Gebel Wad el-Karsani) after a Muslim sheikh (saint) buried near the 100m high, flat-topped sandstone rock.

The mountain is closely associated with religious traditions, since the tomb of this sheikh is still being visited by the local people for blessings.

(Source: UNESCO)

Foreign tourist arrivals fetch Iran $11.8b in calendar year

TOURISM desk **TEHRAN** — International travelers have spent some $11.8 billion in Iran over the past Iranian calendar year 1397 (ended March 20), tourism chief said on Sunday.

"According to the central bank's latest data, the country's tourism sector has earned 11 billion and 800 million dollars last year," Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization Director Ali-Asghar Mounesan said, IRNA reported.

"For the time being, the tourism sector is becoming the third largest source of income in the world economy so that more attention should be paid to the sector in our country," Mounesan said.

Mounesan made the remarks on the sidelines of an opening ceremony for a major tulips festival, adding, "Tourism sector, because of its specific circumstances, has suffered the least damage from the [U.S.-led] sanctions, and therefore tourism can aid Iran's economy. In addition, the sector indirectly helps to boost social vitality is treasured."

The official emphasized that the government should attach more importance to the tourism sector, adding, "[problems with] Iran's tourism industry should be addressed as soon as possible so that it can be a good source of income for the country."

The number of international tourists visiting Iran surged 52.5 percent in the past Iranian calendar year 1397 from a year earlier, according to data compiled by the CHHTO.

The Islamic Republic hosted some 7.8 million foreign nationals in that year, which shows a 52.5 percent increase year on year.

The 2019 Travel Risk Map, which shows the risk level around the world, puts Iran among countries with "insignificant risk", a category where the UK, Denmark, Switzerland, Norway, and Finland are placed in.



International travelers visit bas-relief carvings of the eastern staircase of Apadana, a ruined palace in the UNESCO-tagged Persepolis, southern Iran.

Vardij, home of stone monsters

By Mohammad Ali Haqshenas

TEHRAN (MNA) — Not too far from Tehran, there is a village where its rocks will kind of scare you as they look like monsters.

In the northwest of the metropolitan Tehran, lies a scenic village named Vardij which is considered among tourism destinations of Tehraners in springs and summers.

The village is located some 15 kilometers north of Vardavard which is the most western region of Tehran. Located in an altitude of 1850 meters above sea level, Vardij is part of Tehran's District 22, and home to some 705 people according to 2016 consensus.

En-route to this destination, if lucky, you may see seasonal waterfalls on different corners of mountains. Springs join together in wet seasons to form a river which can even flow to southwestern sections of Tehran. The water flow and its beauties in the valley are mostly hidden to those who are traveling by road. Many come to the valley in the weekend on foot to enjoy the many waterfalls in the path.



Going further by car on the road which meanders in the mountain, one will see on the left side a host of soft rocks that can scare you at first glance. These monster stones lie just on top of Vardij village.

Taking a closer look at these strange rocks, you can see different types of monsters. Human skulls and animal bodies can be recognized among the crowded hill of stone giants.

There are numerous stories behind these figures. Some locals believe that these rocks are ghosts that are turned into stones. However, science tells us that the rocks have been shaped by hundred-thousands of years of erosion.

If you are eager to have an hour-long on-foot trip, you can also see one of the tallest waterfalls in Tehran; Lat Mall. The impressive cascade consists of three waterfalls the first two of which are something around 5-7 meters high. The third waterfall is 35 meters tall and flows down like stairs.

The best season to visit Vardij is in spring and summer as you can even taste its delicious fruits of cherry, apple, and walnut among others. It is not a favorite destination in autumn and winters since it gets so cold that even 90 percent of its population abandon it for warmer and more secure regions.

How to assess security risks while traveling

By Patrick Scott

While we can't predict the next crisis, preparing for the worst and taking charge of our own personal security are essential steps.

Tourists who researched security conditions in Sri Lanka before the Easter Sunday terror attacks would have found that travel advisories ranked the threat of terrorism as low.

The church and hotel bombings on the island shattered that outlook, underscoring how attacks increasingly occur in presumably safe locations, and raising questions about the value of due diligence with so much uncertainty in the world.

But travel and risk mitigation experts insist that, while we can't predict the next crisis, preparing for the worst and taking charge of our own personal security are essential.

"Most of us are not going to end up in a terrorist attack," said Chris Abbott, executive director of Open Briefing, a company that provides security and intelligence services to nongovernmental organizations. "Know the high-risk areas and where the threats are and know what you're going to do when it goes down."

Research before you go

Official government sites contain troves of analyses on most countries and the potential threats facing visitors, as well as advice on everything a traveler might need, from vaccines to insurance to crisis planning.

"There's a lot of good information in those government sites if people haven't considering looking at them," said Evan Godt, the destinations managing editor of guidebook giant, Lonely Planet.

The travel advisories weigh factors like crime, terrorism and civil unrest and typically range from "exercise normal precautions" to "do not travel." It's wise to review multiple government sites, including the United Kingdom Foreign Office, the Australian Foreign Affairs department and the United States Department of State.

Register your trip in the State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive alerts on security changes and so officials can reach you in an emergency. The department's Overseas Security Advisory Council also releases in-depth crime and safety reports on countries and major cities.

Ciara Johnson, a 26-year-old solo traveler who has visited some 40 countries and shares safety tips on social media, gets her global view of travel advisories from the State Department's color-coded world map. She also sometimes looks at International SOS's travelriskmap.com, which ranks countries by health care and security risk.

She reads firsthand accounts from other female travelers on sites like Solo Traveler and Solo Female Traveler Network. She also reads up on her destinations in Lonely Planet, buys insurance from its recommended provider, World Nomads, and checks out that site's articles on safety.

Terrorism is not so much on her mind as personal safety. Life carries risks whether staying at home or traveling the world, Ms. Johnson said.

"But I think you can take steps to prevent bad things from happening and prepare yourself as much as possible," she said.

Do it yourself or book a tour?

Many travelers leave the front-end work to tour operators. Grasshopper Adventures, which runs most of its cycling tours in Southeast Asia, consults a variety of sources about its destinations, including government sites, cycling touring forums, and traffic and accident statistics, said its chief executive, Adam Platt-Hepworth.

When suicide bombers struck in Sri Lanka, the company had two tours underway and they both finished without incident. In the coming weeks, several more of the 9-day rides were still a go.

"We thought everyone would cancel," Mr. Platt-Hepworth said, "but a surprising number of people said, 'Yeah, I'm still going. That's not going to mess up my holiday.'"

When the British government on April 25 advised against all but essential travel to Sri Lanka, TUI Group, one of the world's biggest tour operators, encouraged its 200 or so customers to leave, said Martin Riecken, head of corporate communications.

Those who bought future trips to the island were offered free rebooking or a full refund, he said. The company always follows the advice of the governments where its divisions are based like Germany, the United Kingdom and France.

"If any foreign office imposes a travel warning, we won't fly there," Mr. Riecken said.

Consider the power of your phone

Many corporations and nongovernmental organizations enlist travel security and risk mitigation firms to help protect staff abroad, and some of those services are available to leisure travelers.

International SOS offers medical insurance and travel assistance that includes access to its app, with safety reports on each country, and advice by phone from its analysts. That could include recommending options for secure hotels and for safe transportation after an extreme event. For two people traveling to Egypt for a week, for example, this package costs about $200.



Tourists walk past a security checkpoint at the Bandaranaike International Airport in Sri Lanka days after the attacks.

There are a number of mobile apps that track users and send out alerts on changing security conditions. The Sitata app lets you enter trip dates and location and view reports by country on personal safety, extreme violence and political unrest. Sitata, which is free, and Safeture app, to be available to consumers this summer for around $40 a year, send users alerts for selected countries on flight disruptions, demonstrations and disease outbreaks.

Mobile apps Life360 and Apple's Find My Friends, both free, share your location with people in your group, and send alerts when users arrive at a location. Life360 also lets you send a help alert to your group.

Before and during your trip

Locate your country's nearest consulate or embassy and keep their addresses and emergency numbers with you. Most important, experts say, is assess your surroundings and have a plan for getting out of harm's way. That could mean using a bathroom for a panic room. If you're in an open area or public place when violence occurs, "You go away from it, always," said Matthew Bradley, regional security director for risk management firms International SOS and Control Risks.

When choosing a hotel, he said, find one with "the same level of security as every other hotel in town, or a little higher." It's best not to stay above the fifth floor, so emergency truck ladders can still reach, he said.

Don't overlook packing a good first aid kit, a door stopper and a mosquito net, and make sure you've had the right vaccinations, said Mr. Abbott of Open Briefing.

"Honestly, it's the small stuff," he said.

(Source: The New York Times)

Organ donation sets record high in one month

HEALTH desk **TEHRAN** — Organ donation in Iran set a record high in the first Iranian calendar month Farvardin (March 21-April 20) compared to the same period last year, an official with the Ministry of Health has said.

Last year (March 2018-March 2019) some 923 cases of organ donation were recorded in the country, Sanaz Dehqan said, however, she didn't provide any exact figures about the number of organ donations reported in the first Iranian calendar month.

Dehqan went on to say that an automated database of organ transplantation has already launched in the country.

In mid-February head of the transplantation and treatment of diseases department at the Ministry of Health Mehdi Shadnoosh said that the first stage of establishing an automated database of organ transplantation would begin on March 1st. The second stage of this project will begin in May and the aim is for the whole system of organ donation to be automated in time, he added.

The database will include all the information about the people who are awaiting an organ donation; then the system will automatically rank them based on their needs and whenever a new organ is found the top ten on the waiting list will be introduced, he further explained.



According to the figures revealed by International Registry in Organ Donation and Transplantation (IRODaT) Spain leads the world in organ donation.

Some 5,000 people die of brain death annually in Iran, out of 3,000 brain deaths reported last year being qualified to be organ donors, only 926 donated their organs.

Figures published for 2017 reveal that 2,183 people in Spain became organ donors last year after they died. That's 46.9 pmp – a standard way of measuring the rate of donation in a country, The Independent reported in July 2018.

Spain's closest contender is Croatia, with 38.6 pmp (2016). It has maintained its position as the clear leader for the past 26 years. In a press release, Spain's National Transplant Organization confidently describes the country as unbeatable.

According to the data published on IRODaT by the end of 2017 Iran's per million population of actual deceased organ donors was 11.43. In 1996 Iran's per million population of actual deceased organ donors was 0.1, which compared to the current per million people in the population (pmp) shows a great increase.

Some 5,000 people die of brain death annually in Iran, out of 3,000 brain deaths reported last year being qualified to be organ donors, only 926 donated their organs.

In May 2018, Masih Daneshvari hospital's manager Ali Akbar Velayati said that some 10,000 people are waiting in transplant lists and every day some 10 people waiting for an organ lost their lives.

Omid Qobadi told IRNA in October 2018 that some 5 million Iranians hold organ donor cards.

Ramadan 2019: The health benefits of fasting

Ramadan, which begins on May 6 in most countries this year, is the holiest month in the Islamic calendar.

It involves abstaining from eating, drinking, smoking and sexual relations from dawn to sunset, in the hopes that it will lead to greater 'taqwa', or consciousness of God.

Muslims were commanded to fast during Ramadan more than 1400 years ago, the ancient Greeks recommended fasting to heal the body, and today some scientists are advocating a modified fast for its mental and physical benefits.

Known as intermittent fasting, this modified fast comes in a number of forms that require not eating for 12, 16, or 24 hours at a time. Another form, known as the 5:2 fast, advocates calorie restriction (eating only between 500 and 600 calories) over a period of 36 hours, twice a week.

Eat Stop Eat, a book by Brad Pilon published in 2007, recommended abstaining from eating for 24 hours once or twice a week, giving individuals the freedom to decide when to start and end their fast.

In 2012, Michael Mosley released his TV documentary Eat, Fast and Live Longer and published his best-selling book The Fast Diet, both based on the 5:2 concept of intermittent fasting.

"In The Fast Diet I advocate a form of fasting called 'time-restricted eating'", Mosley told Al Jazeera.

"This involves only eating within certain hours, similar to the form of fasting practiced by Muslims during Ramadan.

"The proven benefits include improved sleep and evidence of reduced risk of some cancers, in particular, breast cancer."

Benefits of fasting

Experts have also found that restricting food intake during the day can help prevent health problems such as high cholesterol, heart disease and obesity, as well as improve mental health and wellbeing.

By not consuming any food, our body is able to concentrate on removing toxins, as we give the digestive system a rest.

Nutritiionist Claire Mahy told Al Jazeera: "Fasting allows the gut to cleanse and strengthens its lining. It can also stimulate a process called autophagy, which is where cells self-cleanse and remove damaged and dangerous particles."

Scientists have also been studying the link between diet, gut health and mental wellbeing and, as Mosley explained to Al Jazeera, fasting can lead to the release of BDNF (brain-derived neurotrophic factor) in the brain.

"This has been shown to protect brain cells and could reduce depression and anxiety, as well as the risk of developing dementia," Mosley added.

Many people who have embraced fasting have also found that, done properly, it has helped them lose fat and gain lean muscle mass.

When not to fast

As with any diet or lifestyle change, there are risks to fasting as it is not suited to everyone.

Individuals with compromised health or those who are being followed by a physician for any health conditions should consult



a doctor before trying it in order to be monitored for some of the side-effects.

"Fasting can lead to low blood glucose levels (BGL), which causes reduced concentration and increased fatigue," explained registered nutritionist Nazmin Islam.

Islam added that sustainable weight loss is only possible with regular fasting and that any weight loss during Ramadan could easily be reversed once an individual returns to their daily eating patterns.

"However, the benefits outweigh the cons. In the long run, fasting, if done correctly, can improve one's digestive system and overall metabolism." *(Source: aljazeera.com)*

Colorectal cancer vaccine has promising results in early trials

A clinical trial shows promise for a new colorectal cancer vaccine, as it caused no serious side effects while bloodwork demonstrated immune cell activation.

New research offers hope of an effective vaccine for colorectal cancer.

These results appear in the Journal for ImmunoTherapy of Cancer and outline a phase 1 clinical trial.

The trial set out to establish if the vaccine itself was safe and whether it activated immune cells — both aspects of which were satisfactory. This success paves the way for further study.

A research team at Jefferson (Philadelphia University and Thomas Jefferson University) in the United States is the developer of the vaccine.

The group's latest scientific work involved 10 individuals who had stage 1 or 2 colon cancer.

The team administered the vaccine to the participants who returned for bloodwork at 30, 90, and 180 days after the drug delivery.

The blood samples showed evidence of killer T cell activation, a process that causes the T cells to find and destroy colon cancer cells.

The Jefferson scientists were also interested in the potential side effects of the vaccine during this trial. While the participants had some discomfort at the injection point, they reported no serious side effects.

The vaccine works by mobilizing the immune system against a specific molecule the scientists call GUCY2C. Prior research discovered that this molecule is a marker that colorectal tumors express and that helps these cancer cells stand out from healthy cells.

Researchers paired this molecule with another one that augments an immune reaction with the hope that it would target the cancer cells and kill them.

"There is an urgent need to understand what fuels colorectal cancer growth, and to harness that knowledge for developing novel therapies," says Karen E. Knudsen, Ph.D., who is the director of the Sidney Kimmel Cancer Center at Jefferson Health in Philadelphia, PA.

"This pivotal study provides some of the first evidence that it may be possible to safely direct a patient's own immune system to seek and destroy this cancer type. This is a true milestone — made possible through the scientists and clinicians in our colorectal cancer team working in synchrony."

Why colorectal cancer research is vital

Colorectal cancer includes cancers that start in the colon or the rectum. Doctors group them because they share many features of the disease and its progression.

The disease begins as one or more growths on the inner lining of the colon or rectum, and these can become cancerous over time.

Colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer in the U.S. among both men and women. The American Cancer Society (ACS) estimate that doctors will diagnose in excess of 101,000 new cases of colon cancer and more than 44,000 cases of rectal cancer this year.

As well as being the third most common cancer diagnosis, colorectal cancer is also the third leading cause of cancer-related deaths for both men and women. The ACS say the disease is expected to cause around 51,000 deaths in 2019.

Early detection of this type of cancer is crucial, as there may not be symptoms present in the preliminary stages. Colonoscopies can detect and remove polyps before they become cancerous, and there are less-invasive tests of stool that can help detect its presence. *(Source: Medical News Today)*

Could a cell phone game detect who is at risk of Alzheimer's?

An Alzheimer's diagnosis often relies on signs of memory problems. However, these issues usually do not appear until years after the disease has taken hold. A new smartphone game is using spatial navigation to detect Alzheimer's before it is too late.

Another person develops Alzheimer's disease every 3 seconds, according to Alzheimer's Disease International. The number of people living with this most common form of dementia currently stands at around 50 million. By 2050, experts expect this figure to have tripled.

The last "significant breakthrough" in Alzheimer's research happened 4 decades ago, states the latest World Alzheimer's Report. However, a recently developed smartphone game may alter that statistic.

"Research shows us that the brain changes associated with diseases like Alzheimer's begin decades before symptoms like memory loss start," says Hilary Evans, chief executive at Alzheimer's Research United Kingdom.

"[F]or future Alzheimer's treatments to be effective, it's likely they must be given at the earliest stages of disease, before there's too much damage to the brain."

Navigating space

A collaboration between the organization, the University of East Anglia (UEA) and University College London in the U.K., and Deutsche Telekom has resulted in a game that may help experts detect who is at risk of Alzheimer's.

"We often hear heartbreaking stories about people with



dementia who get lost and can't find their way home," continues Evans, adding that spatial navigation issues "are some of the earliest warning signs for the condition."

Such problems are the focus of the Sea Hero Quest game, which encourages players to find their way around various mazes. So far, more than 4.3 million people across the globe have tried it.

In the current study, which features in the journal PNAS, the researchers compared how different people played the game and found some interesting results. They analyzed data from more than 27,000 U.K. players between the ages of 50 and 75 years and also recruited a lab group of 60 individuals for genetic testing.

A game changer

Genetic testing revealed that 31 of the participants in the smaller group had the APOE4 gene. Carriers of this gene are almost three times more likely than other people to develop Alzheimer's disease, and it tends to appear when they are younger.

When the team compared the lab group data with the benchmark data, they could distinguish between those with and without the APOE4 gene based on the way that they played Sea Hero Quest.

Those with a genetic predisposition to Alzheimer's "took less efficient routes to checkpoint goals" and "performed worse on spatial navigation tasks," notes Prof. Michael Hornberger from the UEA, who is the lead researcher. "This is really important because these are people with no memory problems."

Waiting until someone demonstrates memory issues to diagnose Alzheimer's may be too late, adds Prof. Hornberger, because such symptoms occur "when the disease is quite advanced."

"[E]merging evidence shows that subtle spatial navigation and awareness deficits can precede memory symptoms by many years."

In fact, a routine memory test was ineffective in recognizing the difference between those who were and were not at risk of the disease.

(Source: parallelstate.com)

Australian box jellyfish: Antidote for the world's most venomous creature discovered

An antidote to the sting of the world's most venomous creature has been discovered by scientists.

The Australian box jellyfish carries enough venom in its tentacles his to kill more than 60 people. A single sting from can cause excruciating pain, scarring and even cardiac arrest leading to "death within minutes" if the exposure is large enough.

But now researchers at the University of Sydney have found a way to block the venom's ability to destroy cells.

The team used the genome-editing method known as CRISPR to work out exactly how the venom attacks, before using a cholesterol-absorbing drugs called cyclodextrins to prevent it from killing cells.

"Our drug works on the big beast," said associate professor Greg Neely, one of the study's authors. "We don't know yet if it works on other jellyfish, but we know it works on the most-deadly one."

The antidote blocks the symptoms of a box jellyfish sting if administered to the skin within 15 minutes after contact.

It was shown to work on human cells outside the body and then tested effectively on live mice. The Australian pain researchers now hope to develop a topical application for humans.

"The jellyfish venom pathway we identified in this study requires cholesterol, and since there are lots of drugs available that target cholesterol, we could try to block this pathway to see how this impacted venom activity," said Dr Raymond Lau, the lead author of the paper published in the journal Nature Communications.

"We took one of those drugs, which we know is safe for human use, and we used it against the venom, and it worked. It's a molecular antidote."

The researchers do not know yet whether the drugs could be used to stop a heart attack induced by a box jellyfish sting.

They hope their findings could lead to a cardiac injection treatment in the emergency room in very severe cases.

Writing for the academic site The Conversation, Prof Neely said the "really cool thing" is that cyclodextrins "are known to be safe for us in humans, and are cheap and stable".

He added: "So now we are trying to work with the state or national government, or first responders, to see if we can move this venom antidote forward for human use."

(Source: The Independent)

Ebola death toll passes 1,000 in DR Congo amid second deadliest outbreak in history

Over 1,000 people have died in an Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), one of the deadliest outbreaks of the disease in history.

With efforts to bring it under control hampered by civil war and mistrust, health minister Oly Ilunga said 1,008 lives have been claimed by the virus.

While the crisis is a long way off the 2014-2016 outbreak in West Africa's Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, which killed more than 11,000, people experts warn its true extent in DRC is not clear.

"There might be double this many cases in reality that we're just not aware of," Tariq Riebl, emergency response director for the Ebola response crisis with the International Rescue Committee.

Despite the risk of spread across the highly porous borders with Uganda and Rwanda or further afield, in April the World Health Organization (WHO) again opted not to declare a global health emergency.



Ebola treatment centers have come under repeated attack and many international aid agencies have pulled staff out of hotspots, like the towns of Katwa and Butembo, leaving government health workers struggling to cope.

Last month a Cameroonian epidemiologist working with the WHO was killed during an assault on a hospital in Butembo.

Insecurity has become a "major impediment" to controlling the Ebola outbreak, Michael Ryan, WHO's health emergencies chief, told reporters in Geneva on Friday.

He said 119 attacks have been recorded since January, 42 of them directed at health facilities, while 85 health workers have been wounded or killed.

Dozens of rebel groups operate in the region, and political rivalries in part drive's community rejection of health personnel.

"Every time we have managed to regain control over the virus and contain its spread, we have suffered major, major security events," Mr Ryan said.

He added they were "anticipating a scenario of continued intense transmission" of the disease.

WHO has said the most recent Ebola outbreak remained contained to eastern Congo even as the number of cases rises in a dense, highly mobile population near the border.

Many people fear going to Ebola treatment centers, choosing instead to stay at home and risk transmitting the disease from the virus to family and neighbors.

Residents of highly volatile Butembo believe Ebola was brought to the city on purpose, said Vianney Musavuli, 24, adding: "I am deeply saddened to learn that the number of Ebola deaths has exceeded 1,000.

"The problem is that people here in this area [people] believe Ebola is a political thing, and that's why residents are still attacking the teams in retaliation."

Insecurity also has prevented vaccination teams from getting to some areas, further limiting the health response.

However, more than 109,000 people have received an experimental but effective Ebola vaccine.

Mr Ryan said authorities are looking at introducing another one. He called for more help from Congo and elsewhere to close an "urgent, critical gap" of some $54m in containment funding.

(Source: The Independent)

Gas that makes mountains breathe fire is appearing around the world

At the top of a mountain in southwest Turkey, the ground spits fire. Known as the Flames of Chimaera, they have burned for millenniums. Local myth long held that these fires were the breath of a monster – part goat, part snake, part lion.

Today we know the fuel for this flaming mountaintop is gas escaping from deep within the earth. But it does not come from the decay of ancient plant, algae or animal life, like fossil fuels.

Instead, this gas comes from a chemical reaction inside rocks. And a series of studies published by a group of international scientists known as the Deep Carbon Observatory is showing that this source of gas is more common on our planet than previously known.

"We have discovered these unusual types of methane in many, many sites. It's not a rare phenomenon," said Giuseppe Etiope, a member of the group who helped discover the cause of the Flames of Chimaera in 2014.

Over the past decade, the observatory's community of scientists has found hundreds of gas deposits in more than 20 countries and several spots at the bottom of the sea that are similar to the Flames of Chimaera.

And they've learned that the recipe for these gas emissions is far more complex than previously thought.

"We now have a better understanding of the different way we can make methane on Earth. There's not only the biological regime as we know it," said Bénédicte Menez, a geomicrobiologist at the Institut de Physique du Globe de Paris.

Abiotic methane, as it's called, does nor involve decayed plants, animals or algae trapped in sedimentary rocks, like biotic methane. The chemical reactions that produce these gasses involve water and rocks sometimes miles below Earth's surface.

For years, Deep Carbon Observatory researchers have collected and analysed gas samples from hundreds of diverse sites. Using special tools to figure out where the methane came from, they have discovered Earth's basic recipe: Take hydrogen from water. Mix with inorganic carbon from minerals or gas. Add another metal-rich mineral to get the process going, and voilà – abiotic methane.

The hydrogen often comes from serpentinisation, when water percolates usually through rocks from the mantle. But the recipe varies. Different sites may use different minerals or carbons sourced from their environments: Hydrogen may come from friction, or radiolysis, instead of serpentinisation. Temperatures may range from below 121C, which can still support life, to around 482C, which cannot.

So the fires of Chimaera were the result of carbon-dioxide-rich limestone, or calcium carbonate and hydrogen-rich serpentinised rocks that were doused by rainwater.

By contrast, in the ocean, at sites like the Lost City hydrothermal vent field, most methane formed under the higher temperatures produced when once-buried mantle rocks were exposed and serpentinised by circulating seawater.

In each case, we see chemosynthesis – the deep-earth version of photosynthesis. Only its energy comes from a chemical reaction, not the sun. Both processes transform inorganic molecules to organic products life can use, which is the basis for all ecosystems on the planet.

In some instances, chemosynthesis also produces amino acids, the building blocks of life.

With the new tools designed to study Earth's subsurface, researchers can determine whether methane came from ancient life or lifeless rocks. In doing so, they also reveal secrets about how life may have emerged on this planet – and the possibility for life elsewhere, like inside Mars or on the ocean floor of Saturn's icy moon, Enceladus.

Scientists like Menez think chemosynthesis may have come before photosynthesis, and allowed for emergence of microbes that eat and produce methane. "We know that life did not emerge from scratch." she said.

(Source: The Independent)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Jonathan Aitken

(June 10, 1999)
The British former cabinet minister Jonathan Aitken was sentenced to 18 months in prison for perjury and conspiracy to pervert the course of justice. We heard from Mr Aitken's lawyer, from Sir Malcolm Rifkind, a former colleague, and an earlier statement from Mr Aitken.
On January 19th this year Jonthan Aitken **admitted charges** of **perjury** and **perverting** the course of justice. Today in court number one he was **sentenced** to eighteen months in prison. Mr Aitken does not intend to **appeal**. (Bruce Streather, Mr Aitken's lawyer)
He's become very realistic about what has happened. He doesn't blame anyone else, he blames himself entirely for what has happened. He recognizes he behaved very **foolishly**. I think there is genuine **remorse** there. It doesn't excuse behavior, but I think it shows a human quality which is not surprising. I mean he's a very human person and like all human beings, he has **strong points and weak points**, but sadly the weak points have brought him to his current state. (Sir Malcom Rifkind)
Mr Aitken made this statement when launching a libel action against a British newspaper in 1995.
If it now **falls to me** to start a fight, to **cut out the cancer** of **bent and twisted journalism** in our country with the **simple sword of truth and the trusty shield** of traditional Britsh fair play, so be it. I am ready for that fight - the fight against falsehood and all who peddle it.

Words
admitted charges: he said he had done what he was accused of
perjury: a legal term: if you take an oath in a court of law and then lie, then you commit perjury
perverting: interfering with the process of justice
sentenced: the announcement of the punishment that a person will receive after they have been found guilty
appeal: a request for a decision to be changed
foolishly: the opposite of behaving sensibly
remorse: a strong feeling of regret and guilt at something wrong you have done
strong points and weak points: a point is a quality or aspect of someone
falls to me: a formal way of saying it is his responsibility
cut out the cancer: a figurative expression meaning to eliminate
bent and twisted journalism: writing in newspapers that distorts the truth
simple sword...trusty shield: a somewhat poetic expression: 'fair play' means that you don't cheat at sports

(Source: BBC)

Kani Barazan international wetland overflows after a decade

ENVIRONMENT desk

TEHRAN — Recent downpours made Kani Barazan international wetland full to bursting its banks which is unprecedented over the past ten years, Mahabad chief of department of environment (DOE) has stated.

Kani Barazan wetland, located in Mahabad county in northwestern province of West Azarbaijan, was once recorded as the first bird-sighting site in the country.

Stretching to 907 hectares, Kani Barazan wetland is home to various bird species including, flamingo, little cormorant, great white pelican, stilt, sternidae, great crested grebe, graylag goose, lesser white-fronted goose, heron, common shelduck and etc.

The wetland retains 16 million cubic meters of water, which is already overflowed, IRNA quoted Farooq Sokhanvar as saying on Sunday.

"The overflowed water is entering three wetlands near the Lake Urmia, as it is part of southern ecology of Lake Urmia," he further stated.

By launching the online monitoring station in the wetland, water level, oxygen, temperature, pressure and humidity of the wetland are recorded and transmitted to aquatic ecosystems department at the



DOE, he highlighted.

In 2006, the wetland was declared as a hunting prohibited area and the first wildlife refuge in the West Azarbaijan province due to its unique ecosystem, he concluded.

According to Energy Ministry, since the current crop year (September 23, 2018), province of West Azarbaijan also hit the normal averages getting 476.1 millimeters of rain, so precipitation increased by 45.3 percent in the province compared to last year rate of 327.7 millimeters, it also beat the long-run record of 293.8 millimeters by 62 percent rise.

Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian said in early April that recent heavy rainfalls in Iran has filled 70 percent of dams and resulted in restoration of drained wetlands across the country.

Kani Barazan international wetland ecosystem

Earlier in March, Sokhanvar told IRNA that some 30,000 migratory birds have winged their ways to Kani Barazan Wetland, located in northwestern province of West Azarbaijan.

According to the persiaport.com the wetland hosts a range of native and migrating birds. Kani Barazan Wetland is one of the main wildlife habitats in northwestern Iran being supplied by Mahabad dam and its downstream river.

Birdwatchers call it Iran birds' paradise being the first bird-watching site of Iran. The best time for bird-watching in the region is from mid-January to mid-February.

Interestingly, the local residents voluntarily assume the responsibility of protecting this wetland and its wild life from poaching.

Due to its topography and mass canebrakes, the wetland is mainly frequented by water birds. According to the estimates, there are 75 kinds of aquatic species identified in the wetland, belonging to 11 broader categories of birds.

Animal, botanic garden inaugurated in Tehran

SOCIETY desk

TEHRAN — A garden dedicated to preserve and display different endemic plants and animals have been inaugurated near Chitgar Lake, in northwestern part of Tehran, Fars news agency reported on Saturday.

The garden is called Raz-e-Hasti (literally meaning secret of existence), which was inaugurated with Tehran Mayor, Pirouz Hanachi in attendance.

Stretching over 18.5 hectares of land area, the garden collects a verity of native roses and a set of wheat grasses cultivated in a farm-like land, and displays some wildlife



species like deer, in addition to domestic animals such as goats and camels.

There is a collection of nearly 100 peacocks and pheasants, as well as native species of foxes and squirrels in the garden, and some nests has been set for 50 pigeons.

A total budget of 150 billion rials (nearly $3.5 million) have been spent in this regard, which was partially paid by Tehran Municipality amounting to 10 billion rials (nearly $240,000).

The construction process have been started about 6 years ago, but stopped for few years till last year that it undergone development again.

'Watershed management; Iran's only way to survive drought, severe rainfall'

ENVIRONMENT desk

TEHRAN — The only way for the country to overcome long-term droughts along with preventing floods is through comprehensive watershed management plains, Ali Salajeqeh, University of Tehran faculty in river engineering and watershed management, has said.

"Return period for the recent heavy downpours is 50 to 100 years, and the floods also have a return period of 200 to 500 years," he said, adding, therefore, human activities played an essential role in pacing up the return period of floods.

He went on to note that with preventive management, flooding could have been prevented and even water could be stored employing eco-friendly methods, ISNA reported on Saturday.

"Some claimed that large structures such as dams have controlled the flood, while this is wrong, recent rainfall carried large amounts of soil and sediments into the country's dams," he added.

In dry countries, extreme events such as flood and drought are part of the climate characteristic, so we must be able to contain the natural incidents, he highlighted, lamenting, so water and watershed management is the only way to save the country from recurrent droughts and intermittent rainfall.

If the watershed operations are carried out in the framework of a comprehensive watershed management plan, other operations, including standard dam construction, are arranged accordingly, he stated.

Salajeqeh went on to conclude that nature should be managed with watershed operations, because it is economically more efficient than dam construction, and, on the other hand, extract more water.

According to National Drought Warning and Monitoring Center affiliated to Iran's Meteorological Organization since the beginning of the current water year (September 23, 2018) the whole country received 294 millimeters of rain.

The number amounted to 129.9 millimeters in the previous water year and 206.4 millimeters in the long-term, the data indicated. The numbers show a drastic increase



of 126.3 percent compared to last water year. It also reveals a 42.4 percent increase compared to long-term means.

Extreme rainfall, starting on March 19, has caused flooding in 28 out of 31 provinces affecting 42,269,129 inhabitants in 253 cities nationwide.

Namak Lake not to generate SDSs this year: official

ENVIRONMENT desk

TEHRAN — Namak Lake, located in the central Qom province, will not be a hotspot for sand and dust storms (SDSs) for a year due to the recent rainfall which moisturized the soil, Masoud Baqerzadeh Karimi, the director general of aquatic ecosystems at the Department of Environment has said.

Namak Lake is a salt lake in Iran. It is located approximately 100 km east of the city of Qom and 60 km of Kashan at an elevation of 790 meters above sea level.



Wetlands around province of Qom have dried up due to drainage or low precipitations as well as overgrazing which resulted in total disappearance of plant species and severe soil erosion, so that the wetlands turned into hotspots generating dust.

The Namak Lake consists of two wetlands namely, Hoz-e Soltan and Hoze-e Mareh, which are mainly filled by snow, rain and salty rivers across the province. When rain comes down in the province firstly Hoz-e Mareh is filled and then Hoz-e Soltan.

Mareh wetland has also been expanded by 60 percent, so that migratory birds have flown to the area again, he stated.

He went on to note that water flowed in 70 percent of the Hoz-e Soltan wetland, adding, so both wetlands are in good condition.

He concluded that SDSs will not rise from Namak Lake this year, hopefully.

Based on the latest data published by National Drought Warning and Monitoring Center affiliated to Iran's Meteorological Organization since the beginning of the current water year (September 23, 2018) the whole country received 294 millimeters of rain.

The number amounted to 129.9 millimeters in the previous water year and 206.4 millimeters in the long-term, the data indicated. The numbers show a drastic increase of 126.3 percent compared to last water year. It also reveals a 42.4 percent increase compared to long-term means.

Province of Qom also met above normal rainfall averages amounting to 256 millimeters during the current crop year, while last year, it only rained some 92 millimeters in the province, so this year, the precipitation rates exceeded both of last year and long-term means by 178.3 and 82.9 percent, respectively.

First Announcement

KSC
Khouzestan Steel Company

IN THE NAME OF GOD

INVITATION TO INTERNATIONAL TENDER
No. :402436
KHOUZESTAN STEEL COMPANY INTENDS TO PURCHASE
Ferro Alloys
WITH THE FOLLOWING SPECIFICATIONS:

INTRESTED

BIDDERS MAY OBTAIN SET OF DOCUMENTS, CONTAINING THE RELEVANT TERMS AND CONDITIONS BY SUBMISSION OF A WRITTEN APLICATION AND PAYMENT OF A NON-REFUNDABLE FEE OF:

EUR 50 "FIFTY EURO" TO THE ONE OF BELOW ACCOUNT No.:
1) ACCOUNT No.0100013543943 AT "EXPORT DEVELOPMENT BANK OF IRAN AHVAZ CENTERAL BRANCH"
2) ACCOUNT No.1902-750-4019644-1 AT "EGHTESAD NOVIN BANK- OF IRAN AHVAZ SHARIATI BRANCH" OR

Rials 2,000,000,"TWO MILION RIALS" TO THE ONE OF BELOW ACCOUNT No.:
1) ACCOUNT No.0102513186002 AT "MELLI BANK OF IRAN AHVAZ KSC BRANCH"
1) ACCOUNT No.0100304453001 AT "SADERAT BANK OF IRAN AHVAZ KSC BRANCH"
AND PRESENT THE PAYMENT RECEIPT TO THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS:

RAW MATERIAL & ENERGY PURCHASING DEPARTMENT
KHOUZESTAN STEEL COMPANY (KSC)
KM 10 AHWAZ – BANDAR IMAM KHOMEINI ROAD
P.O.BOX: 1378
POST CODE: 61397-31398
AHWAZ– IRAN

Note1: ALL BIDS MUST BE INFORMED US WHICH PARTICIPATE IN OUR TENDER UP TO 21thMay, 2019. WHEN YOUR COMPANY IS CONFIRMED AND THE TENDER DOCUMENT IS SENT TO YOU, YOU MUST BE DELIVERED TO THE AFORESAID ADDRESS ON OR BEFORE THE CLOSING DATE 10thJune,2019.THE OPENING DATE OF ENVELOPES WILL BE AT 10 AM ON THE 11thJune,2019 IN THE BUYER'S CONFERENCE ROOM LOCATED AT THE HEAD OFFICE OF KSC AHWAZ-IRAN AND THE BIDDERS OR THEIR AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVES CAN ATTEND THE MEETING OF THE TENDER.

Note 2: FOR MORE INFORMTION PLEASE CONTACT WITH FOLLOWING DETAILS:

Tel No. : +98 61 32136195
Fax No. : +98 61 32908114
Mr.Hasan.Faramarzi EMAIL : ha.faramarzi@ksc.ir OR VISIT:http://WWW.KSC.IR

Israel escalates violence with continued bombardment of Gaza

1→ according to Press TV, the latest rocket fire from Gaza killed a 60-year-old Israeli man. A total of some 83 Israelis have also been wounded.

The Tel Aviv regime says about 430 rockets have been fired at the occupied lands over the past few days. The Israeli army says its warplanes have targeted some 180 sites in the Gaza Strip.

A building housing the offices of the Turkish state-run Anadolu news agency in Gaza has also been targeted by Israel. The bombing of the premises has been condemned by the Turkish government.

The Israeli attacks have claimed the lives of a total of seven Palestinians, including Saba Mahmoud Abu Arar, a 14-month-old baby girl, and her 8-month pregnant mother.

Hamas holds Israel responsible

In a press release on Sunday, Hamas said Israel was to blame for the violence.

Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum held "the Israeli occupation responsible for any repercussions of its crimes, violations, and rejection to implement the ceasefire understandings."

Separately, the Gaza Joint Chamber of Military Operations, which comprises various Palestinian resistance factions, said that the groups had "decided to respond to the occupation's crimes in the Gaza Strip in an unprecedented way."

"Given the insistence of the enemy to target civilians' homes, the resistance decided to respond in an unprecedented manner to the crimes of the occupation," it said, without providing further details.



Saba Abu-Arar, 14-month-old infant was killed by Israeli war planes' strikes.

Netanyahu tells army to keep up 'massive attacks'

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, meanwhile, said later on Sunday that he had ordered the army to "continue the massive attacks" against targets in Gaza and boost "ground, armored, and artillery forces" around there.

Netanyahu also said he held Hamas responsible, not just for its actions, "but also for the actions of [the] Islamic Jihad [movement]."

UN expresses worries

The UN's Middle East envoy said he was "deeply concerned by yet another dangerous escalation in Gaza," adding that the world body and Egypt were attempting to broker an end to the fighting.

"The United Nations is working with Egypt and all sides to calm the situation. I call on all parties to immediately de-escalate and return to the understandings of the past few months. Those who seek to destroy them will bear responsibility for a conflict that will have grave consequences for all," Nikolay Mladenov said in a statement.

"Continuing down the current path of escalation will quickly undo what has been achieved and destroy the chances for long-term solutions to the crisis. This endless cycle of violence must end, and efforts must accelerate to realize a political solution to the crisis in Gaza," he added.

The Israeli regime carries out regular attacks on the Gaza Strip under the pretext of hitting positions belonging to the Hamas resistance movement.

Last month, Israel and Hamas reached ceasefire "understandings" brokered by Egypt after a round of hostilities earlier.

Palestine condemns Israeli aggression

Meanwhile, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has strongly condemned the Israeli aggression on Gaza.

"The silence toward Israel's crimes and violations of international law encourages it to continue committing more crimes against our Palestinian people," he said in a press statement.

The Palestinian Foreign Ministry also stressed that the "heinous" offensive "reveals the reality of the racist aggression committed by the Zionist American coalition against the Palestinian people."

It also said that the Palestinian people were not in need of aid projects but rather a firm international position that enables them to exercise their right to self-determination.

The ministry further called on the UN Security Council to act immediately in order to stop the brutal Israeli aggression on the Palestinian nation.

The coastal sliver of land has been under a siege by Israel since 2007 and witnessed three wars since 2008.

It has also been the scene of deadly tensions since March 30, 2018, which marked the start of the anti-occupation Great March of Return protests, with participants demanding the right to return for those driven out of their homeland by Israeli aggression.

Turkey says it will not bow to U.S. sanctions over S-400 deal

TEHRAN— Turkey will never bow to U.S. sanctions over its agreement to purchase Russian S-400 surface-to-air missile defense systems, Vice President Fuat Oktay said on Sunday regarding a deal that has strained ties between the NATO allies.

Washington says the systems are not compatible with NATO equipment and may compromise its Lockheed Martin F-35 fighter jets. It has warned of possible U.S. sanctions if Ankara pushes on with the Russian deal.

Turkey, a prospective buyer and a partner in the production of the F-35s, has said the S-400s and jets would not impact each other and that it will not abandon its deal with Russia, Reuters reported.

It has proposed forming a working group with Washington to assess the impact of the S-400s, but says it has not received a response yet.

Speaking to broadcaster Kanal 7, Oktay said the U.S. concerns are unreasonable and that the planned July delivery date for the S-400s remained unchanged.

"When Turkey signs an agreement, Turkey keeps its promise. We signed this agreement and certain payments were made," Oktay said. "I don't think the arguments and concerns here have a lot to lean on," he said.

The United States has also offered to sell Turkey its rival Raytheon Co. Patriot defense systems, which Turkey's Defence Minister Hulusi Akar said Ankara was still evaluating.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, who will visit Turkey next week, told Turkey's state-run Anadolu news agency on Sunday that decisions about defense procurement were up to individual countries.

Qatar will not grant visas to its 'enemies': tourism official

TEHRAN— Qatar will not grant visas to those it considers "enemies", the secretary-general of the National Tourism Council said in reference to Egyptians seeking to enter the country amid an ongoing political rift.

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt cut diplomatic and trade ties with Qatar in 2017, accusing it of supporting terrorism. Doha denies the allegation.

According to Reuters, while citizens from the three Persian Gulf states were recalled to their home countries due to the rift, Egyptians, who make up the largest Arab minority in Qatar, have remained and make up a sizable portion of the tiny but wealthy country's workforce.

Speaking at an event to promote a summer tourism campaign, the tourism council's Akbar al-Baker said Qatar would not let Egyptians enter the country to take part in promotions aimed at boosting its tourism industry.

"The visa will not be open for our enemies - it will be open for our friends," Baker said of Egyptians looking to come. "Are visas open for us to go there? No. So why should we open it for them? Everything is reciprocal."

The comments were the first by a Qatari official since the nearly two-year rift began suggesting Qatar would no longer grant visas to people from Egypt, the most populous Arab country.

Qatar has not said it would deport Egyptian residents already in the country and the comments did not suggest a policy shift that could endanger their status.

Trump voices confidence in N. Korea deal, 'great' Russia ties

TEHRAN — U.S. President Donald Trump has expressed confidence in North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and forging a "deal" with Pyongyang as well as "great relationship" with Russia after a phone conversation with his Russian counterpart and despite the North's latest test firing of missiles.

"I believe that Kim Jong Un fully realizes the great economic potential of North Korea, & will do nothing to interfere or end it. He also knows that I am with him & does not want to break his promise to me. Deal will happen!" Trump stated in a Twitter message on Saturday, but did not elaborate on the nature of Kim's promise or the sort of deal he deems imminent.

According to Press TV, Trump has often touted a rosy relationship with Kim on Twitter, voicing optimism that the two can negotiate denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula. Their two summits — in Singapore in 2018 and in Vietnam earlier this year — however have yet to produce any tangible deal beyond a pledge



that Washington and Pyongyang would work toward denuclearization.

Kim has since met with Russia's President Vladimir Putin in Vladivostok last month. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is also reportedly considering a meeting with Kim, according to a Friday report in the Japan's Shankei newspaper.

North Korea conducted a "strike drill" for multiple launchers and tactical guided weapons into the East Sea in a military drill supervised by leader Kim Jong-un on Saturday, the North's state media reported on Sunday.

The purpose of the drill was to test performance of "large-caliber long-range multiple rocket launchers and tactical guided weapons by defense units," the Korean Central News Agency said, implying that the latest firing was not the long-range ballistic missiles that have been seen as a threat to the United States.

The statement came a day after the latest firing, which analysts interpreted as an attempt to exert pressure on Washington to give ground in negotiations to end the North's nuclear program after the February summit ended in failure.

Oman uncovers spy network run by United Arab Emirates

TEHRAN — Authorities in Oman have reportedly uncovered a network of spies working for the United Arab Emirates, as the two Persian Gulf Arab states are involved in a Cold War-like conflict amid an ongoing Riyadh-led diplomatic and trade boycott against Doha.

Lebanese Arabic-language daily newspaper al-Akhbar, citing informed sources who requested anonymity due to the sensitivity of the matter, reported that Omani security services had been able to obtain sensitive information, suggesting that agents were spying on the sultanate for the UAE.

The report added that the confidential information exposed the details of the ring and the names of all individuals and companies cooperating with it. Omani officials subsequently arrested all members of the spy network.

Al-Akbar added that the revelation also showed that Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the UAE vice president and prime minister, and ruler of the Emirate of Dubai, was himself directing the spying network – an issue that generated high political tensions between Muscat and Abu Dhabi.

Omani authorities then sent a note of protest to Abu Dhabi, threatening to expose their findings in case their UAE counterparts did not provide them with the names and identities of all agents working for them, Press TV reported.

Al-Akbar went on to report that Sheikh Mohammed had set up a line of communication with Omani officials in the ports of Duqm and Sohar, offering them huge sums of bribes in return for obstructing the development of the two ports.

Emirati officials have yet to comment on the report.

Back on January 30, 2011, Oman announced that it had dismantled an Emirati spy ring that was targeting the government and the military in the Persian Gulf sultanate.

The cell "gathered information on the sultanate's military, security and economy, in return for large sums of money from Emirati security services," an unnamed security official close to the case said at the time.

The official added that a number of Omani nationals had been arrested, including some who worked for the government.

The UAE denied having links to any such network, but the country's Foreign Ministry, in a statement carried by the state news agency WAM, expressed "its full willingness to cooperate with ... Oman in any investigations that it carries out in full transparency to uncover (those) who try to mar the relations between the two countries."

Syria presses with attack on terrorists in southern Idlib

TEHRAN— Syrian military forces are continuing to target terrorist hideouts in northwestern Syria where the government has been restraining its offensives based on a de-escalation agreement signed and monitored by international powers.

The state-run SANA news agency said military forces had managed to destroy the hideouts of terrorists in southern countryside of the Idlib province and in areas bordering the province in the neighboring Hama.

It said the hideouts mostly belonged to the Nusra Front, a terrorist organization which is not included in a de-escalation agreement signed between Russia, Syria's main ally, and Turkey, which backs some groups of militants in the region in its alleged bid to contain a Kurdish militancy that could spread to its own territories.

Reports said two Turkish troops had been wounded in a shelling attack which Ankara authorities said had come from territories held by the Syrian government. The two soldiers were moved to Turkey for treatment of their light injuries, they said.

The Syrian military attacks mostly targeted terrorists' hideouts in Jabal al-Zawiya in Idlib and rural northern Hama. Reports by opposition forces say between 30 and 60 people have been killed in five days of military attack in the region.

Erdogan vows to keep up exposing Israeli crimes in Palestine

TEHRAN — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said that Israel's attack on state-run Anadolu agency's office in the Gaza Strip would not deter Ankara from exposing Israeli crimes and atrocities in the occupied Palestinian territories.

In a post on Twitter early late on Saturday, Erdogan issued a strong condemnation of the attack by Israeli regime forces on Anadolu office in Gaza, which took place several hours before.

"We strongly condemn Israel's attack against Anadolu Agency's office in Gaza," said the Turkish president.

"Turkey and Anadolu Agency will continue to tell the world about Israeli terrorism and atrocities in Gaza and other parts of Palestine despite such attacks," Erdogan added.

Anadolu's correspondent in the occupied Jerusalem al-Quds said that Israeli forces had fired at least five rockets at the building used by the news agency in Gaza.

The attack was part of a series of airstrikes by the Israeli regime on the besieged enclave which left two people killed.

The airstrikes came a day after the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas targeted regime forces inside the occupied Palestinian territories, killing two of them.

N. Korean leader Kim oversaw testing of multiple rocket launchers

TEHRAN — North Korea has conducted a "strike drill" for multiple launchers, firing tactical guided weapons into the East Sea in a military drill supervised by leader Kim Jong Un on Saturday, the North's state media reported on Sunday.

The purpose of the drill was to test performance of "large-caliber long-range multiple rocket launchers and tactical guided weapons by defense units," the Korean Central News Agency said.

According to Reuters, photographs released by KCNA showed the tactical guided weapons fired could be a short-range, ground-to-ground ballistic missiles, according to Kim Dong-yub, a military expert at Korea's Kyungnam University's Institute of Far Eastern Studies.

While such a missile launch would be in violation of UN Security Council Resolutions, at least it would not involve long-range ballistic missiles that have been seen as a threat to the United States.

"What was sobering for me was that unexpectedly, there was a photo of short-range, ground-to-ground ballistic missile, otherwise known as the North's version of Iskander," said IFE's Kim.

Maduro calls on military to be 'ready' for U.S. military action

TEHRAN — Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro has called on the country's armed forces to be on standby for potential U.S. military action against the Latin American nation following a failed coup attempt earlier this week.



"Be ready to defend the homeland with weapons in your hands if one day the U.S. empire dares to touch this territory, this sacred earth," Maduro said during a televised speech from a base in the northwestern Cojedes state, Press TV reported.

Maduro, standing alongside Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino and in the presence of more than 5,000 troops, underscored the continued military support for his legitimate government and dismissed the latest coup attempt by a number of rebel forces allied with Western-backed opposition leader Juan Guaido.

"I told the generals and admirals yesterday: loyalty, I want an active loyalty... I trust you, but keep your eyes open, a handful of traitors cannot tarnish the honor, the unity, the cohesion and the image of the armed forces," Maduro said.

A small group of armed troops accompanying Guaido clashed with soldiers at an anti-government rally in the capital Caracas early on Tuesday. Gunfire ensued and more than 100 people were wounded.

Trump contradicts Bolton, Pompeo on military option against Venezuela

TEHRAN— U.S. President Donald Trump has contradicted his national security team on pushing for a military intervention against Venezuela, saying he and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin share the goal of a peaceful end to the crisis in the Central American nation.

"He is not looking at all to get involved in Venezuela, other than he'd like to see something positive happen for Venezuela, and I feel the same way. We want to get some humanitarian aid. Right now people are starving," Trump told reporters on Friday.

Trump's reference to Russia's hands-off approach towards Venezuela stands in contrast to insistence by his Secretary of State Mike Pompeo that Russia is part of the problem in Caracas. Pompeo claimed earlier last week that President Nicolás Maduro was about to flee Venezuela until Russia persuaded him to stay.

according to Press Tv, in its description of the Trump-Putin conversation, the Kremlin said Putin stressed the need to respect Venezuelans' right to determine their own future. He told Trump that outside interference in internal affairs and attempts at forceful regime change in Caracas undermine the prospects for a political settlement of the crisis.

Trump's statement came shortly after acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan and other senior officials, including his National Security Adviser John Bolton, reviewed options following a failed effort earlier in the week by Venezuelan opposition leaders to fuel an uprising.

Bayern confirm Ribery departure and farewell match



Bayern Munich confirmed that veteran French star Franck Ribery will end his 12-year spell at the club at the end of this season, and announced that he and fellow stalwart Arjen Robben will be granted a farewell match next year.

In a statement on their website on Sunday morning, the Bundesliga club announced that the Frenchman would not extend his contract beyond June 2019.

"When I came to Bayern it was a dream come true," said Ribery, 36, who joined in 2008 and has won eight Bundesliga titles in the 12 years since.

"It won't be easy to leave, but we must never forget what we have achieved together."

Robben, 35, confirmed his impending departure at the end of last year, and it was widely expected that Ribery would follow suit, as Bayern prepare for a squad overhaul ahead of next season.

The two wingers have been defining stars in a dominant decade for Bayern, winning the Champions League in 2013 as well as a host of domestic titles.

Bayern announced that they would organize a "big farewell game" for both Ribery and Robben, to be held in 2020.

"Franck and Arjen are great players, and Bayern Munich have a lot to thank them for," said club CEO Karl-Heinz Rummenigge.

"They helped shape the most successful decade in the history of the club."

Robben made an emotional return from injury and Ribery scored in a 3-1 win over Hanover on Saturday.

The win lifted Bayern four points clear of title rivals Borussia Dortmund, and put them on the brink of a seventh successive Bundesliga title.

(Source: Goal)

Disbelieving LeBron 'stunned' by Magic's exit

LeBron James was stunned and in disbelief when he first learned of Magic Johnson's sudden resignation.

In his first public comments about Johnson shocking the Los Angeles Lakersorganization when he stepped down as president of basketball operations moments before the Lakers' season finale April 9, James said he was given no warning or heads-up on Johnson's decision.

On his HBO show "The Shop," James said he was stretching before the game against Portland when he was told Johnson had told the media of his decision.

"Man, get the f--- out of my face! You bulls---!" James said of his reaction when his longtime friend and business partner Randy Mims told him of what Johnson had done. "I came here to be a part of the Lakers organization having a conversation with Magic."

Johnson was the only Lakers representative who met with James at his Los Angeles home July 1 before James decided to join the Lakers. Just a few days before Johnson stunned the Lakers and the NBA world with his abrupt decision, he and Lakers general manager Rob Pelinka met with James and James' agent Rich Paul, ESPN's Adrian Wojnarowski reported. Johnson gave James no inkling of his decision to come.

"So it was just weird for him to be like, 'I'm out of here,'" James said. "And not even have no like, 'Hey, Bron ... kiss my ass. I'm out of here.' I would have been OK with that."

Lakers teammate Lonzo Ball, who was also on the episode with James, said his reaction was, "That s--- crazy!"

(Source: ESPN)

Cardiff relegated as away-day kings Palace hit three

Cardiff City's brief stay in the Premier League ended on Saturday after they were beaten 3-2 by visitors Crystal Palace in a result that ensured Brighton & Hove Albion stay up.

Cardiff needed a win to stand any chance of catching 17th-placed Brighton, who are four points above them with one game remaining.

Goals from Cardiff's former loanee Wilfried Zaha, who was jeered on his return to Wales, Michy Batshuayi and Andros Townsend sealed the home side's fate after they were given brief hope by a comical own-goal equaliser by Martin Kelly.

Bobby Reid hit back in stoppage time but the goal came too late to make a difference.

Cardiff's chances were not helped by an early injury to influential Victor Camarasa, who limped off after just 11 minutes.

Zaha opened the scoring on 28 minutes before Kelly sliced the ball past his own keeper three minutes later. But Batshuayi restored Palace's first-half lead after rounding off a clever move with Jordan Ayew.

Cardiff rallied after the break with Josh Murphy and Kenneth Zohore both going close, and Kelly clearing another Murphy effort off the line. The misses highlighted Cardiff's major deficiency this season when they have consistently come up short in front of goal.

Palace soon made them pay, with Townsend bursting from the halfway line to shoot in off the post after 70 minutes as Palace won for the fifth time in six away league games.

This is the second time in five seasons Cardiff have gone down after just one campaign and the third time manager Neil Warnock has experienced a top-flight drop.

"Hopefully we can bounce back," said Cardiff captain Sean Morrison. "The fans can see how much effort we've put in - it's nice to know they've got our backs.

"We would've loved to have taken it to the last day. We've fallen short today and over the season and we're relegated because we didn't do enough over the year. We've lacked a bit of quality."

(Source: Reuters)

Encouraging words from Bach as Brisbane joins 2032 Olympic field

Brisbane is using a meeting of world sport movers and shakers in the nearby Gold Coast to start pushing a possible bid for the 2032 Summer Olympics.

With the next two Olympics in Europe and North America, the 2032 Games should logically take place in the Asia-Pacific region.

Because Paris, in 2024 and Los Angeles, in 2028, were selected unopposed in 2017, the International Olympic Committee also needs a healthy slate of candidates to restore faith in the process.

The IOC will not select a host until 2025, but already several cities have bids in various stages of public development.

Jakarta, which hosted the last Asian Games, has officially applied. Mumbai has expressed interest.

In February, the IOC encouraged a joint bid from the two Koreas, to continue the rapprochement Olympic officials believe was initiated at the Winter Games in Pyeongchang in 2018 where the two Koreas marched under a common flag.

The Australian state of Queensland hosted the Commonwealth Games in Gold Coast in 2018. With the five day SportAccord convention, which brings together the international sports federations, under the patronage of the IOC, opening in the surf resort on Sunday, it is the turn of the state capital, Brisbane, to push to host a major event.

IOC President Thomas Bach, repeated in Sydney on Saturday that he does not want "too many losers" among the candidates, suggesting that some cities might be discouraged from continuing their bids.



Bach, who is expected in Gold Coast on Tuesday, was in Sydney, Olympic host in 2000, at the invitation of John Coates, president of the Australian Olympic Committee.

Bach said Brisbane's feasibility study perfectly reflected the requirements of the IOC, particularly regarding the use of existing facilities.

-'Yes we want the Games!'-

He told a press conference in Sydney on Sunday that if the region improved its transport network, "would lead to, I think, a pretty strong candidature".

"The first stage is for the Australians and for the Queenslanders, to say 'yes we want to be a host to the entire world'," he added.

On Monday, Bach will be in Brisbane where he will meet the mayor and visit the facilities.

Bach became IOC president in 2013 and, under current IOC rules, he can serve a maximum of two terms, the first of eight years, the second of four years. If he is re-elected in 2021, the 2025 would come at the end of his reign.

"It is possible the decision for 2032 would be taken as one of the last big decisions of his 12 year presidency. In a way the 2032 Host City could define Bach's legacy." said a consultant on condition of anonymity.

The selections of Paris and Los Angeles came after numerous cities, including Budapest, Rome, Calgary, Boston and Hamburg, expressed interest then dropped out, several after being officially accepted as candidates.

The problem is continuing in finding a host for the 2026 Winter Games. The IOC will choose between Milan/Cortina and Stockholm/Are on June 24 after local opposition forced Sion in Switzerland and Graz/Schladming (Austria) to withdraw.

"The current batch of high profile cities/nations expressing interest for 2032 has been quietly and efficiently orchestrated by the IOC to help counter the received wisdom that the bid process is in trouble," said the consultant.

"It is still very early in the 2032 bid process as technically the decision does not need to be made until 2025 so normally you would not start the bid process until 2023," the consultant added. "However the process is changing with greater concerns on making it easier and cheaper and more transparent for cities to express interest in bidding and stay in the race."

(Source: AFP)

Liverpool face nervous wait on gravity of Salah head knock



Liverpool face an anxious wait to see if Mohamed Salah will be fit to play against Barcelona in the second leg of their Champions League semi-final on Tuesday after the Egyptian star suffered a head knock in a thrilling 3-2 win at Newcastle that kept their Premier League title dreams alive.

Salah was stretchered off after challenging Newcastle goalkeeper Martin Dubravka for a high ball with scores level 20 minutes from time.

"What I heard, he got the hip of the goalie on his head," said Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp.

"He was then on the ground and the doc had to make a decision 'on the pitch or off the pitch', and the decision was off the pitch. We accept that of course.

"When we came in he was sitting in the dressing room watching the game on television. So he was then fine, but of course we have to wait. He got a proper knock, obviously, in that situation."

Salah, who had extended his lead in the race for the Golden Boot earlier in the game with his 22nd league goal of the season, will undergo further tests to assess his fitness for Barca's visit to Anfield on Tuesday and the final day of the league season against Wolves on next Sunday.

Liverpool face a monumental task to overturn a 3-0 first leg deficit against the Spanish champions and will also be without Brazilian striker Roberto Firmino due to a groin injury.

However, they remain in the hunt for a first English title for 29 years as Salah's replacement, Divock Origi, headed home a late winner at St. James' Park to move back two points clear of Manchester City at the top of the table.

The title remains in City's hands as they have two games to play to Liverpool's one.

Salah was seen walking unaided to the team coach after the game and the Reds hope he could feature against Wolves next weekend to take advantage if City do slip up.

Despite their desperation for silverware, Liverpool will be under the spotlight for how they handle Salah's injury after a week in which the protocols surrounding head injuries in football were questioned.

Tottenham defender Jan Vertonghen was allowed to briefly return to the field during his side's 1-0 Champions League semi-final, first leg defeat to Ajax after receiving treatment to a head injury.

However, the Belgian defender lasted only a few seconds before having to be substituted as he struggled to walk unaided and retched on the side of the pitch.

(Source: Mirror)

Roger Federer having fun on Madrid dirt



Roger Federer says he doesn't have high expectations entering his first clay-court season since 2016 but has enjoyed practicing on the red dirt sahead of this week's Madrid Open.

Seeded number four in the Spanish capital, Federer is making his first appearance at the Caja Magica since 2015. The 37-year-old Swiss opted out of the clay swing the last two seasons but announced in January that he was ready to make a return to the surface this year.

He has a bye in the first round and will open his campaign on Tuesday night against either Richard Gasquet or Spanish teenage wildcard Alejandro Davidovich Fokina.

"It's been good. It's been fun. I was lucky, we had good weather when I started. So that helped because I remember three or four years ago, when I was practicing it was snowing, like this weekend in Switzerland, and that didn't inspire me very much to go practice on clay, or go into an indoor bubble and stuff, so this year was easy. I enjoyed myself a lot," said Federer, whose preparation period included a four-day training block at home with British world number 85 Dan Evans.

"I'm happy I'm here and I'm happy I'm on the surface."

Seeking a fourth career title in Madrid, Federer was drawn in the same half of the draw as top-seeded Novak Djokovic and shares a quarter with in-form number five seed Dominic Thiem.

While some rustiness on the surface can be expected, Federer admits it wasn't too much of an uphill battle when it came to readjusting to the clay these past few weeks.

"Not too much, funnily enough. Look, it takes some time getting used to how to construct the points maybe a little bit more. Because there is more baseline, there is a possibility to play with more angles and height, I guess, off a hard ball you can roll it and spin it and go loopy, whereas on a faster court you almost have to hit against it. It is hard to take pace off the ball," explained Federer.

"So, from that standpoint, it's been interesting and fun. But not so challenging, to be honest. But then again, matches might be a completely different story.

"I have not high expectations in some ways, but at the same time I also know that things are possible. I mean Madrid always plays fast with the altitude here, so intrigued to find out myself. But it's been good so far."

(Source: AFP)

Chelsea captain : No respect for Sarri after 'terrible' season

Chelsea captain Gary Cahill has launched a stinging attack on Maurizio Sarri, saying he struggles to show any respect for the manager who has sidelined him at Stamford Bridge.

Sarri has publicly said that Cahill is not technically good enough to play a possession-based style of football, leading to the defender not making a single competitive appearance since November and being in the matchday squad on only four occasions since then.

Cahill, 33, has now told the Daily Telegraph Sarri's treatment of him has left a sour taste, after the Italian did not discuss the situation directly with him.

"It's been really terrible for me personally," Cahill said of his final season at Chelsea, with his contract expiring in the summer. "It will just be erased out of my head when I leave Chelsea. My last memory will be last season's FA Cup final [1-0 win vs. Manchester United].

"It's been very difficult. I have played on a regular basis over the previous six seasons and I've won everything with Chelsea, so to be watching from the stands is something I didn't expect. I know how the whole club works, I've got a big relationship with all the players and staff, and yet none of that has been utilised.

"If you are not playing a player, any player, for two, three, four games, then you don't have to give a reason for that. But



if it gets to eight or nine games, then you have to explain the situation. What's going on? But the manager hasn't done that.

"I see some of the situations with players who won the title with Chelsea, not just myself, and it just hasn't been right. It makes it very hard for me to have respect for someone who has not respected what some of us have won with the club."

On the subject of Sarri's claim that he is not good enough technically to play possession football, Cahill added: "I've adapted to the different tactics, formations and philosophies of all the managers I've played under and will continue to learn from my next coach. Every experience, good or bad, is a learning process."

Cahill chose to see out his Chelsea contract rather than take the option of a move away during the January transfer window, and he has refrained from talking publicly about Sarri's treatment of him until now.

"I'm quite proud with how I have dealt with it," he said. "I've not been disruptive and I've trained hard every single day.

"I've got a respect for all the other people at the club, the players and the staff and the people who helped to give me a chance, so it's been important to me to conduct myself in the right way. And when you see an Ethan Ampadu, or another young player coming through, he can see how you behave every day, so you have to set the right example."

Cahill will look for a new club in the summer, and insists he leaves the Bridge "with my head held high."

(Source: Soccernet)

Alireza Jahanbakhsh will shine for Brighton, says Chris Hughton



Brighton coach Chris Hughton has backed club-record signing Alireza Jahanbakhsh to show his true talent in the Premier League next season.

Albion splashed £17m on the Iran international after he topped the Eredivisie scoring charts with AZ Alkmaar.

But the 25-year-old winger has so failed to find the net for the Seagulls and was dropped from their squad for last weekend's 1-1 draw with Newcastle.

With survival now guaranteed, Hughton is confident that Jahanbakhsh and fellow summer signing Florin Andone will adapt to England's top-flight.

Speaking ahead of Brighton's game at Arsenal, Hughton said: Sometimes it's difficult when you've brought a player in and you have other options.

"A lot of players that don't settle into that first season can or possibly could argue that if they had played more regularly, they would have worked through it.

"But that's trying to get that balance between what you feel is your best team at the time.

"With the players mentioned (Jahanbakhsh and Andone), I'm sure there will be more from them next season."

Cardiff's 3-2 home defeat to Crystal Palace on Saturday banished Brighton's lingering relegation doubts.

Albion will finish the season at the Amex Stadium against title-chasing Manchester City next week.

Hughton believes Unai Emery has done "a wonderful job" since succeeding the long-serving Arsene Wenger at Arsenal and expects the Gunners to improve further under the Spaniard.

The London club are in the race for Champions League qualification and are on the brink of reaching the Europa League final.

"I'm looking at the period of time he's been in and also what he took over - a manager that had been at the club for so many years," Hughton said of Emery.

(Source: Sky Sports)

Zlatko Kranjcar sacked as Iran U23 football coach

SPORTS desk **TEHRAN —** Zlatko Kranjcar has been fired as head coach of Iran U23 football team on Sunday after one year in charge.

Ex-Persepolis and Sepahan coach was named as the head coach of the Iranian team in last year's April.

The 62-year-old Croatian, who has also coached Croatia and Montenegro national football teams, replaced Amirhossein Peyrovani in the Iran U23 football team

Iran, a powerhouse of the Asian football, have not been in the Olympics since the 1976 games in Munich.

The Persians earned a spot in the AFC U23 Championship Thailand 2020 Final in late March but the Iranian officials are not satisfied with the way Iran qualified for the tournament.



The Iranian media reports suggest that an Iranian coach will replace Kranjcar.

Padideh coach Yahya Golmohammadi is a candidate to lead the team.

The 2020 AFC U23 Championship will be held in Thailand from Jan. 8 to 26.

A total of 16 teams will compete in the tournament.

It will act as the AFC qualifiers for the Olympic football tournament. The top three teams of the tournament will qualify for the 2020 Summer Olympics men's football tournament in Japan as the AFC representatives.

Football the best job in the world: Branko Ivankovic

SPORTS desk **TEHRAN —** Persepolis coach Branko Ivankovic believes that football activity is the best job in the world.

Speaking ahead of Persepolis's game against Pakhtakor of Uzbekistan in Tashkent, Ivankovic said, "We have a difficult task ahead because Pakhtakor take advantage of a good coach and good players as well. Persepolis will test one of their toughest matches on Monday but we are an experienced team and ready to win the match. There is no easy match in the AFC Champions League," he said.

"I think football is the best job in the world and we should enjoy the game. Pakhtakor look different and have changed their formation. They have recently defeated Lokomotiv Tashkent and it showed we will play a strong team in front of their home crowd," the Persepolis coach added.

Persepolis started the campaign with a 1-1 draw against Pakhtakor in Tehran's Azadi Stadium in Group D. The TV replays showed that Marat Bikmaev was in offside.

"The referees are doing their best but sometimes they make mistakes. I'm feeling optimistic about the officials and want to enjoy the football," Ivankovic said.

Persepolis, as the AFC Champions League runners-up, have suffered two defeats against Al Sadd of Qatar and Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli so far, however, Ivankovic says they have a chance of qualifying for the next stage.

"Our strategy will not change and is the same in every match. We respect our opponents but we want to beat them. Pakhtakor are a strong team with a young generation but we are here to get three points," the Persepolis coach stated.



Preview - Group C: Esteghlal FC (IRN) v Al Duhail SC (QAT)



Esteghlal's chances of fighting for a 2019 AFC Champions League Round of 16 spot are hinging upon their ability to get the three points against Qatar's Al Duhail on Matchday Five of Group C on Monday.

A 1-0 defeat to Al Hilal a fortnight ago left the Tehran-based side in third place with four points, three adrift of their Monday opponents and five behind leaders Al Hilal.

Esteghlal's woes were compounded when a 1-0 loss to Padideh in the Iranian Pro League, resulting in the suspension of the services of coach Winfried Schafer, with assistant Farhad Majidi taking over at the helm.

Al Duhail, on the other side, have had time to rest after the Qatar Stars League reached the end of season point. Rui Faria's men can confirm their place in the next round with a draw, provided Al Hilal defeat Al Ain in the other Matchday Five fixture.

Goals from Medhi Benatia, Youssef El Arabi and Ali Afif had given Al Duhail a perfect start to the campaign with a 3-0 win over Esteghlal in the reverse fixture two months ago.

(Sourve: the-aafc)

Preview - Group D: Al Pakhtakor (UZB) v Persepolis FC (IRN)



Pakhtakor Central Stadium plays host to a classic six-pointer between Pakhtakor and Persepolis in Group D of the 2019 AFC Champions League on Monday.

The hosts are third in the group with five points, one point ahead of their opponents. The two sides are still in the thick of the battle for knock-out stage places, with the other two Group D sides only marginally ahead of them.

Both teams fell to 2-1 away defeats on the previous matchday; Persepolis losing to Al Ahli in Jeddah, while Pakhtakor were beaten by Al Sadd in Doha, leaving the Qatari side top of the group with seven points and Al Ahli second with six.

Marat Bikmaev had opened the scoring for Pakhtakor and Persepolis got their equaliser through Mario Budimir as the two teams split the points on the opening matchday.

Should Persepolis be eliminated from the group stage, this would be the second year running that the AFC Champions League losing finalists fail to reach the knock-out stage in the following year. Al Hilal had reached the final in 2017, but exited at the first hurdle in 2018.

(Source: the-afc)

Fulham midfielder becomes youngest ever Premier League player

Fulham's Harvey Elliott has become the youngest ever Premier League player at 16 years and 30 days.

The England under-17 midfielder made his debut in the 88th minute of Saturday's 1-0 defeat by Wolves.

Former Fulham left-back Matthew Briggs held the previous record, set on 13 May 2007 at 16 years and 68 days.

Elliott, born on 4 April 2003, became Fulham's youngest player with a substitute appearance in the Carabao Cup third round in September, aged 15.

"Harvey is on the bench and gets on the pitch because he deserves to," said Fulham's caretaker boss Scott Parker. "He's been outstanding in training over the past three weeks. He's a special talent and we want to nurture him the best we can."

The youngster, who will be sitting his GCSEs in just a few weeks' time, was born in a year that saw Black Eyed Peas dominate the charts with Where Is the Love?

Elliott was born 10 months after Ronaldo and Ronaldinho inspired Brazil to World Cup glory and nine months after Manchester United broke the British transfer record with the £30m signing of Rio Ferdinand from Leeds for £30m in July 2002.

(Source: BBC)

Azmoun's Zenit lift Russian title

Sardar Azmoun's Zenit St Petersburg claimed their fifth Russian title on Saturday with a 1-1 draw at Akhmat Grozny after closest challengers Lokomotiv Moscow lost 2-0 at Arsenal Tula.

With three games to go Zenit are assured of the title with a nine-point lead and a better head-to-head record against second-placed Lokomotiv.



This was Zenit's first title in four years and a great debut season for Republic of Iran international Azmoun, who has scored 12 goals in the campaign.

Akhmat dominated Zenit but a combination of poor finishing and good goalkeeping by Andrei Lunev left the 13,000 home crowd frustrated.

In the 33rd minute Argentinian forward Sebastian Driussi scored for Zenit but his goal was disallowed for offside.

Brazilian midfielder Ismael put Akhmat into the lead 10 minutes after the break with an unopposed shot from 22 yards out. Zenit's Driussi levelled the score with a 10-yard effort through traffic with three minutes remaining.

(Source: AFP)

Chris Beath to officiate Pakhtakor v Persepolis

TASNIM — Australian referee Christopher James Beath has been named to officiate the match between Pakhtakor of Uzbekistan and Iran's Persepolis.

The match will be held at the Pakhtakor Central Stadium in Tashkent in Matchday Five of AFC Champions League Group D on Monday.

Beath, 34, was added to the FIFA International Referees List in 2011, serving as a referee for matches including the Kirin Challenge Cup contest between Japan and Iceland.

In 2015, Beath was involved in an exchange program where he refereed in the J-League.

On 4 April 2017, Chris Beath was appointed as one of the inaugural video assistant referees (VARs) in the Hyundai A-League, the first top-tier football league in the world to implement the technology.

In January 2018, Beath was selected as one of the referees for the 2018 AFC U-23 Championship held in China. He refereed the opening fixture of the tournament.

He officiated the match between Esteghlal of Iran and Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia in April.

Qatar to play Brazil ahead of Copa America

Brazil will play 2022 FIFA World Cup hosts Qatar in one of their last two friendlies before the Copa America gets underway in June, the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) said on Saturday.

Asian champions Qatar are to make their Copa America debut in Brazil as one of two invitees to the South American tournament alongside Japan, making their second appearance.

Brazil will host Qatar in the capital Brasilia on June 5 before playing Honduras in Porto Alegre - a Copa America host city - on June 9. The hosts kick-off the Copa America, which they have won eight times, against Bolivia in Sao Paulo on June 14.

The final will be played at Rio de Janeiro's iconic Maracana stadium on July 7.

Brazil are in Group A alongside Venezuela and Peru, while Qatar play Argentina, Colombia and Paraguay in Group B. Qatar open their campaign against Paraguay on June 16.

(Source: AFP)

Ribery linked with Qatari teams Al-Saad, Al Duhail

Franck Ribery will leave Bayern Munich at the end of his contract this summer, the Bundesliga club said on Sunday.

Ribery, 36, has made over 400 appearances and won 21 major honors with Bayern since joining from Marseille in 2007. His trophies include eight Bundesliga titles, the Champions League, Super Cup and Club World Cup.

"When I came to Bayern, it was a dream come true. It won't be easy to say goodbye, but we must never forget what we've achieved together, we've won so much -- more than 20 honors," Ribery told the club's official website.

Former France international Ribery will join fellow veteran forward Arjen Robben in leaving the club at the end of the campaign, breaking up the iconic "Robbery" partnership at the Allianz Arena. Bayern confirmed they will honor the duo with a testimonial match in 2020.

"Franck and Arjen are great players," Bayern chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge said. "FC Bayern owes a lot to both of them and we will give them a wonderful and emotional farewell. They've helped shape FC Bayern's most successful decade with fantastic football."

Ribery can still add two more pieces of silverware this season, with Bayern on the brink of the Bundesliga title after beating Hannover 3-1 on Saturday, while they face RB Leipzig in the final of the DFB Pokal later this month.

"I don't have a concrete plan for next season yet," Ribery added. "I'm not sure where I can go to play football. I will keep playing but nothing is 100 percent certain yet."

He has been linked with a move to the Middle East with Al-Saad (Qatar), Al Duhail (Qatar) and Al Nasr (Saudi Arabia).

(Source: ESPN)

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Generosity is genuine if is self-propelled, for if it is based on request, it takes on the color of coyness and escape from people's reproach.

mam Ali (AS)

"Street Performer of Manhattan" star Mikail Shahrestani tops at stage actors celebration

ART desk **TEHRAN** — Mikail Shahrestani, the actor of "The Street Performer of Manhattan" was honored with the special award of the 16th Iranian Stage Actors Celebration on Saturday.

The play is about a retired actor who has been badly treated in his society, which is suffering from systemic cultural dysfunction that has not allowed him to demonstrate his inner values.

Shahrestani is the actor and director of the monolog that he has co-written with Nima Mehr.

The celebration is organized annually by the Iranian Theater Forum to honor best actors of the year in theater.

Four more actors were also honored during the celebration held at the City Theater Complex.

Majid Noruzi received an award for his role in "Amadeus" written by English playwright Peter Shaffer and directed by Javad Molania, while Hossein Kashfi-Asl was awarded for his role in "Bullets over City Theater Complex", an adaptation of Woody Allen's "Bullets over Broadway" directed by Shayan Afkari.

Nasser Ashuri won an award for his role in William Shakespeare's "King Lear" directed by Masud Delkhah, and Farzin Mohaddes was honored for his role in "Steve Jobs" by Mehran Ranjbar.

The top three actresses of the year were also awarded. Nasrin Derakhshanzadeh received an award for her role in "Amadeus" and director Ali Rafei's "The House of Bernard Alba".

Mona Farjad was praised for her role in "Fly into Darkness" by writer and director Afshin Hashemi, and Parastu Golestani won an award for her role in "Family Photo" directed by Reza Bahrami.



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Mikail Shahrestani (L) acknowledges the audience after being honored for his role in "The Street Performer of Manhattan" during the 16th Iranian Stage Actors Celebration in Tehran on May 4, 2019. Actor Behzad Farahani (R) is also seen in the photo.

"Dreamland" scoops awards at Iran's university theater festival

ART desk **TEHRAN** — Iranian director Morteza Jalilidoost's play "Dreamland" has scooped the main awards, including best play, at the 22nd International Iranian Festival of University Theater.

The play also brought Jalilidoost the award for best director, while cast member Mostafa Amiri was named best actor during the closing ceremony of the event held at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on Saturday evening.



Morteza Jalilidoost speaks after accepting best director award for "Dreamland" at the 22nd International Iranian Festival of University Theater at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on May 4, 2019. (Honaronline/Mehdi Azadbakht)

Charlie Chaplin is the main character of the play written by Saba Nejati.

Parnia Shams won the award for best playwright for her work "Is", while Shabnam Dadkhah was picked as best actress for her role in Mohammad-Hossein Majd-Taheri's "Aura".

Workshops by international theater scholars Dominique DuPont and Pinar Alev were held in the Iranian cities of Kashan and Kerman during the festival, which opened in Tehran on April 25.

Iranian shorts line up for Japanese festival

ART desk **TEHRAN** — A lineup of seven Iranian films will go on screen in the various sections of the 21st edition of the Short Shorts Film Festival and Asia in Tokyo, Japan.

"Reporter" by Mohammadreza Kheradmandan, "A+" by Behrang Mirzai and "Cover" by Vahid Alvandifar are among the films.

The lineup also includes short animations "Empty View" by Ali Zare Qanatnoi, "Story of a Man without Lips" by Milad Shahjani, "The Fox" by Sadeq Javadi Nikjeh and "Mr. Deer" by Mojtaba Musavi.

The Short Shorts Film Festival and Asia, which is an Academy of Motion Picture Art and Sciences accredited festival, will be held from May 29 to June 23.

Werner Herzog praises new "Star Wars" series "Mandalorian"

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Werner Herzog is calling "The Mandalorian" "a phenomenal achievement" after joining the cast of the streaming series set in the "Star Wars" universe.

Herzog told The Associated Press that he'll likely appear in two or three episodes of Jon Favreau's series as "a character in whom you cannot trust." The series, starring Pedro Pascal, Gina Carano and Carl Weathers, is set to premiere in November with the launch of the new Disney Plus streaming service.

The famed 76-year-old German writer, director and actor does have a confession: He's never seen a "Star Wars" movie.

"I've seen some trailers. I've seen some excerpts here and there. And I know about the whole franchise and about the toys for the kids and so — it's all a new mythology," Herzog said. ... You better take them seriously."

Herzog said he was impressed by the practical, real-world approach of "The Mandalorian," whose directors include Taika Waititi and Bryce Dallas Howard. The series is set in the aftermath of "The Return of the Jedi," taking place five years after the Rebellion's victory.

Iranian director to expose Florian Zeller's "Lie" in Tehran



Director Saqi Atai. (Honaronline/Gata Ziatabari)

ART desk **TEHRAN** — Iranian director Saqi Atai plans to stage French playwright Florian Zeller's "The Lie" in Tehran in the near future.

"The play has been translated into Persian by Mahmud Gudarzi, and this is the first time the play will be performed in Iran," she told the Persian service of MNA on Saturday.

"Zeller's plays usually move on the border between reality and imagination," Atai said and added, "But what happens is different; i.e., the writer exposes the gap between reality and a lie. He creates a crisis in another, different environment."

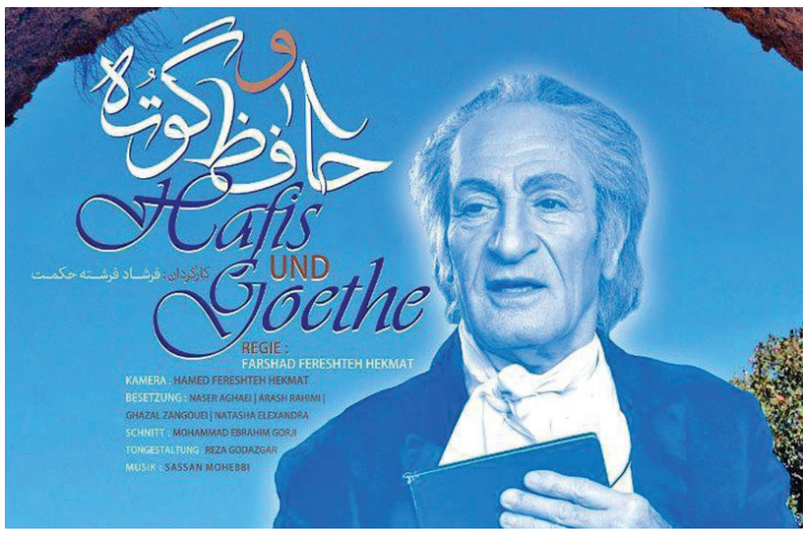
"By staging this play, I intend to say that there is a porous border between truth and a lie, and even when we are telling a lie there is a bit of truth hidden in our words," she stated.

In "The Lie", Michel and Laurence are coming for dinner. But Alice has spotted Michel kissing another woman that very afternoon, leaving her with a dilemma. Her husband Paul believes it is better to behave as if nothing has happened; Alice is far from sure. An argument ensues, and as their own relationship is held up to scrutiny, the question as to who is being protected and why grows ever more difficult to answer.

Atai said that she plans to assemble a cast of professional actors for the play in order to shorten the duration of rehearsals.

Earlier in July 2017, she staged Zeller's fellow dramatist Eric Emmanuel Schmitt's "Enigma Variations" at Tehran's Divare Chaharom Theater.

University of Tehran to host "Hafez and Goethe"



A poster for the docufiction "Hafez and Goethe" by Farshad Fereshteh-Hekmat. (DEFC)

ART desk **TEHRAN** — Iranian filmmaker Farshad Fereshteh-Hekmat's docufiction "Hafez and Goethe" will go on screen at the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Tehran on Tuesday, the Documentary and Experimental Film Center (DEFC) announced on Sunday.

Veteran stage and screen actor Nasser Aqai, who stars as Goethe in the film, and film expert Ahmad Alasti will attend a review session, which will be organized after the screening.

"Hafez and Goethe" tries to shed light on the great German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's inspiration from the Persian poet Hafez.

The film was shot on locations in Hafez's hometown Shiraz, which also houses his tomb, and Tehran. Fereshteh-Hekmat and his crew also traveled to Frankfurt, where Goethe was born, and several other German cities such as Weimar, Berlin, Heidelberg and Leipzig to shoot scenes of the film.

Goethe wrote "West-East Divan", which contains his poems, notes and essays, under the influence of Hafez's poetry.

He was familiar with Hafez and his works through his friendship with Austrian Orientalist Joseph Freiherr von Hammer-Purgstall (1774-1856) who provided the first ever complete translation of the Divan of Hafez into a Western language.

City Council member challenges likeness of bust to Jamshid Mashayekhi

ART desk **TEHRAN** — Tehran City Council member Ahmad Masjed-Jamei has complained that the bust of Jamshid Mashayekhi, which was set up near his house, bears no resemblance to the legendary actor.

Speaking during the Sunday session of the City Council, he added, "The statue looks nothing like actor Jamshid Mashayekhi. It seems that the portrait of the actor, based upon which the bust has been created, was taken during the last days of his life."

"The bust looks nothing like the actor, and it does not deserve his name and position, and I hope the bust will be replaced soon," he added.

He asked the Tehran Municipality to be more sensitive about national figures.

The Tehran Municipality set up the bust of the veteran actor near his house in the Velenjak neighborhood on Friday.



A bust of legendary actor Jamshid Mashayekhi is seen in the Velenjak neighborhood in Tehran on May 3, 2019 just a few minutes after being set up on Moqaddas Ardebili Street. (Tasnim/Masud Shahrestani)

In addition, Mohsen Hashemi, chairman of the Tehran City Council, expressed his criticism and proposed the sculptors make use of plotters in order to prepare three-dimensional images of the celebrities so that their busts more closely resemble the individuals themselves.

Sculptor Reza Hassanzadeh, a member of the Association of Iranian Sculptors, has made the bust based on a portrait selected by the family of Mashayekhi who died on April 2 at the age of 85.

The bust of the actor was unveiled last Friday during a ceremony attended by Mashayekhi's family, Tehran Mayor Piruz Hanachi and several art and cultural figures.

Henry VIII's first wife, Catherine of Aragon, in spotlight in new show

LONDON (Reuters) — English Tudor king Henry VIII and his six wives are a staple tale of costume dramas - now a new television series is turning viewers' attention to the story of the first, Catherine of Aragon.

"The Spanish Princess", a British-American production based on two books by Philippa Gregory, stars "Game of Thrones" actress Charlotte Hope in the title role and Stephanie Levi-John as her black lady-in-waiting, Lina de Cardonnes.

Cast members, who also include Laura Carmichael from "Downton Abbey", say the show is different to past costume dramas thanks to its all-inclusive perspective.

"We get an opportunity to tell (history) from the perspective of women and to tell the stories of black people," Hope told Reuters in an interview.

"I think it's not only really important but also really exciting that we get to explore something that hasn't been explored yet."

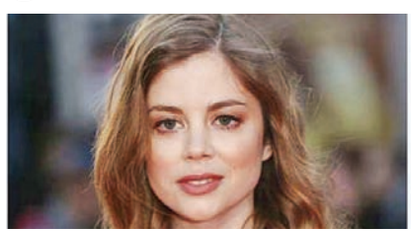
Catherine of Aragon (1485-1536) was betrothed to Arthur, the Prince of Wales and heir apparent to the English throne, as a young child.

The eight-part series follows her journey from sunny Spain to grey and drizzly England. When Arthur suddenly falls ill and dies five months into their marriage, Catherine finds herself a widower in a strange land, aged only 16.

Seven years later, after receiving the blessing of the pope on the premise her marriage to Arthur was never consummated, Catherine is married to his younger brother, who has just been made king.

Henry VIII ruled England from 1509 to 1547. He famously divorced Catherine against her will, consequently breaking from Rome to become the head of the Church of England.

"We always hear the stories from Henry's side so...it's really nice to sort of flip it on its head and be like actually there was another side to the story too," Levi-John said.



Actress Charlotte Hope poses as she arrives for the gala screening of the film "A United Kingdom", on the opening night of the 60th British Film Institute (BFI) London Film Festival at Leicester Square in London, Britain October 5, 2016. (Reuters/Neil Hall)