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Salih insists on extending Iranian energy waivers in talks with Pompeo

TEHRAN — Iraqi President Barham Salih and U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo discussed the extension of waiver over U.S. sanctions on Iran's energy exports to Iraq, ISNA reported citing Iraqi news portal Alsumaria.

Pompeo made an unannounced visit to Baghdad at Tuesday night and met with a handful of high-ranking Iraqi officials.

According to a source with knowledge of the matter, Pumo and Saleh highlighted the issue of extending Iraq's exemptions from U.S. sanctions against Iran and not creating tension with Iran.

Also on Tuesday Iraqi media reported that the Arab country has rejected the U.S. demand for cutting its energy ties with Iran. **→4**

Lavrov blames U.S. 'irresponsible' acts for 'unacceptable situation' surrounding JCPOA

TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Wednesday delivered a letter by President Hassan Rouhani, which was addressed at Russian President Vladimir Putin, to Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

Zarif and Lavrov also sat down to discuss Iran's countermeasures to U.S. exit from the multilateral 2015 nuclear

deal and imposition of sanctions, which include reducing the level of Tehran's commitment to the deal.

During a press conference after his meeting with Zarif, Lavrov said the "irresponsible" policies of the U.S. government have led to an "unacceptable situation" in which the multilateral pact on Iran's nuclear program may fail. **→2**

Iraq holds trial for over 500 Daesh terrorists

The Iraqi judiciary has tried and sentenced more than 500 foreigners since the start of 2018 for joining the Daesh terrorist group, the country's Supreme Court announced on Wednesday.

It said "514 verdicts were issued, for both men and women, while another 202 accused are still being interrogated and 44 are still being tried."

Another 11 were acquitted and re-

leased, it said.

The statement referred to "different nationalities" but did not list any specific countries, AFP reported.

It said interrogations were taking about six months for those simply accused of Daesh membership, but anyone accused of actively taking part in the terrorist group's operations could be questioned for up to a year. **→13**

Kabul attackers target foreign aid group with blast, dozens wounded

TEHRAN — Afghan security forces exchanged sporadic gunfire on Wednesday with attackers who made use of a car bomb blast to invade the compound of an international aid group in Kabul, injuring at least two dozen people, authorities said.

Taliban militants claimed responsibility for the attack on the third day of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan that targeted the non-profit Counterpart International in the upscale Shahr Naw area of the capital. Reuters reported.

Occasional gunshots and explosions were heard as special forces, backed by advisers from foreign forces, surrounded the site and engaged the attackers in a stand-off. Authorities cordoned off the area, sending ambulances and police trucks. Interior ministry spokesman Nasrat Rahi-



mi said at least 80 employees of the aid group were rescued and security forces were clearing buildings there.

"Two floors of the building have been cleared and to avoid civilian casualties, the operation is being undertaken with caution," Rahimi said.

At least nine injured people were taken to hospital, said a health ministry spokesman, Wahidullah Mayar, while officials at the city's Emergency Hospital said they had received 15 wounded.

Officials of aid group Counterpart, which is headquartered in the United States and has operated in Afghanistan since 2005, were not immediately available to comment.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid claimed responsibility for the attack, saying the aid group was working closely with government departments, promoting women, which is opposed by the Taliban.

Palestinian food aid threatened by 'serious funding crisis': UN

The UN warned Wednesday that its agencies providing food assistance to Gaza must raise tens of millions of dollars within weeks to avoid significant aid cuts.

The UN's World Food Programme and its agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, currently provide food assistance to more than one million people in Gaza.

But the United Nations humanitarian co-ordinator for the Palestinian territories, Jamie McGoldrick, warned that the agencies were facing "a serious funding crisis."

They needed to raise money fast to be able to make a looming order for the food needed for the remainder of the year, he told journalists in Geneva.

"We envisage that if WFP and UNRWA don't

get around 40 million dollars by the end of May - beginning of June, they will not be able to order the pipeline," he said.

UNRWA is planning to host a donor's conference next month and another one in September, as it struggles to fill the void after Washington, traditionally its largest donor, withdrew its support.

Last year, a number of countries stepped up to generously compensate for the lacking U.S. funding, but McGoldrick said that this year a huge shortfall remained.

"If they don't get the funding, clearly they can't order the food," he said, adding that this would mean that in the second half of the year, either the number of people receiving aid will be cut or rations will be slashed, or both.



© Tehran Times / Shahab Ghayoumi

Every passerby is invited: Communal Iftar meals in Tehran

Passersby have been invited to have Iftar meals along a Tehran street in the fasting month of Ramadan, May 7, 2019.

A fasting day during Ramadan begins before the sunrise and continues during the daylight hours. It comes to an end with the evening meal of Iftar served at sunset.

Muslims break their fast at the time of the call for evening prayer.



ARTICLE

Hamid Bayati
Tehran Times journalist

Europe's passivity against Trump government

European analysts and strategists continue to worry about the continued presence of U.S. President Donald Trump in the White House. An American view of the behavior of Trumps (towards the European Union) clearly reflects this fact. It should not be forgotten that the relationship between Washington and the European countries has been under the scumbags since the arrival of Trump at the top of the political and administrative equations of the United States!

Now, apparently, the European authorities are on the one hand worried about the outcome of the presidential elections of 2020 and the re-entry of Trump in power. However, the European authorities have shown in practice that they have no interest in resisting the actions of the President of the United States!

A long time ago, the New York Times published an important report on the views of European and American analysts on the trump and behaviors of the American president. European allies knew to expect the unexpected from President Trump! More important, for the long term, they have begun to believe that underneath the presidential narcissism, sarcasm and bluster there is a strategy: to undercut European solidarity in NATO and the European Union so the United States can exercise its economic and military power to shape relations with individual countries, just as China and Russia seek to do.

An overview of the New York Times report on US-European relations during the presence of Trump at the White House is noteworthy, as New York Times reported, Europeans are now convinced that Mr. Trump has an agenda that is inimical to their interests, said François Heisbourg, a French political analyst. "Europeans realize that he's not just a temperamental child, but that he wants to dismantle the multilateral order created 70 years ago that he believes limits American power."

European leaders had already taken into account the disrupter Trump, said Tomas Valasek, the director of Carnegie Europe, a foreign policy think tank. "We're not in the dark about him, but we've never dealt with this sort of political animal before," Mr. Valasek said. **→6**



ARTICLE

Shair Abbas Kazemi
Researcher and writer
from Islamabad

Pakistan's missing - Did they vanish into thin air?

In Imran Khan's much-hyped 'Naya Pakistan' (New Pakistan), the same old stories of pain, loss and hopelessness continue to dominate the national discourse.

Human rights abuses continue with sheer impunity and public outcry over high-handedness of government-backed forces has gathered momentum. People are back in the streets, demanding their legitimate rights, asking for the whereabouts of their loved ones who left home and didn't come back.

The disturbing phenomenon of enforced disappearances in Pakistan date back to the time of former military ruler Gen. Pervez Musharraf and the practice has continued over the years.

These days, members of the Shia community are staging a sit-in outside the official residence of President Arif Alvi in Karachi to seek information about their missing relatives and friends. The peaceful sit-in has continued for many days now and the protestors have vowed to hold their ground until their legitimate demands are met.

The protestors include women, children, youth, who are carrying placards, banners and portraits of the missing people, demanding information about their whereabouts. Did they vanish into thin air, they ask.

Sisters are waiting for their brothers, daughters are searching for their fathers, women are concerned about the well-being of their spouses, and parents are in deep trauma, thinking about their children. It seems like a hopeless situation, which has put a big question mark over Imran Khan's promises.

One of the protestors, a woman, whose two young sons are missing, was seen holding their pictures, asking simple questions: are they terrorists, criminals or target killers? She said both her missing sons were young, one studying in college and the other just recently employed. She has no idea why they were subjected to enforced disappearance. **→6**

Zarif: There is “narrowing window” to prevent nuclear deal to collapse

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — In a post on his Twitter page on Wednesday, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif told the remaining parties to the 2015 nuclear deal that they have “a narrowing window” to prevent the agreement from falling apart.

The warning came shortly after Iran announced that it was stopping implementation of some of its commitments under the deal in response to a failure by the remaining parties to compensate for the U.S. exit from the multilateral deal and reimposition of sanctions on Iran.

Since the Trump administration pulled out of the nuclear deal in May 2018, the three European countries signatory to the deal - namely France, Britain and Germany - have just expressed verbal support for the agreement and refused to fulfill their commitments.

On May 8 2018, US withdrew from #JCPOA, violated #UNSCR 2231 & pressured others—incl #E3—to do the same After a year of patience, Iran stops measures that US has made impossible to continue Our action is within the terms of JCPOA. EU/E3+2 has a narrowing window to reverse this.

Under the deal, officially called the JCPOA and endorsed by the UN Security Council Resolution 2231, Iran was tasked to put a cap on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions.

In his tweet, Zarif said, “On May 8, 2018, the U.S. withdrew from the JCPOA, violated UN Security Council Resolution 2231 and pressured others, including the E3, to do the same.”

However, Zarif said, “After a year of patience, Iran stops measures that the U.S. has made impossible to continue.” Zarif said, “EU/E3+2 has a narrowing window to reverse this.”

“EU/E3+2” refers to the European Union, the European trio of France, Britain and Germany as well as Russia and China.

In the first step to limit its commitments to the JCPOA, Iran announced it will stop selling enriched uranium and heavy water until 60 days. It said if during these two months the remaining sides agree to compensate for their failures and honor their commitments the situation will return to the past, otherwise Iran will take the next steps.

Salehi: Iran not obliged to restrict uranium to 300kg and heavy water to 130 tons

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Ali Akbar Salehi, director of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, said on Wednesday that Iran is not obliged to restrict its stockpile of enriched uranium to 300kg and its heavy water to 130 tons.



After a cabinet meeting, he told reporters that Iran will not follow these two restrictions for 60 days.

The nuclear chief added Iran is acting within the framework of the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA, and withdrawal from the deal is not on the agenda.

Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) issued a statement on Wednesday announcing that Iran will stop implementing some parts of its commitments under the nuclear deal.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran upholds its rights under articles 26 and 36 of the JCPOA and will stop implementing some parts of its obligation under the JCPOA from today, May 8, 2019, in line with protecting the Iranian people's security and national interests,” the statement said.

The JCPOA was signed in July 2015 between Iran, the U.S., France, Britain, Germany, Russia and China. However, U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew his country from the deal last year and ordered the toughest sanctions against Iran.

Under the JCPOA, endorsed by the UN Security Council Resolution 2231, Iran was tasked to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions. However, since the U.S. left the deal in May 2018, the Europeans have failed to compensate for the U.S. withdrawal and just paid lip service to the agreement.

‘France wants to keep Iran nuclear deal alive’

By staff and agency

French Defense Minister Florence Parly has said that France wants to keep the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, alive.

Parly told BFM TV/RMC radio that the agreement to control Iran's nuclear activities had been undermined for several months, according to Reuters.

She said that France, Britain and Germany, the European signatories to the deal, were doing all they could to keep it alive by putting together initiatives to help Iran's economy despite tough U.S. sanctions.

Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) issued a statement on Wednesday announcing that Iran will stop implementing some parts of its commitments under the nuclear accord.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran upholds its rights under articles 26 and 36 of the JCPOA and will stop implementing some parts of its obligation under the JCPOA from today, May 8, 2019, in line with protecting the Iranian people's security and national interests,” the statement said.

According to the statement, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has informed leaders of the remaining countries to the nuclear deal of Tehran's decision.

The JCPOA was signed in July 2015 between Iran, the U.S., France, Britain, Germany, Russia and China. However, U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew his country from the deal last year and ordered toughest ever sanctions against Iran.

In its policy of “maximum pressure” on Iran, the United States announced on April 22 that if any country buys oil from Iran from May 1 will be subject to sanctions.

Lavrov blames U.S. ‘irresponsible’ acts for ‘unacceptable situation’ surrounding JCPOA

Tehran to continue engagement with “relevant” actors

I → Lavrov criticized the Trump administration, saying, “As I understand, our main task here is to discuss the unacceptable situation, which has unfolded around the JCPOA as a result of irresponsible behavior by the United States.”

Russia is one of the signatories of the 2015 document, also known as JCPOA, which offered Iran relief from economic sanctions in exchange for accepting restriction on its nuclear industry.

■ ‘60-day window of opportunity for diplomacy’

The Iranian minister, for his part, said Tehran's actions came in response to the U.S. withdrawal from the deal, and were not meant to destroy the agreement.

“[They] can be reversed. There is a 60-day windows of opportunity for diplomacy,” Zarif stated.

Iran on Wednesday announced that it will no longer observe the limits on reserves of enriched uranium and heavy water established by the deal, calling it a response to the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA exactly a year ago.

Unless European signatories of the agreement deliver on their promise to protect the Iranian economy from unilateral sanctions



reimposed by the U.S. over the last 12 months, Iran would take further action, President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday.

All signatories were formally notified about Tehran's decision, with Zarif using his coinciding visit to Moscow to offer personal explanations about why it was taken.

Lavrov stressed that Russia appreciated Iran's continued compliance with the JCPOA even after the U.S. broke its side of the bargain.

■ Tehran to continue engagement with ‘relevant’ actors

After meeting with Lavrov, Zarif briefed his Twitter followers of the subject matter of the talks.

“Substantive consultations in Russia. Convergence of views including: JCPOA is in critical condition bec of US - and Europe's failure to uphold its obligations. EU/E3 must step up for JCPOA to survive.”

60-day ultimatum to preserve JCPOA

SNSC says Iran will cease implementing other JCPOA obligations phase by phase if its needs go unmet

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — As a retaliation against the U.S. pullout from the 2015 nuclear deal and re-imposition of sanctions on Iran coupled with a failure by the European Union to compensate for the U.S. exit, President Hassan Rouhani on Wednesday officially announced that Iran stops selling stockpiles of enriched uranium and heavy water for 60 days from May 8.

Under the 2015 nuclear agreement, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Iran was only allowed to keep 300 kilograms of enriched uranium. Also, based on the agreement, Iran was authorized to exchange heavy water for importation of yellow cake.

“This announcement is for 60 days. We have announced to the other side, the five countries [Germany, France, UK, Russia and China], that if they come to the negotiating table in 60 days and we reach a conclusion and safeguard our main interests which are oil [sale] and banking relations, we will return to the previous situation of May 7, 2019,” Rouhani told a cabinet meeting.

However, he warned, if any conclusion is not reached, Iran will resume enriching uranium and will not follow obligations under the JCPOA according to which its uranium enrichment should not exceed the purity level of 3.67 percent.

Pointing to a letter he sent to the leaders of the remaining parties to the JCPOA, Rouhani said he has mentioned in the letter that Iran will give a firm response if the remaining parties refer the issue to the UN Security Council.

The remaining signatories to the JCPOA are Germany, Britain, France, Russia and China.

Rouhani's letter was submitted to the ambassadors of these countries in Tehran by Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Abbas Araqchi.

Rouhani noted that Iran has not quit the JCPOA and his action is within the framework of the articles 26 and 36 of the deal.

“No word reduced or added. The JCPOA is the same JCPOA and will not change. However, we are ready to sit at the negotiating table to better implement it and make your implementation of the commitments better,” Rouhani explained.

Under the JCPOA, endorsed by the UN Security Council Resolution 2231, Iran was tasked to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions. However, since Trump

According to the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), if the remaining JCPOA parties fail to agree to implement their commitments in banking and oil transactions in 60 days, Iran will stop observing restrictions on the level of enriching uranium

pulled the U.S. out of the JCPOA, the European countries cut banking ties with Iran, stopped purchasing Iranian oil, annulled agreements, and their companies left Iran one after another.

Even when the oil sanctions were introduced against Iran in November 2018, which exempted certain countries, including Greece

“We will resume implementing the commitments when our needs are met, otherwise the Islamic Republic of Iran will stop implementing other obligations phase by phase,” the SNSC states.

and Italy, these two EU members refused to buy oil from Iran in limited volumes. However, certain other countries such as China, India, Japan, South Korea and Turkey continued to buy oil from Iran under sanctions waivers.

Trump's exit from the JCPOA and Europeans' refusal to respect their obligations happened despite the fact that International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has issued 14 reports each time confirming that Iran

The Iranian foreign minister rounded off his tweet by saying “Iran's choice is constructive engagement with credible *and* relevant actors”.

■ Kremlin blames U.S. for Tehran's decision

Also on Wednesday, the Kremlin spokesman said that Iran is being provoked into rolling back some terms of the nuclear deal due to external pressure, which he blamed on the United States.

“President Putin has repeatedly spoken of the consequences of unthought-out steps regarding Iran and by that I mean the decision taken by Washington (to quit the deal). Now we are seeing those consequences are starting to happen,” Dmitry Peskov told reporters on a conference call, according to Reuters.

Peskov said Russia wanted to keep the nuclear deal alive and that its diplomats were doing all they could behind the scenes in talks with European officials to try to save it.

Asked if Russia might be ready to join other countries in imposing new sanctions against Iran over its partial roll back on the deal, Peskov said: “For now, we need to soberly analyze the situation and exchange views on this. The situation is serious.”

JCPOA.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran upholds its rights under articles 26 and 36 of the JCPOA and will stop implementing some parts of its obligation under the JCPOA from today, May 8, 2019, in line with protecting the Iranian people's security and national interests,” the statement said.

“We will resume implementing the commitments when our needs are met, otherwise the Islamic Republic of Iran will stop implementing other obligations phase by phase,” the statement added.

“In the current phase, the Islamic Republic of Iran does not consider itself committed to comply with restrictions on its stockpiles of enriched uranium and heavy water,” it explained.

According to the SNSC, if the remaining parties fail to agree to implement their commitments in banking and oil transactions in 60 days, Iran will stop observing restrictions on the degree of enriching uranium and modernizing the Arak heavy water nuclear reactor.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to continue consultations with remaining signatories to the deal at all levels, however, [Iran] will respond firmly to any irresponsible action including referring the issue to the UN Security Council or imposing more sanctions,” the statement added.

In line with its “maximum pressure”, the Trump administration has been ratcheting up its sanctions on Iran since last year. Just on April 22, it announced it wants to zero out Iran's oil exports and announced that if any country buys oil from Iran will be punished.

Pompeo repeats anti-Iran threats in surprise visit to Iraq

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is continuing attempts to sow discord between Iran and Iraq during a surprise visit to the Arab country.

The hawkish U.S. politician made an unannounced visit to the capital Baghdad on Tuesday, to discuss “big energy deals that can disconnect them from Iranian energy.”

The former CIA chief further claimed that under President Donald Trump, the U.S. cares about Iraq's sovereignty.

“Generally this has been our position since the national security strategy came out in the beginning of the Trump administration,” he told reporters before heading to meet with Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi. “I wanted to go to Baghdad to speak with the leadership there, to assure them that we stood ready to continue to ensure that Iraq is a sovereign, independent nation.”

Pompeo added that his talks will also include “the security situation there, and the forces that we have in Iraq as well, ensure that we continue to support the Ira-

qi security forces, the ISF, and can train them, professionalize them, so that the new leadership there in Iraq can have security control inside of the country.”

Pompeo's visit comes days after White House national security adviser John Bolton said a carrier strike group and a bomber task force had been deployed to the region to confront what the Trump administration's claims are “clear indications” of threats from Iran.

The U.S. military said Tuesday that additional forces being sent to the Middle East will also include B-52 bombers.

According to U.S. officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity to Reuters, there will be four B-52s.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has chided Bolton's way of “announcing” the deployment, which came only long after the USS Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group departed Norfolk, Virginia, on April 1, for a “regularly scheduled deployment,” according to the U.S. Navy's website. (Source: Press TV)



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Iran to continue tit-for-tat policy under NPT, JCPOA: top MP

POLITICAL TEHRAN — A top Iranian lawmaker said on Wednesday that Iran is not after pulling out of the nuclear deal, but will continue to adopt a tit-for-tat policy in response to the other sides' lack of commitment to the deal.

Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh, chairman of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, said the nuclear accord, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), is a comprehensive document which says if a country doesn't fulfill its commitments, others can take counter-measures, Mehr reported.

Falahatpisheh also said Iran will enter into "serious" technical negotiations with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the remaining signatories of the JCPOA to "produce our required [nuclear] fuel at different degrees."

He reiterated that pulling out of JCPOA and NPT is not on the agenda.

President Hassan Rouhani declared on Wednesday that Iran would stop selling stockpiles of enriched uranium and heavy water for 60 days.

The announcement by Rouhani came exactly a year after President Trump withdrew entirely from the 2015 agreement and announced sanctions on Iran.

Rouhani notified European nations that he would give Europe 60 days to choose between following U.S. President Donald Trump or saving the deal by engaging in oil trade with Iran in violation of American unilateral



sanctions.

If the Europeans fail to compensate for the unilateral American sanctions, he said, Iran will resume construction of the Arak nuclear reactor.

Following Rouhani's announcement, other top officials and lawmakers made similar remarks and voiced their support for the move.

Alaeddin Boroujerdi, former chairman of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, advised European powers to pay attention to Iran's 60-day deadline.

He described Iran's decision as a "reasonable" one, adding that the JCPOA was

written for a two-way road, under which Iran accepted to put some restrictions on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of sanctions. Under the current circumstances, Iran is entitled to react to U.S. measures with regard to the JCPOA, he said.

"There is no reason for us to halt nuclear enrichment while Trump tries to persuade other countries to stop purchasing heavy water from us," he added.

Boroujerdi said exiting the NPT and making atomic weapons, which has been banned under a Fatwa by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei,

are a red line for Iran.

Other than these two, he continued, "we are allowed to do anything as long as the other side is not fulfilling its commitments."

"Europeans want us to fulfill our commitments but when they themselves fail to fulfil theirs, they cannot expect us to act as they wish," the lawmaker asserted.

■ 'Decisive and clever move'

Mohammad Reza Tabesh, deputy chairman of the pro-reform Hope faction in parliament, said the 60-day deadline was a "decisive" and "clever" move which aimed to secure Iran's national interests.

Tabesh expressed the hope that other countries would comply with their commitments and help Iran play an active role on the world stage, ISNA reported.

Tabesh also said, "Exiting Barjam (JCPOA) and the NPT are on the table, and if necessary and after thorough cost-benefit analysis, we will make a decision."

Hossein Naqavi Hosseini, a member of the national security and foreign policy committee, said Iran's countermeasures will not be contrary to international law, the JCPOA and the NPT.

"Unfortunately the Americans have intensified pressure against us through sanctions, and accordingly, the Islamic Republic cannot remain calm from now on," Naqavi Hosseini said.

He argued that exiting the nuclear pact "would not benefit us but we can take appropriate countermeasures."

IRGC chief: Enemies have no more options against Iran



TEHRAN (Tasnim) — Having exhausted all of their possibilities against Tehran, the enemies of Iran have no more options to use, says Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Hossein Salami.

Speaking at a military event in Tehran on Wednesday, General Salami said the confrontation between Iran and the arrogant powers has reached its highest point.

He said the adversaries have exhausted all of their possibilities against Iran and have no more capacity or power to activate.

"The enemies of the Islamic Revolution have today taken up an inclusive battle formation in the economic, cultural and social spheres, not necessarily physical," the commander added.

The senior general also hailed the IRGC as a power that is fit enough to defeat an enemy with global coalition.

In remarks last week, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei stressed the need for the Iranian nation to take up battle formation in response to the enemy's political, economic and intelligence onslaughts against the Islamic Republic.

Iran to take two 'fundamental measures': Vaezi



POLITICAL TEHRAN — Presidential chief of staff Mahmoud Vaezi said on Wednesday that the Islamic Republic will take two "fundamental measures" before the end of a two-month deadline that Iran set earlier in the day for the remaining parties to the 2015 nuclear agreement to fulfill their commitments.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a cabinet session in Tehran, Vaezi said the measures will be taken within the framework of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Tasnim reported.

"During these two months, we would take two fundamental measures and if we gain the result (we seek), we will return to the (conditions of the) day before today, but if we do not reach that result, we will

implement the second phase," he said, without providing further detail.

Vaezi also said that no one in Iran, the region or in the U.S. is after a war, adding that the U.S. is only waging a psychological war against Iran to disrupt its economy.

The remarks came after Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) issued a statement earlier in the day, announcing that Tehran will stop implementing some parts of its commitments under the JCPOA.

The Islamic Republic of Iran upholds its rights under articles 26 and 36 of the JCPOA and will stop implementing some parts of its obligation under the JCPOA from today, May 8, 2019, in line with protecting the Iranian people's security and national interests," the statement said.

Britain, Germany voice concerns about Iran's nuclear announcement



POLITICAL TEHRAN — Britain and Germany, two of the five remaining parties to the 2015 nuclear agreement, have voiced concerns over Iran's decision to stop implementing parts of the deal which was abandoned by the U.S. exactly a year ago.

Britain is extremely concerned about Iran's announcement on Wednesday that it is scaling back curbs to its nuclear program, Prime Minister Theresa May's spokesman said, urging Tehran not to take escalatory steps. "We are extremely concerned about this announcement and urge Iran to continue to meet its commitments under the deal and not to take escalatory steps," Reuters quoted the spokesman as saying.

"This deal is a crucial agreement which makes the world safer and we will ensure it

remains in place for as long as Iran upholds these commitments."

A German government spokesman also said on Wednesday that Germany regrets statements made by the Iranian government and urges Tehran not to take any aggressive steps.

A German Foreign Ministry spokesman added that Berlin wants to keep the Iran nuclear deal, and said Berlin would fully stick to its commitments as long as Iran does the same.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani on Wednesday declared the Iran would stop implementing parts of the deal. He gave Europe 60 days to choose between following U.S. President Donald Trump or saving the deal by engaging in oil trade with Iran in violation of American unilateral sanctions.

'Our JCPOA move was an ultimatum to West'



TEHRAN (FNA) — Hesamoddin Ashna, a senior cultural advisor to President Rouhani, has underlined Iran's Wednesday decision to modify its nuclear deal undertakings was an ultimatum to the West.

"The measure taken by the Islamic Republic of Iran today after one year of self-restraint and strategic patience was meant to serve as Iran's strategy of ultimatum," Ashna told FNA on Wednesday.

"We make the entire world understand that defying undertakings against Iran won't be awarded."

It came after Iran announced it will stop implementing some of its commitments under the nuclear deal, officially known as the JCPOA, until other parties to the deal secure its interests.

Japan says will use friendly ties with Iran to resolve issues

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said on Wednesday that his country will use its friendly ties with Iran to resolve the problems after Iran announced it would stop implementing some parts of its commitments under the 2015 nuclear accord.

"We hope to use our traditionally friendly relations with Iran to solve problems through dialogue and achieve peace and stability in the region," Suga said, Mehr reported.

Hailing remarks by President Hassan Rouhani that his government is not leaving the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Suga said Tokyo will keep a close eye on developments on the matter.

"The Iranian government's decision is not to withdraw from the nuclear agreement and we take note of this point," he said. "We will continue to monitor the situation carefully," the chief cabinet secretary added.

Spain FM: Iran's decision within JCPOA framework

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Spain's Foreign Minister, Josep Borrell, has said Iran's decision to stop implementing some parts of its nuclear commitments is within the framework of the multilateral deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"As far as I know, Iran's decision is within the framework of the nuclear deal, but the International Atomic Energy Agency is the body in charge to decide about the JCPOA-related issues," Borrell said, the Mehr news agency reported on Wednesday.

The U.S. took an inappropriate measure by withdrawing from the JCPOA, preparing the ground for Iran's Wednesday move, he said.

President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday that Iran will stop selling its yellow cake and heavy water product in a reciprocal act to U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA a year ago.

Military backs decision to limit JCPOA commitments

General Staff of the Armed Forces threatens 'fierce response' to any foreign military adventurism

POLITICAL TEHRAN — The military on Wednesday voiced its unwavering support for Iran's decision to stop implementing some parts of its commitments under the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Issuing a statement, the General Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces threatened to give a fierce response to any possible military adventurism by the enemies in response to Iran's

decision on the JCPOA, IRNA reported.

"We warn the enemies that any possible movement by them will be faced with a fierce response by the nation and their revolutionary children in the armed forces," the statement read.

It also expressed the hope that Iran would be able to pass through such difficult era and foil the enemy's plots.

The statement came after Iran informed the five remain-

ing signatories to the nuclear deal of its decision to suspend the implementation of some of its commitments under the multinational agreement, exactly one year after the United States unilaterally abandoned the international document.

In a statement, the SNSC said the order is aimed at "safeguarding the Iranian nation's security and interests" in the line with national rights under Articles 26 and 36 of the JCPOA.

EU to discuss consequences of Iran's choice: source

TEHRAN (IRNA) — A senior spokesman in the European Union stressed that the Iranian president's letter on Tehran's reciprocal act against U.S. withdrawal from the nuclear deal was received and the JCPOA Joint Commission is reviewing its consequences.

"We note with concern the statement made by Iran today concerning its commitments under the JCPOA," the spokesman told IRNA on condition of anonymity.

He added that as coordinator of the Joint Commission, "we are analyzing the implications together with the members of the Joint Commission."

"We remain fully committed to the JCPOA, a key achievement of the global nuclear non-proliferation architecture, which is in the security interest of all," he reiterated.



Rouhani announced on Wednesday that Iran will give a 60-day moratorium to the parties to the JCPOA to remedy their breaches and restore Iran's interests enshrined by the international deal.

Iranian Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) in a statement announced that Iran has stopped some of its commitments under the JCPOA as of May 8, 2019.

China says implementing JCPOA is a joint responsibility

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Immediately after Tehran announced partial suspension of its commitments under the nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), China insisted it wants the JCPOA to be preserved.

China, one of the signatories of the 2015 agreement on Iran's nuclear program, announced that the deal needs to be saved and fully implemented, RT reported.

"Defending and implementing the JCPOA is a joint responsibility of all parties," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang said during a daily briefing.

"We call on all relevant parties to do everything to prevent the situation from escalating," he added.



The official criticized U.S. pressure on Iran, saying such measures only raise tensions over the Islamic Republic's nuclear program.

Geng also stated that China will protect companies dealing with Tehran from the threat of American sanctions.

Beijing is one of the leading buyers of Iranian crude, while Washington threatens to punish purchasers with secondary sanctions.

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	211344.0
IFX	2605.7

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,050 rials
GBP	54,924 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$69.47/b
WTI	\$60.74 /b
OPEC Basket	\$70.23/b
Gold	\$1,290.25/oz
Silver	\$14.94/oz
Platinum	\$870.40/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

World shares near five-week low before make-or-break trade talks

World shares held near five-week lows on Wednesday as renewed trade tensions and fears for the global economy drove investors into the safety of bonds and the Japanese yen, with the latter rising to a six-week high against the dollar.

Reuters reported the European shares inched higher in an effort to shake off the gloom of dismal session in Asia and sharp slides on Wall Street, where the trade-sensitive industrial and technology sectors were hit especially hard by fears that a potential trade deal between the United States and China could unravel.

Chinese Vice Premier Liu He is due to visit Washington today and tomorrow for trade talks in a last-ditch bid to avert a sharp increase in tariffs on Chinese goods ordered by U.S. President Donald Trump.

MSCI's Asia-Pacific share index excluding Japan, fell almost one percent to touch its lowest level since late-March, while the pan-European EuroStoxx index was flat, clawing its way back from multi-week lows.

Markets are on tenterhooks given the importance of the talks to world growth, especially given the mixed nature of recent economic data from China.

Uncertainty ... all-in-all, bonds as well as other safe-havens such as yen, look set to benefit from this situation in the short-term."

Adding to market jitters was Chinese trade data showing solid imports but an unexpected fall in April exports. The numbers follow lackluster economic data in Europe and signs of steep inventory build-ups in the United States.

"Chinese exports were negative which suggests the world economy remains weak," Barraud said noting that the latest manufacturing surveys had painted a subdued picture of new export orders worldwide.

New Zealand became the first country in the developed world to cut interest rates since the Fed turned tail on policy earlier this year, though other central banks, from Sweden to Canada have hinted at policy easing.

New Zealand's Central Bank Governor Adrian Orr cited the U.S.-China trade dispute as a major risk for his country's economy.

The decision pushed the kiwi dollar to a six-month low, while government bonds jumped, sending yields 5-7 basis points lower across the curve.

On currency markets, investors' demand for safe-havens boosted the Japanese yen which firmed 0.2 percent against the dollar at 110.07 yen, taking its gains to more than 1 percent this month.

Bonds too have benefited from the worries for growth and trade, with 10-year yields on U.S. Treasuries, German bunds and Japanese government bonds (JGBs) languishing at near one-month lows.

Germany's 10-year government bond yield, the benchmark for the bloc, hovered near five-week lows at -0.04 percent, not far from the 2-1/2 year low of -0.094 percent while Japan's 10-year yield burrowed deeper into negative territory and last stood at minus 0.055 percent.

BOJ board debated pros, cons of more easing at March meeting: minutes

Bank of Japan policymakers remained divided on how quickly to ramp up stimulus to hit their elusive price goal, minutes of their March meeting showed, even as slowing global demand clouded the outlook for the export-reliant economy.

According to reuters.com, while most in the nine-member board saw no immediate need to expand an already massive stimulus program, several warned of heightening risks to Japan's recovery that could warrant additional monetary easing, the minutes showed on Wednesday.

"Considering the difficulty in shifting inflation expectations, it was important to respond pre-emptively in the event of a change in economic and price developments," one member was quoted as saying.

Another said the BOJ should be "prepared" to ease if risks to the economy and prices materialize, the minutes showed.

But others were more cautious. One member said the BOJ should not respond to short-term fluctuations in economic data, and instead look at the long-term trend in guiding monetary policy, according to the minutes.

Those reluctant to ease any time soon also pointed to the rising costs of prolonged easing, such as the hit to financial institutions' earnings from years of ultra-low interest rates.

A few board members said the BOJ must pay more attention to the impact its prolonged ultra-loose policy was having on regional banks' profits, the minutes showed.

The hit to regional banks' profits and equity capital could "gradually materialize" and prompt more banks to take excessive risks to secure profits, those board members were quoted as saying.

At the two-day rate review that ended on March 15, the BOJ kept monetary policy steady despite cutting its assessments on exports and output amid heightening global economic risks.

‘U.S. sanctions present opportunity for Iran, Cuba to expand trade ties’

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The U.S. sanctions on Iran could be considered an opportunity for Iran and Cuba to expand economic ties in line with politic cooperation, the Ambassador of Cuba in Iran Alexis Bandrich Vega said on Tuesday.

Meeting with Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Gholam-Hossein Shafei, Vega underlined bolstering trade ties with Iran as the Cuban Embassy's top priority.

"Iran and Cuba should not limit their relations to embassies.... there are many opportunities for joint investment in various fields like food, medicine, biotechnology, telecommunications, construction, hotels and tourism and etc., which should be given particular attention by the two sides", he said.

The official further urged Iranian companies to participate in Cuban



Cuba's Ambassador in Iran Alexis Bandrich Vega (L) met with ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafei in Tehran on Tuesday to discuss expansion of trade ties.

international exhibitions, including the Havana exhibition, and called for the exchange of information between Iranian and Cuban companies through the two countries' chambers of commerce for participation in such exhibitions.

He also suggested oil for good mechanisms to be executed by the two sides in order to bypass U.S. sanctions.

Shafei in his turn expressed dissatisfaction with the mismatch between the two countries' economic relations with the political relations, saying "Mining, food industry, sugar cane, fisheries and aquaculture are among the areas that have great potential for joint cooperation and should not be taken for granted."

The official also announced ICCIMA's readiness for exchanging delegations and trade information between Iranian provincial chambers with Cuban counterparts.

Stock market issues 55,000 trading codes in a month

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Some 55,000 new trading codes were issued in the Iranian stock market during the first month of current Iranian calendar year, Farvardin (March 21-April 20), IRNA quoted Hossein Fahimi, the managing director of Central Securities Depository of Iran (CSDI), as saying.

CSDI is the sole registrar, central custodian and clearing house for the Iranian financial market of four exchanges including TSE, Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), and Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX).

Iran's exchange markets witnessed fruitful

performances and results in the past Iranian calendar year 1397 (ended on March 20, 2019).

For example TSE officially launched "futures" in mid-December 2018 for more risk management and IME launched "option" in early March 2019 in an approach to diversify financing methods for agricultural products, while the number and worth of trades at Fara Bourse increased 89 percent and 71 percent, respectively, in the past year compared to its preceding year and IFX, the main index of IFB, touched a new record high, gaining more than 100% to stand at 2,258 points on March 19, 2019.

Meanwhile, the value of trades at IME rose 52 percent in the past calendar year from its previous year.



Vienna willing to expand economic co-op with Kish Island: Austrian envoy

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Austria's Ambassador to Tehran Stefan Scholz said his country is eager to expand cooperation with Iran's southern Kish Island in economic as well as tourism and scientific fields, IRNA reported.

Making the remarks on Tuesday night in a meeting with Gholam-Hossein Mozaffari, the managing director of Kish Free Zone Organization, the Austrian envoy said Kish Island has valuable capabilities for investment.

The Austrian ambassador said that he was pleased with the visit to Kish Island and thanked the hospitality of the officials of Kish Free Trade Zone.

"Austria and Iran are the two cultural powers in the world", he said, adding: "Clean energy is part of the Austrian economy and a major part of green eco investments as well."

"In Kish island, implementation of some environmental projects is important as a model for other cities in Iran and the region", he added.

He emphasized the need for expanding the cooperation in ecotourism, saying that in this context, Austria has a strategic role and there is another partnership between the two countries in this due, such as that between the Vienna High School of Tourism and an institute in Tehran.



Austrian Ambassador to Tehran Stefan Scholz

Mozaffari, for his part, said that Kish Island is an ideal destination for tourists, especially in the tourism sector of Halal and Health Tourism.

"Kish is an environment-friendly island, it is interested in taking advantage of the Austrian experience in the field of environmental protection, in particular the recycling

sector", he added.

In a meeting with representatives of Fars Chamber of Commerce on Sunday, Scholz had said that the main goal of Austrian embassy in Tehran is to use the existing opportunities and conditions so that in case of any future positive development in the international arena, we can take positive steps without any waste of time.

One opportunity is to strengthen export capacities of Iran since its products are of high qualities and competitive prices, the Austria ambassador said.

In a separate meeting with some other officials of Fars, Scholz, said that Vienna rejects the U.S. sanctions against Tehran and seeks to expand ties and cooperation with the Islamic Republic, Fars news agency reported.

The Austrian envoy noted that his country 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.

Slowing growth: EU countries urged to further adjust spending

By Jorge Valero

The European Commission called on Spain, Italy, France and Belgium to do more efforts to balance their public accounts on May 7, citing a slowing economy.

Bad news for the European economy again. The eurozone will grow less than initially expected this year, the Commission said on Tuesday.

According to the Commission's spring economic forecast, the euro area will grow at a moderate pace of 1.2% in 2019, down from 1.3% projected in February.

The Commission also cut its GDP forecast for the EU to 1.4% this year, down by 0.1%.

For next year, output is projected to increase by 1.5% in the eurozone and 1.6% in the EU as a whole.

Euro area economy is expected to slow down more markedly than initially expected, because of the impact of increasing risks, including a disorderly Brexit, and external tensions primarily driven by the U.S.-China trade war.

After years of austerity, public spending is on the rise. Public deficits increased in the eurozone as a whole from 0.5% last year, the lowest figure since 2000, to 0.9%.

Expenditures and revenues

In the case of Belgium, Spain, France and Italy, the loosening stance is somehow worrying for the EU executive, given the structural mismatch between expenditures and revenues and the already high level of public debt.

The Commission broke its usual stance of waiting until June to issue its recommendations and included a straight-forward message in its spring forecast to the governments concerned.

Spain, Italy, France and Belgium "are set to run sizeable structural deficits in 2019 combined with debt levels close to or above 100% of GDP, suggesting that further fiscal adjustment is needed."

The European Commission's fresh call for further adjustments in some of the EU's largest economies comes just two weeks before European elections scheduled on 23-26 May.

Widespread voter dissatisfaction with austerity policies adopted in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis has already pushed populist parties to power across Europe, most notably the Five Star Movement and the far-right in Italy.

Italy is a particular headache for Brussels. It has the highest level of public debt among the vulnerable economies of Europe (135.2% of GDP expected in 2020), and



the current government is largely ignoring calls from Brussels to get its expenditure under control.

Italian GDP is projected to register a meager 0.1% growth in 2019, and 0.7% in 2020, according to the Commission's spring economic forecast.

Meanwhile, the fiscal stimulus put forward by the national-populist government in Rome is expected to push deficits above the 3% threshold again in 2020. The Commission now expects the Italian deficit to reach 3.5% of GDP next year, compared to 3.1% projected in November.

EU freezes budget disciplinary procedure against Italy

The solution offered to the European Commission is not 'ideal' but Italy's efforts are sufficient to avoid the launch of the excessive deficit procedure, the EU executive announced on 19 December.

The compromise reached between Rome and Brussels last December failed to rein in deficits in the eurozone's third largest economy. Deficits were fuelled by the deteriorating economic environment and additional spending announced by Rome, including a new citizens' income and a review of the country's pension reform.

Italy's fresh deviation from EU fiscal rules will fuel criticism from countries like The Netherlands, who say the Commission is too soft with the Italian government led by the populist Five Star Movement and the far-right Lega.

Pierre Moscovici, the EU Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, refused to say whether the deteriorating figures would trigger an EU sanctions procedure against Italy. The Commission will assess Italy's compliance with EU rules at the beginning of June, he indicated.

Spain's €36 billion hole

But the country with the largest structural deficit in the eurozone is not Italy but Spain. The fourth largest

euro area economy is currently spending almost 3% of its GDP (around €36 billion) more than it gets in revenue, excluding the economic cycle.

The Socialist government led by Pedro Sanchez, who won national elections on 28 April, passed additional expenditure measures, including a pay rise for civil servants and new social policy measures.

The Iberian economy is reducing its deficit however, thanks to a robust growth rate of 2.1% this year, the highest among the large EU economies, together with Poland.

In its Stability and Reform program submitted to Brussels last week, Spain included a tax hike to generate additional revenues worth 1.6% of GDP (around €20 billion).

The Commission's call

Moscovici did not comment on whether these new measures would be sufficient to satisfy the Commission's call for further efforts.

Like for Italy, he postponed his verdict to June, by which time Sánchez may have concluded his attempt to form a new government.

In Spain, Socialists pledge 'pro-European government' after election win

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez looks set to regain power after his Socialists overcame a historic challenge by right-wing nationalists in elections on 28 April, a result he portrayed as a morale booster for the European Union.

While Italy, Spain, France and Belgium were urged to cut expenditure, Moscovici called on healthier EU economies to provide "more support to the economy", in addition to new reforms to bolster economic output. This is the case in particular of Germany, the Netherlands and Finland, which have sufficient "fiscal space" to increase spending, the Commission says.

Despite the worsening economic climate, Moscovici showed some optimism, saying the European economy will continue to grow this year and next.

The "European economy is holding up in the face of less favorable global circumstances and persistent uncertainty," the Frenchman said.

But the situation could continue to worsen, amid continuous trade tensions stoked by U.S. President Donald Trump.

Among the chief risk factors for the next two years, the Commission listed protectionist measures and the slowdown of the global economy, especially if trade disruptions continue.

(Source: euractiv.com)

Nominal electricity generation capacity exceeds 80.5GW

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** — Nominal electricity generation capacity in Iran has reached 80,509 megawatts (80.509 gigawatts), IRNA reported on Wednesday.

The mentioned figure for the added capacity was supplied from the newly operational distributed generation power plants, hydroelectric power plants, as well as renewable plants.

The country increased its electricity generation capacity by 500 megawatts (MW) compared to the last year (ended on March 20).

Iran's total power generation capacity stood at 80,000 MW in the past Iranian calendar year (1397), up from the 78,484 MW of its preceding year.

Currently, with a total generation



capacity of 25,083 MW (31.2 percent) combined cycle power plants account for the biggest share in the country's total power generation capacity followed by gas power plants generating 29.9 percent.

The share of hydroelectric power plants is 19.87 percent while hydroelectric plants generate 14.8 percent of the country's total electricity, the share of dispersed generation units is 1.5 percent and finally the renewable power plants account only for 0.79 percent of Iran's total power generation capacity.

The energy ministry plans to inaugurate 22 new units with a total capacity of 3,933 MW in the current fiscal year along with upgrading and increasing the efficiency of existing power plants to add another 461 MW of new capacity.

Salih insists on extending Iranian energy waivers in talks with Pompeo

1 → According to Iraq's Power Minister Luay al-Khateeb, the country will need to import gas and electricity from Iran for at least three more years.

"Iraq is going to need two or three years to

achieve self-sufficiency in the field, which will be possible only if big projects are implemented", Al-Khateeb said.

"Iraq has told the Americans it currently needs to import gas and electricity from Iran,

as it is importing close to 1,200 megawatts of electricity as well as gas for generating 2,800 megawatts of electricity from the country," he added.

Earlier, Iraqi Oil Minister Thamer al-Ghaz-

ban referred to improbability of cutting gas and power imports from Iran under current juncture.

According to Iraqi officials, without Iranian gas supplies half of Iraq's natural gas power plants will close down in the summer.

Pakistan determined to complete IP pipeline, PM Khan says

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** — Pakistan is determined on completing the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline known as IP pipeline which is aimed to send Iranian gas to Pakistan, IRNA reported, quoting Prime Minister Imran Khan as saying on Tuesday.

"Coordinating with the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan will take the necessary steps to complete the IP gas pipeline project," Khan said.

Local media reported on Tuesday that Khan had issued fresh directives to relevant Pakistani authorities on the completion of the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline, also known as the peace pipeline.

The official also called on Pakistani Foreign Ministry for taking necessary measures to solve the issues regarding the project through mutual understanding and reconciliation.



The prime minister said Tehran and Islamabad should work jointly and review the agreed price of the gas and also complete the project.

He further blamed U.S. sanctions as the main hurdle in the way of the completion of the IP projects.

Near 20 years after the initiation of talks over the peace gas pipeline, beginning as the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project, and despite the fact that Iran has completed its part of the pipeline in its territory, Pakistan has fallen behind the target to take delivery of gas, initially scheduled for 2014.

The joint project was launched in 2010 and aims to construct 1,800 kilometers (over 1,100 miles) of pipeline from Iran to Pakistan. Iran plans to deliver 21.5 mcm/d of gas to Pakistan through the project.

NIDC to dig 23 wells in South Azadegan Oilfield by Mar. 2020

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** — National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) will dig 23 new wells in South Azadegan Oilfield by the end of current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2020), according to a director in NIDC.

Jahangir Shojaei, the director of project to dig the mentioned wells, said that despite the problems caused by the recent floods in the oil-rich regions which led to the halt in the operation of several drilling rigs in the field, efforts are being made to complete the project according to the schedule, Shana reported.

He said over 75,000 meters of drilling have been already conducted in the project and 19 wells are now ready for oil extraction.

South Azadegan is one of five major oilfields Iran shares with Iraq at the western part of Iran's south-western region of Karoun, known as West Karoun fields.

West Karoun holds great importance for the country's oil industry since according to the latest studies, its in-situ deposit is estimated to be 67 billion barrels containing both light and heavy crude oils, and therefore it could have a big impact on Iran's oil output increases in the future.

With the fields fully operational, their output could add 1.2 million bpd to the country's oil production capacity.

Having an estimated 67 billion barrels of in-situ oil, West Karoun fields definitely deserve the spotlight which has been put on them recently.



Oil steady near \$70 as China demand offsets concerns about trade

Brent oil held steady near \$70 a barrel on Wednesday as record Chinese imports and tighter global supplies eased concerns about a deepening trade spat between the United States and China.

As per Reuters, U.S. sanctions on crude exporters Iran and Venezuela as well as supply cuts by OPEC and Russia also supported prices.

Brent crude futures were at \$69.78 per barrel by 0902 GMT, down 10 cents or 0.14 percent.

"It has been a less than auspicious start to the month for the energy complex. Oil prices had rallied about 40 percent since

the beginning of the year but the move higher has for now been put on the back burner," said Stephen Brennock, analyst at London-based oil brokerage PVM.

China's crude imports in April hit a record for the month of 10.64 million barrels per day (bpd), customs data showed on Wednesday. That is an 11 percent rise from the same month last year. The country is the world's largest oil importer.

Oil prices had fallen earlier this week due to announcements from Washington that the United States would further raise tariffs on Chinese goods on Friday.

The "focus now will be on the two days of talks in Washington scheduled to take place between U.S. and Chinese officials," said Jasper Lawler, head of research at futures brokerage London Capital Group.

Before that, prices had rallied on a tightening of U.S. sanctions on Iran with the aim of reducing oil exports from the key producer to zero.

Iran has said it will defy the sanctions. It also said it would stop implementing "some commitments" under a 2015 nuclear deal if it was not allowed to export oil.

Most analysts expect Iran's crude exports to fall to little more than 500,000

bpd, down from around 1 million bpd in April, as governments largely bow to U.S. pressure.

Washington has also slapped sanctions on Venezuelan oil exports.

Both sets of sanctions come amid already tight supply as the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries has been withholding output this year to prop up prices.

U.S. Energy Secretary Rick Perry said on Tuesday that Saudi Arabia, OPEC's de facto leader, would increase its oil production to meet needs arising from sanctions on Iran.

Global Energy Storage Systems Market size to reach \$296.0b by 2024

A leading research firm Zion Market research added a recent report on "Energy Storage Systems Market by Technology (Compressed Air, Pumped Hydro Storage, Lithium Ion, Sodium Sulfur, Nickel Cadmium, Lead Acid, Redox-Flow, and Flywheel), by Application (Transportation and Grid Storage), and by End-User (Non-Residential, Utility, and Residential): Global Industry Perspective, Comprehensive Analysis and Forecast, 2017 – 2024" to its research database.

B2BNews reports the Energy Storage Systems Market comprehensive is perceptible among the most immensely gathered market globally. The Energy Storage Systems Market report gives the exchange information and the progressing business chain information in the overall market.

The report gives a thought with respect to the advancement of the free market movement of significant players of the Energy Storage Systems Market. A noteworthy examination of the market relies upon general plans, which have been of late organized to the investigation of Energy Storage Systems Market, is furthermore incorporated into the report.

The Energy Storage Systems Market report thinks about the present execution of the overall market notwithstanding the novel examples and furthermore a complete bifurcation product, its end-users, applica-



tions, and others of the market; additionally, the factual studying report does predictions on the accompanying power of the market reliant on this examination.

The Energy Storage Systems Market measurable looking over examination incorporates all parts of the

overall market, which starts from perception the Energy Storage Systems Market, collaborating with customers, and assessing the data of the overall market. Each division of the overall market is researched and isolated dependent on the sort of stock, their applications, and the end-customers.

The worldwide geological (Latin America, North America, Asia Pacific, Middle & East Africa, and Europe) analysis of the Energy Storage Systems Market plan has furthermore been done cautiously in this report. The dynamic establishment of the overall Energy Storage Systems Market depends on the assessment of item circulated in various markets, limitations, general benefits made by every association, and future aspirations.

The major application areas of Energy Storage Systems Market are also covered on the basis of their implementation. The report gives the ideology about different factors and inclinations affecting the development course of the worldwide Energy Storage Systems Market.

A review of the impact of the administrative regulations and policies on the Energy Storage Systems Market operations is also included in this report. The Energy Storage Systems Market report offers a complete analysis of competitive dynamics that are modifying and places the patrons ahead of competitors.

South Pars phases 4, 5 go through overhaul operations

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** — The overhaul operations of the phases 4 and 5 of the giant South Pars gas filed (which Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf) has finished and the mentioned phases are operating at their optimum level, Tasnim news agency reported on Wednesday, quoting a refinery official.



According to Mohammad-Shafi Moazeni, director of the 3rd South Pars Refinery which receives natural gas from phases 4 and 5, with new sour gas pipelines from phase 7, 8 and 9 being connected to the third refinery, the refinery's sweet gas output has increased by five percent.

Earlier in April, Hadi Hashemzadeh Farhang, the managing director of South Pars Gas Company (SPGC), said the output of South Pars gas refineries is going to increase by over seven billion cubic meters (bcm) by cutting their overhauling period.

According to the official, every year during the first six months of the Iranian calendar year (started on March 21) the refineries of the giant South Pars field go through renovation and overhauling and consequently the output falls accordingly.

"This period was 201 days last year, which is scheduled to be 174 days this year. This means an increase of 7.4 billion cubic meters in the complexes' refining capacity."

South Pars is the world's largest gas field shared between Iran and Qatar. Iran is developing the mega project in 24 phases. It reportedly provides more than two-thirds of the country's natural gas.

South Pars holds an estimated 40 trillion cubic meters of natural gas, or roughly 8% of the world's reserves and approximately 18 billion barrels of condensates. It adjoins Qatar's North Field that spans over 6,000 square kilometers.

IEA: Renewables growth is stalling

By Nick Cunningham

Renewable energy deployment stalled out last year, raising alarm bells about the pace of the clean energy transition.

In 2018, total deployment of renewable energy stood at about 180 gigawatts (GW), which was the same as the previous year. It was the first time since 2001 that capacity failed to increase year-on-year, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA).

Adding 180 GW of clean energy is a massive total, but still falls short of what is needed to clean up the electricity sector. It equates to roughly 60 percent of what is needed each year in order to meet long-term climate goals, the IEA said. The agency said that the world needs to add about 300 GW of renewable energy each year through 2030 in order to meet the targets laid out in the Paris Climate Agreement.

Worse, last year, CO2 emissions from energy rose 1.7 percent, setting another record high at 33 Gigatonnes. So, while emissions need to decline sharply, they haven't even flattened out yet. Renewable energy continues to grow, but so does demand for oil and gas.

"The world cannot afford to press "pause" on the expansion of renewables and governments need to act quickly to correct this situation and enable a faster flow of new projects," Fatih Birol, the IEA's Executive Director, said in a statement.

"Thanks to rapidly declining costs, the competitiveness of renewables is no longer heavily tied to financial incentives. What they mainly need are stable policies supported by a long-term vision but also a focus on integrating renewables into power systems in a cost-effective and optimal way. Stop-and-go policies are particularly harmful to markets and jobs," Birol added.

For the last four years, growth of wind had slowed, but the gap was made up by faster growth from solar. The difference in 2018 was that solar's exponential growth flattened out. The reason for that lies in China, where the government pared back incentives on solar in order to cut expenditures and cope with grid integration challenges, the IEA said. Still, China added 44 GW of solar last year, the most by far out of any other country and nearly half of the 97 GW global total. But that was down from 53 GW that China installed in 2017.

Costs continue to fall, making renewable energy the cheapest option in many markets, which should ensure strong growth going forward. In the U.S., wind and solar are now cheaper than operating existing coal plants in much of the country. In fact, in April, renewable energy surpassed coal in terms of electricity generation for the first time, accounting for 24 percent of the total, compared to coal's 20 percent market share.

But, despite the momentum, the transition is not fast enough. A new UN report finds that the world is facing a mass die-off of biodiversity, with as many as one million plant and animal species at risk of extinction. Also, the world is on track to blow through its carbon budget within 12 years.

Because of this urgency, a wave of new policies supporting a faster roll out of electric vehicles and renewable energy is inevitable. At the state level, renewable energy mandates are proliferating. In the Democratic primary for president, candidates are trying to outdo each other in terms of ambition on clean energy and climate change. For instance, what was once considered an extreme position, such as banning oil and gas drilling on public lands, has now become a mainstream position in the Democratic Party, at least for the candidates running for president.

Another example of the shifting Overton window came in late April when former Texas Congressman and presidential contender Beto O'Rourke recently called for \$5 trillion in spending over the next 10 years in an effort to cut emissions to zero by 2050. It's ambitious by any measure, but faced some pushback for not going far enough, which says a lot about the growing concern about climate change. In fact, climate change ranked as the top issue for Democratic voters, according to a recent poll.

The oil and gas industry has enjoyed a golden era under the Trump administration, but it may only be temporary.

Pakistan's missing - Did they vanish into thin air?



➔ Another story of a woman, a widow, whose 23 year old son has been missing for two years, is heartbreaking. She said if her son was involved in any criminal activity, he should be tried in a court, through proper legal procedures, rather than subjected to enforced disappearance. She has a point. Pakistan is a democratic country, not a banana republic.

According to reports, protesters are demanding the release of at least 40 persons who are missing or were illegally abducted without any warrant, in clear violation of the country's laws.

One protestor was quoted saying in media that if the missing people are wanted in criminal cases or involved in any activity against the State, the law should take its own course. But their abduction is in clear violation of international humanitarian norms and the country's Constitution. Many mothers have died in grief while waiting to hear the knock on the door again.

Another protester was quoted saying that his brothers were abducted by the authorities in 2016, and in the last two years there has been no information about them. His mother passed away in pain and agony after knocking every door of the state to get justice.

Despite steps taken by the government of Pakistan by establishing a Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances (CIED), for the protection of human rights and to amend the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) to declare "enforce disappearances" as a criminal offence, the cases of missing people continue to be reported from across the country. According to Defence of Human Rights Pakistan, more than five thousand cases of enforced disappearances have been reported since 2000.

A report submitted by Sindh province's home department to the Interior Ministry said as many as 3,758 persons were reported to have gone missing in Sindh over the last five years, of which 3,238 were successfully traced or their cases shelved. Of the remaining 520 cases, 156 are pending before CIED, while 364 cases are pending in the High Court (SHC).

The government of Pakistan refuses to acknowledge that the arrests and detentions of these missing people took place, and there has been no credible action even after the intervention of the Supreme Court. If the government that is supposed to work for the security and welfare of Pakistani citizens fails in its job, it leaves people with no other option but to take to streets and protest.

The Constitution of Pakistan has clear provisions to ensure protection of fundamental rights of Pakistani citizens. According to Section 4, "every person should be dealt with in accordance of law", and Section 10 and 10A gives them protection from arrests and detention without being informed and right to have a fair trial.

But the cases of missing people in Pakistan are an example of violations of these fundamental rights and mockery of the country's Constitution. Any illegal detention and abduction is a heinous crime according to PPC. Law enforcement authorities are committing these crimes in the name of 'war on terror', the sham concept invented by the Western powers to advance their politics of hegemony.

In the name of 'war on terror', people are abducted and subjected to enforced disappearance in Pakistan. If someone speaks for his rights or criticizes the government institutions, or calls for reforms in the system, he is labeled a 'traitor' or an 'agent' working for 'enemies'.

Most of the missing people are those who have visited Iran, Iraq and other Middle Eastern countries, which has added to the concerns of Pakistani students in these countries, especially in Iran. They are concerned about their fate and fear they will be either interrogated or pushed into the same dark alley.

One of the Pakistani students in Tehran, wishing anonymity, said after the completion of his studies in Iran, he was interrogated by security agencies and authorities back in Pakistan. That's the dilemma Pakistani students in Iran face today, always under the scanner in their home country.

In a country that takes pride in its democracy and rule of law, it is important to protect the rights of citizens and ensure innocents are not humiliated, harassed or exploited unnecessarily.

The government led by Imran Khan announced its arrival with a proverbial bang last year, which gave hope to many people who had grown weary of the previous ruling dispensations. His manifesto appealed to people and they saw in him great potential to lay the foundation of 'New Pakistan'.

But, so far we haven't seen anything new. The issue of enforced disappearances will be a litmus test for this government. It will decide whether the 'Naya Pakistan' slogan is truth or eyewash.

Writer is a lawyer and research scholar from Pakistan, presently based in Iran

The government led by Imran Khan announced its arrival with a proverbial bang last year, which gave hope to many people who had grown weary of the previous ruling dispensations. His manifesto appealed to people and they saw in him great potential to lay the foundation of 'New Pakistan'.

"I am not in favour of a religious theory of international relations"

By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Dr. Fabio Petito, senior lecturer in International Relations at department of International Relations of University of Sussex says the 'rejection' of religion seems to be inscribed in the genetic code of the discipline of International Relations (IR).

He also adds that "Arguably the main constitutive elements of the practice and theory of modern international relations were purposely established in early modern Europe to end the Wars of Religion."

"I am not in favour of a religious theory of international relations, even if it can be interesting to explore and even expand on what the different worldwide religious tradition have to say on different aspects of international relations, especially as far as normative issues and ethical dilemmas are concerned," Dr. Petito tells the Tehran Times.

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

A: It was probably with the end of the Cold War. Following the end of the Cold war, however, the predominant academic (and public) discourse took a very specific theoretical leaning: the unexpected return of religion in international politics was primarily theorised in the form of a militant and violent-prone form of politics, almost as a God-sent plague or punishment on the earth, "the revenge of God" or as if there was only "terror in the mind of God" as some of the titles of the first books focusing on this resurgence seemed to evoke (respectively, G. Kepel and M. Jurgensmeyer). For this approach the examples were many: the conflicts in Bosnia, Algeria, Kashmir, Palestine, Sudan; but also the raise of world-wide Islamism and Hindu Nationalism or the growing role of the Christian Right on America foreign policy or of Orthodoxy on the Russian state; and of course the events of September 11 came as a seal to unequivocally confirm such a worrying and destabilising trend. More generally, I think that there are three ways in which this resurgence of religion in international politics has been apprehended/read by the discipline of International Relations in this first wave of post-89 attention to religion in IR: 1) in the context of the so-called 'new wars' where political violence is often manifested within 'failed' states and driven by a politics of identity and irregular warfare designed along religious lines; 2) in the context of religious fundamentalism and international terrorism; 3) and within the context and fears of a forthcoming "clash of civilizations".

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

A: It was against this first wave of research on religion in IR that in the year 2000, together with my colleague Pavlos Hatzopoulos, I put together a journal Special issue of Millennium: Journal of International Studies, which is one of the key outlet for publishing critical scholarship in IR theory. The idea was to challenge what Scott Thomas called in the opening article of the special issue the "Westphalian presumption", that is, the notion that religious pluralism cannot be accommodated in international society but must be privatized (or better confessionalised, that is, brought under the control of the state) or overcome by a cosmopolitan ethics, if there is to be international order. In other words, we wanted to move away from the assumption shared by most of the post-89 scholarship that



the politicization of religion in international relations is always an inescapable threat to security, inimical to 'modernity' and to the resolution of conflicts, as the 'new wars' driven by the politics of identity and the terrorist attacks of religious fundamentalists would show. This view, which is very strong in western academia and political circles, we argued, it overlooks the positive role politicised religion (in a qualified way) can play to the modernisation, democratisation and even peace-building in many countries and societies. In fact, we could say that our Special Issue and the following 2003 volume 'Religion in International Relations: The Return from Exile' contributed to a second wave of more reflexive scholarship on religion in IR: scholars started to recognize that the above-mentioned understanding of the global resurgence of religion – by definition a threat to security, inimical to 'modernity' and to the resolution of conflicts – was based on a problematic set of assumptions. It was an ideological understanding more than a social-scientifically based and historically-grounded analysis, part of that very eurocentric idea that William Cavanaugh has defined as the 'Myth of Religious Violence'. Our approach was suggesting to start from a different theoretical assumption, something captured effectively by the words of the pioneering book by Scott Appleby (The Ambivalence of the Sacred), that is, from the assumption that religion was politically ambivalent: on the one hand, it could promote political violence and conflict, but, on the other, also non-violent civic engagement, development, conflict-resolution and even reconciliation.

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

A: I have argued that the 'rejection' of religion seems to be inscribed in the genetic code of the discipline of International Relations (IR). Arguably the main constitutive elements of the practice and theory of modern international relations were purposely established in early modern Europe to end the Wars of Religion. At that point in history – paraphrasing the powerful words of Thomas Hobbes – God made space to the great Leviathan (the sovereign state), that mortal God to which the new modern man owes his peace and security, religion was privatized (or better, as I mentioned before, confessionalised and brought

under the control of the state), and through the principle of the cuius regio eius religio (the ruler determines the religion of his realm) pluralism among states and noninterference were born and worshipped as the new sacred principles of the emerging Westphalian order: As a consequence, politics with reference to Religion becomes the ultimate threat to order, security, and civility, and, must not inhabit both the practice of international relations and, subsequently, the discipline of study of International Relations (IR). There is, in other words, a way in which religion and European modernity entered in tension and this is summarized, in my view, by Carl Schmitt powerful statement that 'all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts'. What gradually happened in modern Europe was a process that has been described by the historian John Bossy as the 'migration of the holy'.

A second break, however, lies, it seems to me, in International Relations' self-understanding as a party to the Enlightenment project, in its self-conception as a social science that holds a privileged access to knowledge of social phenomena. Firstly, and more broadly, it should not come as a big revelation that religion and the Enlightenment have not always been on "very good terms" either theoretically or politically. Rather, the Enlightenment Project (MacIntyre) envisages as its central mission the supersession of those traditional religious-based worlds into a universal individually-based and rationally-justified modern world. Secondly, and more specifically, we have to remember that modern international law, arguably the predecessor of the discipline of International Relations, was born under the auspices of Alberico Gentili's celebrated cry silete theologi in munere alieno! – let theologians keep silence about matters outside their province! – which symbolically marked the end of the scholastic world and the advent of a new epoch, the Westphalian era, in which international politics would be examined from a secular rather than a theological standpoint. We need to understand that the idea of religious violence was one of foundational legitimising myth of the liberal nation-state as it fought against the Church (I mean mostly the Catholic Church) in the 19th century, in Germany, Italy and of course paradigmatically in France. Of course, the fact that in 20th century IR as an academic discipline developed after WWII mostly as an 'American Social Science' with a strong positivist – rather than interpretivist-historical – methodologies further reinforced the rejection of phenomenon of religion that would be difficult to measure and analysed though

the frameworks of positivist and quantitative approaches.

■ If theorizing Religion in International Relations is possible, can this religious theory in International Relations explain all the unresolved issues and problems?

A: I am not in favour of a religious theory of international relations, even if it can be interesting to explore and even expand on what the different worldwide religious tradition have to say on different aspects of international relations, especially as far as normative issues and ethical dilemmas are concerned. This is part of what I would call the 'prophetic' vocation of religion in discerning the signs of time and pointing to a more just and peaceful world order; What I have, however, argued for, in a work that I developed with Luca Mavelli, is that we need an intellectual move towards a postsecular international thinking as a self-conscious reflexive thematization of the fact that contrary what all social sciences believed, for most of the 20th century, secularisation is not the unavoidable narrative and inexorable implication of modernity and modernisation processes. This recognition or what Habermas called 'change of consciousness' has many important implications for a discipline of IR which was born and is embedded in a deep form of 'secularism' and thrives on implicit secular assumptions. To me IR theory needs not only to incorporate the resilience of religious traditions in modern life, an unexpected development of modernization which was wrongly believed to go hand in hand with the process of secularization, but also needs to respond much more to the normative call to include – against the prescriptions of the political philosophy of secularism - religious and spiritual voices in the current discussions on the political and social challenges faced by our societies; finally in a more radical way, IR theorising must be open to the possibility that values such as democracy, freedom, equality, inclusion, and justice may not necessarily be best pursued within an exclusively immanent secular framework. Quite the opposite, the secular may well be a potential site of isolation, domination, violence, and exclusion.

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

A: Of course, the development of new forms of postsecular theorising would make more justice to the complex role that religions play in contemporary international politics, including right-sizing the role and impact of religion against an opposite tendency that sometimes seems to suggest that it's all about religion (Think about certain recent scholarship on the role of religion in the contemporary Middle Eastern conflicts). I want to suggest, however, that a focus on religion in international relations is also important in making sense of the 'big picture' of word order that is slowly emerging under our very own eyes. As recent scholarship in civilizational analysis (Eisenstadt and Katzenstein) has been showing the different religious traditions act as cultural sources for the enactment of different programmes of modernity. That's why in a recent article I wrote on 'Dialogue of Civilizations in a Multipolar World' I argued that we need to develop a postsecular theorising capable of making sense of the new great alignment which will shape the 21st century world order – a new multipolar world in a context of civilizational politics and multiple modernities – as this has something to do also with religion even if all contemporary analyses emphasised only the economic and security dimensions of the new emerging multipolarity.

Europe's passivity against Trump government

➔ "This is a new ballgame and we're learning how to play it. We're not necessarily more effective, but we're getting wiser."

Different leaders have tried different strategies with Mr. Trump, from the "buddy-buddy" approach of President Emmanuel Macron of France and Ms. May, to the cooler attitude of Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany. "But we found that none of this matters," Mr. Valasek said. "He'll treat you like a competitor one way or another. He wants to pit countries against one another and use U.S. power and wealth against the others for his advantage."

The frustration sometimes comes out in meetings. At the NATO meeting, for instance, Prime Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen of Denmark told Mr. Trump that Danes had suffered as many casualties per capita as the United States had in Afghanistan, and that blood mattered more than money.

"In direct and clear speech, I have made it clear to him that Denmark's contribution cannot be measured in money," Mr. Rasmussen said afterward.

"Trump is becoming politically toxic in Western Europe," Mr. Valasek said. "No one wants to be seen smiling with him after being berated on Twitter. Even more, Mr. Trump's insults and his unpopularity among European voters make it harder for European leaders to do what he wants them to do, like increase military spending, even when they think



they should

After Mr. Trump split with the Europeans on issues like climate change and the Iran nuclear deal, Mr. Valasek said, "leaders don't want to be associated with anything he wants;

it's the kiss of death."

They are also fearful of his populism, his support for Britain's withdrawal from the European Union, or Brexit, and his affinity with their political adversaries, who share his nationalist, anti-immigration message.

Yet, Europe faces a dilemma with Mr. Trump, as Sigmar Gabriel, the former German foreign minister, said in an interview with Der Spiegel. "The truth is, we can't get along with Trump and we can't get along without the U.S.," Mr. Gabriel said. "We therefore need a dual strategy: clear, hard and, above all, common European answers to Trump. Any attempt to accommodate him, any appraisal only leads him to go a step further. This must be over. From trade to NATO."

He continued: "We cannot delude ourselves anymore. Donald Trump only knows strength. So we have to show him that we are strong."

The fact is that the president of the United States is still a superstitious and humiliating figure for the European Union, but politicians such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Theresa May are still passive! However, the acceptance of this The reality is bitter, but the European Union has shown in recent years that it is not an independent actor in the international system! The subject we see most of the American Tramp presidency.

Guterres' call for Hezbollah's disarmament an Israeli plan: Damoush

By Mohammad Fatemizadeh

TEHRAN (MNA) — Vice President of the Executive Council of Hezbollah Sheikh Ali Damoush said that Hezbollah holds weapon because of existence of Zionist Regime and as long as they exist, the demands for disarmament are meaningless.

In recent days, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has issued a report demanding the disarmament of Hezbollah in Lebanon. Guterres mentioned in this report that he called upon Hezbollah and other militant group to halt military activities inside and outside Lebanon in accordance with United Nations Security Council resolution 1559. He also called on Lebanese government to prevent Hezbollah owning weapons.

Guterres also pointed out to Iran in this report, adding that countries which have close ties with Hezbollah should encourage them to disarm and become a comprehensive political organization.

To shed more light on the issue Mehr News reached out to Sheikh Ali Damoush, Vice President of the Executive Council of Hezbollah.

Following is the full text of our interview with him:

■ What is your response to UN Secretary General's request, and to what extent do you think this request is in line with the interests of the Zionists and the U.S.?



A: The Israelis carried out some attacks against Lebanon with the aim of destroying the Resistance and disarming Hezbollah, but failed to disarm them through the war. UN Secretary General should request Israel to withdraw from the occupied Shebaa farms instead of calling on Lebanese government for the disarmament of Hezbollah.

The reason why Hezbollah holds weapon is existence of Zionist Regime and as long as

they exist, the demands for disarmament are meaningless. Generally, Guterres's demand is, in fact, an American-Israeli request.

■ What is your analysis about the recent Zionist aggression and attacks on the Gaza Strip and the possibility of a major military conflict in the region in the future?

A: The attack on the Gaza Strip is not a new issue, and the Zionists are accustomed to attacking the Gaza Strip and Palestinian

people. In this regards, the Palestinians have the right to defend their rights against Zionist.

Today, the Palestinian Resistance is strong and can respond to Israeli attacks. The Israelis are not even able to continue their attacks because they know that the Resistance groups have the capabilities that can deter the enemy. Therefore, we believe that this war will not spread.

■ What is your opinion about U.S. sanctions against Iran and how successful you assess them?

A: In recent days, Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran said that Iran would insist on opposing the U.S. sanctions and also oil exports, and I believe that the U.S. is not able to bring Iran's oil exports to zero. This is a clear failure of the U.S. sanctions policy against Iran.

Americans must understand that Iran has not succumbed despite pressure and sanctions and blockade over the last decades. Iran's strategy of patience and tolerance is the best and strongest strategy against sanctions.

■ How can the U.S. "Deal of the Century" project be stopped?

A: It is possible to break the project of "Deal of the Century" through the adherence of all Palestinian strata and groups to the entire territory of Palestine and Jerusalem. If the Palestinians adhere to this principle, the project of "Deal of the Century" will not come true.

Bolton leading U.S. toward more misadventures in region: American pundit

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — A former US Senate foreign policy analyst deplored National Security Adviser John Bolton's hawkish approach toward Iran and said he is leading the administration to "earlier American misadventures in places like Iraq, Libya, and Syria".

"Through the appointment of Bolton (also Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who is Bolton's rival for the king's ear but whose policy thinking is indistinguishable), the Trump administration has effectively outsourced its foreign policy to what amounts to the same foreign influences that have led to earlier American misadventures in places like Iraq, Libya, and Syria," Washington-based political analyst James Jatras said in an interview with the Tasnim News Agency.

James George Jatras is Deputy Director of the American Institute in Ukraine, a privately funded American NGO. Based in Washington, DC, he is a former US diplomat and adviser to the US Senate Republican leadership.

The full text of the interview with Jatras is as follows:

■ On Friday, 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 Bagheri, 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: I trust Iran's response to the newest US efforts to choke off oil exports will depend on how Washington tries to accomplish that. For example, if ending the waivers means only the US applying financial sanctions against the purchasing countries — in effect, economic warfare against the purchasing countries — Iran will try to find ways to facilitate payment that avoids the US financial system and the dollar. That's a formidable task but probably doable for Iran. If, however, the US decides to try to stop Iranian exports by closing the Strait of Hormuz via naval action (stopping ships believed to contain Iranian oil) we are already talking about war. In such case, if Iran responds by stopping other countries' shipping, the US would certainly take forceful action directly against Iran, though in what form I can't say. It should be kept in mind that any US moves from this point forward will be calculated to provoke an Iranian reaction, which then can be used to "justify" more forceful measures ultimately aimed at regime change.



■ In a statement on Sunday, Bolton, who has spearheaded an increasingly hawkish US policy on Iran, said the US is deploying a carrier strike group and bombers to the Middle East in response to troubling "indications and warnings" from Iran. Zarif was recently in the US. In multiple interviews with US media outlets and a roundtable with reporters in New York, 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: 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: It's hard to dispute Mr. Zarif's observation. He also noted that he believed Mr. Trump wants a deal but the B Team is calling the shots. The sad fact is, it probably doesn't matter much what Trump wants or doesn't want. Through the appointment of Bolton (also Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who is Bolton's rival "for the king's ear" but whose policy thinking is indistinguishable), the Trump administration has effectively outsourced its foreign policy to what amounts to the same foreign influences that have led to earlier American misadventures in places like Iraq, Libya, and Syria. It's possible that Trump could (or at least believes he could) be the one to make "the final decisions," so it doesn't matter what his underlings want. That's a dangerously naive hope. No matter who the top man is, subordinates determined to implement their own agenda (in this case, that of Bibi, Bin Zayed, and Bin Salman) can create facts that limit the president's options. With respect to Iran, they hope to set in motion a dynamic (including Iran's responses to provo-

cations) that can lead hostilities to achieve regime change, with Trump having little ability to do anything else (compare his two cruise missile strikes on Syria, over what he must have known were false accusations of chemical weapons use). The other possible hope is the professional military. There have been recent media reports of a shouting match between Pentagon officials and Bolton's staff because the latter didn't think they were being provided enough military options on Venezuela. You can be sure that the military is even more nervous about what "options" for Iran look like. But you can also be sure those options exist and that, if we reach that point, the military will do as ordered.

■ 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: Many observers have pointed out that after Trump's walking away from the JCPOA with Iran, he crippled his ability to negotiate a de-nuclearization deal with North Korea. After all, if you were Kim, what "security guarantees" from Washington could you trust? (The Libya lesson is also instructive.) Still, Trump genuinely seems to want an agreement but then allowed himself to get maneuvered by Bolton into presenting demands at Hanoi that have probably shot down any possibility of a US-DPRK agreement — to the horror of the South Koreans, by the way. So now we have Kim going off to see Russian President (Vladimir) Putin, who is also coordinating with China's Xi. The message is: if Washington won't cooperate in creating conditions for peace on the Korean peninsula, Moscow and Beijing will, with Seoul happy to participate (and probably Tokyo too, in the not too distant future). These countries look to their future in Eurasian integration via China's Belt and Road Initiative and Russia's Eurasian Union. Europe is also a natural partner at the western end if, in time, they can throw off American hegemony via NATO. The only answer the US has at this time is to threaten and disrupt. (For example, I am convinced the US is fueling Salafist terror in Xinjiang, just as we have in numerous other countries — while then accusing Iran of being the "number one terror sponsor"). In the short term, that means picking off vulnerable countries unwilling to abide by US diktat. Right now, Venezuela is at the top of the list but Iran is the next and far more important target because of the regional ambitions of the B Team. Thus, I can't say specifically what Mr. Zarif's discussion will cover, but I would expect there to be a discussion of how the countries with a stake in peaceful Eurasian integration can coordinate their policies to dissuade the US from doing something stupid and destructive. It's a very tall order.

Asia continues to pivot away from coal

By Tim Buckley

ASIA TIMES — The number of thermal coal plants in development pipelines of major Asian countries continues to free-fall, according to new data. The decline poses a warning to the world's biggest exporters of thermal coal — Australia and Indonesia — to check supply.

The latest coal-fired power plant data released by Global Energy Monitor (GEM) in March shows further shrinkage of coal development pipelines of Japan, Taiwan, Malaysia, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Vietnam and China.

Countries across Asia are shifting away from thermal coal into cleaner renewable-energy options, further validating the prediction of the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) that the Asian seaborne thermal coal market is approaching long-term, permanent decline.

China is the biggest importer of thermal

coal, with a 19% share of global imports. The latest GEM data show China's thermal coal plant pipeline plummeting 86% since 2015.

The second-largest importer is India, with the latest GEM figures showing the development pipeline has collapsed by a remarkable 81% since 2015.

■ **Japanese, Korean pipelines eroding**

Representing a 13% share of global thermal coal imports, Japan's pipeline of new coal-fired power plants collapsed 64% in four years according to the latest GEM data, putting Japan's pipeline under 4.6 gigawatts, from almost 12.7GW of projects at January 2015.

South Korea has a 10% share of global thermal coal imports. It has stopped issuing permits for new coal plants and has only one remaining in the development pipeline. The country is likely to now target 30-35% renewable energy by 2040, up from 8% today.

Indeed, Bloomberg New Energy Finance forecasts the South Korean electricity gen-

eration mix will move from 72% coal and nuclear in 2017, to 71% gas and renewables by 2050.

Taiwan has a 6% share of global thermal coal imports and it has an empty coal plant pipeline. New builds in Malaysia are also off the cards.

Pakistan, Bangladesh and Vietnam's coal plants are also shrinking, with fewer projects under development than six months ago.

■ **China is the key**

It is China's drastically shrinking pipeline, however, that is most likely to have a significant impact on the Asian seaborne thermal coal trade.

While China added 194 million metric tons of new domestic coal mining capacity in 2018 — not far off the total thermal coal imported into China in 2018 (216 million tonnes) — the country's coal plant pipeline is likely to continue to decline as the nation grapples with air pollution by prioritizing gas-fired power and renewables over coal.

The Chinese tortoise and the American hare

By David P. Goldman

ASIA TIMES— Historian Andrew Roberts reports that Winston Churchill said just after Pearl Harbor that "in the event of war, the Japanese would 'fold up like the Italians,' because they were 'the wops of the Far East.'" The West chronically underestimates Asians, as the Russians found out at Port Arthur, the Americans at Pearl Harbor and the Yalu River, the British at Singapore, and so forth.

A case in point is the present tariff war. The US assumed that tariffs on Chinese imports would force China to make fundamental concessions to American trade demand. On January 6, President Donald Trump said, "China's not doing very well now. It puts us in a very strong position. We are doing very well." Since then China's CSI 300 stock index has gained 37% during 2019 to date, double the gain in US stock markets. China's economic growth has accelerated while America's has slowed. The tariff war may have hurt the US economy more than China's. With an internal market of 1.4 billion people, China can replace lost foreign business by increasing internal demand. Ten years ago exports made up 36% of China's gross domestic product vs only 18% today. World trade is shrinking, but the impact on China is manageable.

I support President Trump. I applaud him for calling attention to China's challenge to America's strategic position. But I have warned from the outset that the tools he has employed won't get the results he wants. Early in 2018 the United States banned exports of US components to the Chinese telecommunications equipment maker ZTE, which violated US sanctions on Iran. Huawei, the dominant Chinese telecom equipment maker, undertook a crash program to devise substitutes for the US chips that power Chinese-made handsets, and achieved self-sufficiency as of December 2018. Now a Japanese study reports that Huawei's handset chips are equal to or better than Apple's. America's campaign to persuade its allies to keep Huawei away from the rollout of 5G (fifth generation) mobile data networks has failed. Britain, Germany, Italy, Malaysia, Thailand, India, South Korea and the whole of Eastern Europe have rejected American demands. This was a sadly foreseeable diplomatic disaster. Huawei is the highest-quality as well as the lowest-cost provider of 5G systems. It spends US\$20 billion a year on research and development, double the combined outlay of its two largest competitors, Nokia and Ericsson. Half of Huawei's workforce is engaged in R&D, including thousands of European engineers.

Cisco used to dominate the market for mobile data systems. It currently has \$72 billion of cash in the bank, roughly what Huawei spent on R&D during the past seven years. The question is: Why do Chinese companies invest while American companies hoard?

The Asian model treats capital-intensive industry as infrastructure. It supports chip foundries with public funds the way we Americans subsidize airports or sports arenas

To paraphrase Leon Trotsky, you may not be interested in industrial policy, but industrial policy is interested in you. The Asian model treats capital-intensive industry as infrastructure. It supports chip foundries with public funds the way we Americans subsidize airports or sports arenas. The Asian model begins with Japan's Meiji Restoration in 1868. China's model is a variant of the Asian model, which Deng Xiaoping adopted with the advice of Lee Kuan Yew, in explicit emulation of Singapore.

China, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan subsidize capital-intensive industry, with the result that virtually all of the high-tech products invented in America are now manufactured in Asia. Liquid-crystal displays, light-emitting diodes, semiconductor lasers and solid-state sensors are produced almost exclusively in Asia. America's share of semiconductor manufacturing fell from 25% in 2011, to less than 10% in 2018. Silicon is to the weapons of the 21st century what steel was to the 19th century. A country that cannot produce its own integrated circuits cannot defend itself.

China is outspending the US in quantum computing, including \$11 billion to build a single research facility in Hefei. By contrast, the US allocated \$1.2 billion for quantum computing over the next five years. Overall, federal development funding in the US has fallen from 0.78% of GDP in 1988 to 0.39% in 2016.

China remains behind the US in most key areas of technology, but it is catching up fast. In the last several years China has

Landed a probe on dark side of moon;
Developed successful quantum communication via satellite;
Built a 2,000-kilometer quantum communication network between Beijing and Shanghai;
Built missiles that can blind American satellites;
Developed surface-to-ship missiles that can destroy any vessel within hundreds of miles of its coast; and
Built some of the world's fastest supercomputers.

China's investment in education parallels its investment in high-tech industry. Today China graduates four times as many STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) bachelor's degrees as the US, and twice as many doctoral degrees, and China continues to gain. A third of Chinese students major in engineering, vs 7% in the US. Eighty percent of US doctoral candidates in computer science and electrical engineering are foreign students, of whom Chinese are the largest contingent. Most return to China. The best US universities have trained top-level faculty for Chinese universities. American STEM graduate programs reported a sharp fall in foreign applications starting in 2017, partly because Chinese students no longer have to come to the US for world-class education.

China's household consumption has risen 17-fold since 1986 and its GDP in US dollars has risen 35-fold. China has moved 550 million people from countryside to city in only 40 years, the equivalent of Europe's population from the Urals to the Atlantic. China has built the equivalent of all the cities in Europe to house the new urban dwellers, as well as 80,000 miles (nearly 130,000 kilometers) of superhighway and 18,000 miles (29,000km) of high-speed trains.

China's debt-to-GDP ratio stands at 253% (47% government, households 50%, corporate 155%). That is about the same as America's 248% (98% to government, households 77%, corporate 74%). The high corporate debt number is due to the fact that state-owned enterprises fund a great deal of infrastructure building with debt that is counted as corporate rather than government. China's debt problem is no worse than ours. China's Belt and Road Initiative intends to Sinify the economies of the Global South, from Malaysia and Indonesia to Mexico and Brazil. Huawei often is the spearhead of the BRI, building mobile broadband networks that prepare the ground for Chinese e-commerce and e-finance companies. China wants to integrate the labor of countries with a total population of 2 billion into its economic sphere.

It is fanciful to believe that any kind of American pressure can destabilize, let alone dislodge, the present regime within any calculable time horizon. But we can regain technological leadership and prove the superiority of our way of life, and degrade the credibility of the Chinese Communist Party over time. China can innovate, but we can innovate much better. We need to return with a vengeance to the strategies that won the Cold War.

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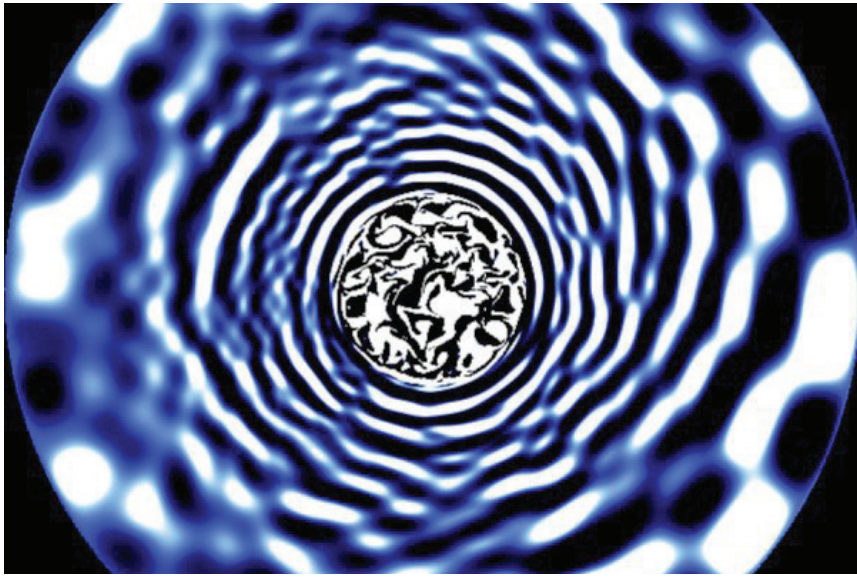
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Blue supergiant stars open doors to concert in space

Blue supergiants are rock-and-roll: they live fast and die young. This makes them rare and difficult to study. Before space telescopes were invented, few blue supergiants had been observed, so our knowledge of these stars was limited. Using recent NASA space telescope data, an international team led by KU Leuven studied the sounds originating inside these stars and discovered that almost all blue supergiants shimmer in brightness because of waves on their surface.

Since the dawn of humanity, the stars in the night sky have captured our imagination. We even sing nursery rhymes to children pondering the nature of stars: "Twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are". Telescopes are able to probe far into the universe, but astronomers have struggled to "see" inside the stars. New space telescopes allow astronomers to "see" the waves that originate in the deep interior of the stars. This makes it possible to study these stars using asteroseismology, a similar technique to how seismologists use earthquakes to study the Earth's interior.

Stars come in different shapes, sizes and colors. Some stars are similar to our Sun and live calmly for billions of years. More massive stars, those born with ten times or more the mass of the Sun, live significantly shorter and active lives before they explode and expel their material into space in what is called a supernova. Blue supergiants belong



Almost all blue supergiants shimmer in brightness because of waves on their surface

to this group. Before they explode, they are the metal factories of the universe, as these stars produce most chemical elements beyond helium in the Periodic Table of Mendelev.

For the first time, researchers have been able to "see" beneath the opaque surface of

blue supergiants. "The discovery of waves in so many blue supergiant stars was a eureka moment," says postdoctoral researcher Dominic Bowman who is the corresponding author for this study: "The flicker in these stars had been there all along, we only had to

wait for modern space telescopes to be able to observe them. It is as if the rock-and-roll stars had been performing the whole time, but only now NASA space missions were able to open the doors of their concert hall. From the frequencies of the waves at the surface, we can derive the physics and chemistry of their deep interior, including the stellar core. These frequencies probe how efficiently metal is produced and how it moves around in the factory."

"Before the NASA Kepler/K2 and TESS space telescopes, few blue supergiants that vary in brightness were known," says Bowman (KU Leuven). "Until now, we had not seen these waves causing shimmering and twinkling on the surface of blue supergiants. You need to be able to look at the brightness of an individual star for long enough with a very sensitive detector before you can map out how it changes over time."

Therefore, it appears that the nursery rhyme sung to children, "Twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are" is not so far removed from the reality of modern-day space telescope observations. "We are now entering a golden age of asteroseismology of hot massive stars thanks to modern space telescopes. The discovery of these waves in blue supergiants allows us to study the progenitors of supernovae from a novel perspective", Bowman concludes.

(Source: Science Daily)

Thawing permafrost leaves traceable carbon footprint in Arctic rivers



Researchers have found a way to measure the carbon released into Arctic rivers by thawing permafrost.

Carbon is everywhere. It is also often on the move. But some carbon sources are sneakier than others. To better understand the planet's carbon budget and its influence on climate change, scientists must develop ways to more accurately track some of this sneaky carbon.

When permafrost thaws, ancient carbon, sometimes frozen for hundreds of thousands of years, is freed up. As the planet continues to warm, more and more of this frozen carbon is escaping. But measuring this climate-carbon feedback is difficult.

To better track the phenomena, scientists at Stockholm University decided to measure the radiocarbon signal of runaway carbon in large rivers.

"Rivers transport carbon from different sources in their catchments, including carbon mobilized from thawing permafrost or collapsing peat, as well as carbon from the soil surface," lead researcher Birgit Wild said in a press release. "Radiocarbon dating helps us distinguish carbon from these different sources."

Older carbon contains lower levels of radiocarbon than newer, surface-level carbon. For the study, Wild and her colleagues tracked shifting radiocarbon ratios for several years, across all four seasons, in four large Siberian-Arctic rivers. Researchers used a database of radiocarbon ratios measured in core samples from permafrost deposits to contextualize their river-based measurements.

Scientists found layers of surface permafrost are the main source of permafrost- and peat-derived carbon dissolved in Arctic rivers. Older permafrost layers are the main source of particulate carbon. And whereas permafrost- and peat-derived carbon accounted for just 12 percent of dissolved carbon in Arctic rivers, carbon from peat and permafrost composed nearly half of particulate carbon measured by scientists.

Researchers expect their findings, published this week in the journal PNAS, to inspire new tools for monitoring the levels of carbon released into rivers -- and eventually the ocean and atmosphere -- by thawing permafrost.

(Source: UPI)

Prehistoric craftsmen sought freshwater mussels for their ornamental shell



Some 6,000 years ago, the freshwater mussel served as the ornamental shell of choice for prehistoric craftspeople.

When researchers analyzed ornamental shells from across prehistoric Europe, they found the artifacts were all composed of mother-of-pearl from freshwater mussels.

The so-called double-buttons, which would have been pressed into leather bracelets and belts, were found in Denmark, Germany and Romania. They were made between 4200 and 3800 BC. Some of the ancient ornaments were found among coastal sites, where a variety of shells would have been available.

Archaeologists have previously overlooked freshwater mollusks as a source material for cultural objects. Researchers assumed their ubiquity would have made them less appealing, and thus less valuable and sought after.

"We were surprised to discover that the ornaments were all made from freshwater mussels because it implies that this material was highly regarded by prehistoric craftsmen, wherever they were in Europe and whatever cultural group they belonged to," Beatrice Demarchi, an archaeologist

at the University of York, said in a news release. "Our study suggests the existence of a European-wide cross-cultural tradition for the manufacture of these double-buttons."

The ornaments date to a period of change in continental Europe. Many of the people of Europe were still hunter-gatherers, but in the south, farmers from the Mediterranean were importing news ways of living. Soon, farming and new cultural traditions would transform all of Europe.

Despite the cultural and socioeconomic fragmentation and instability, the latest findings suggest the region's disparate groups shared some cultural and technological traditions.

"The fact that these ornaments look consistently similar and are made from the same material suggests there may have been some kind of interaction between these distinct groups of people at this time," said York archaeologist Andre Colonese. "They may have had a shared knowledge or tradition for how to manufacture these ornaments and clearly had a sophisticated understanding of the natural environment and which resources to use."

(Source: UPI)

NASA starts preparing for arrival of huge asteroid named "God of Chaos"

NASA is already preparing for the arrival of a huge asteroid named the "God of Chaos" that will skirt past Earth in 10 years.

On 13 April, 2029, people looking towards the sky will see a speck of light streaking across it, which will quickly get brighter and faster. It will be travelling so fast that it will cross the width of the Moon in a minute and be as bright as stars in the sky.

Scientists have named the rock Apophis, after the Egyptian god of chaos.

The glowing speck will be a huge asteroid, 340 meters across that NASA is already preparing to watch as it flies past Earth. The space agency says that it will fly far enough away as to be harmless -- at a distance of 19,000 miles -- but that is as close as some of the spacecraft that flies past Earth.

It is also close enough that researchers will be able to get an unprecedented look at the asteroid itself. They will be able to see the rock in sharp detail, allowing them to observe it in new ways.

It's very rare for asteroids of this size to go past so close. Scientists have seen smaller asteroids at a closer distance, but something of such a colossal size are far fewer in number, NASA said.

"The Apophis close approach in 2029 will be an incredible opportunity for science," said Marina Brozovi?, a radar scientist at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, who works on radar observations of near-Earth objects (NEOs). "We'll observe the asteroid with both optical and radar telescopes. With radar observations, we might be able to see surface details that are only a few meters in size."

Scientists meeting this week at the 2019 Planetary Defense



Conference in College Park, Maryland -- where they have also been role-playing a fictional collision with an asteroid -- have been discussing how to watch the asteroid and missions that could be sent out to meet it.

It will first be visible to the naked eye when it arrives in the night sky over the Southern Hemisphere, shooting across the east coast to the west coast of Australia. It will make its way around the world, cross the Indian Ocean on its way to the US.

Its closest approach will be over the Atlantic Ocean, as the evening arrives in the US. It will move so fast that it will cross the ocean in just an hour, and will then fly off into space.

Apophis was first spotted by astronomers at the Kitt Peak National Observatory in June 2004. Soon after spotting it, further work was derailed by technical and weather problems.

But it was spotted again by scientists in Australia, who

calculated it had a 2.7 per cent chance of hitting Earth when it passed by in 2029. It has since been watched more closely and that possibility has been ruled out.

Researchers now say that further work and calculations show there is only a 1 in 100,000 chance the asteroid will hit Earth. But further work will be required to rule out future impacts.

When it arrives in 2029, that observation will continue. Scientists hope to learn more about the asteroid's size, shape, composition and maybe its interior.

At the conference, researchers discussed questions such as whether the asteroid will affect Earth's gravity, whether they will be able to peer inside and whether it should be met by a spacecraft.

"We already know that the close encounter with Earth will change Apophis' orbit, but our models also show the close approach could change the way this asteroid spins, and it is possible that there will be some surface changes, like small avalanches," said Davide Farnocchia, an astronomer at JPL's Center for Near Earth Objects Studies (CNEOS), who is co-chairing the April 30 session on Apophis with Brozovi?.

And researchers hope that the work they do on this flyby could protect us if any other asteroid were to come towards Earth.

"Apophis is a representative of about 2,000 currently known Potentially Hazardous Asteroids (PHAs)," said Paul Chodas, director of CNEOS. "By observing Apophis during its 2029 flyby, we will gain important scientific knowledge that could one day be used for planetary defense."

(Source: The Independent)

Researchers crack the peanut genome

Researchers working as part of the International Peanut Genome Initiative have previously pinpointed one of the peanut's two wild ancestors and shown that the peanut is a living legacy of some of the earliest human agricultural societies in South America. Since then the team has mapped the entire peanut genome and identified the crop's second wild ancestor and the novel mechanism by which the shy, seed-hoarding plant generated the diversity we see today.

"Because of its complex genetic structure sequencing peanut was only possible using very recent developments in sequencing technology. The result is of unprecedented quality, and provides a reference framework for breeding and improvement of the peanut crop, and a whole new set of insights into the extraordinary genetic structure of peanut," said David Bertoli, Georgia Research Alliance Distinguished Investigator and peanut researcher at the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences.

Bertoli conducts his research through the CAES Institute for Plant Breeding, Genetics and Genomics, which is home to some of the world's foremost experts in this area of crop science and has been prolific in providing new genomic tools and information to help plant breeders around the world develop more sustainable, productive crop varieties.

The team's most recent paper was published in the journal Nature Genetics and is available online.

According to the USDA, farmers around the world grow 44.9 million metric tons of peanuts on more than 64 million acres. The crop is a staple food in many parts of Africa and Asia and is a source of peanut butter, snacks and cooking oil in the United States. In Georgia alone farmers grow \$825 million in peanuts each year.

Despite their importance as a crop, plant researchers haven't had many of the genetic tools needed to speed the introduction of more sustainable and productive peanut varieties. That was because, until recently, scientists had been unable to map the peanuts' hypercomplex tetraploid genome. The Peanut Genome Initiative's international collaboration and advancements in technologies and data processing yielded the breakthroughs.

The bedrock of the team's discoveries was the sequencing of the genome. Because the peanut originated from the hybridization of two wild ancestral species thousands of years ago, the initial phases of the project involved researchers developing genome sequences for those ancestors. Together, the ancestral genomes made a prototype for the genetic structure of cultivated peanuts. This was published in 2016.

This month, the Peanut Genome Initiative discusses the entire genome sequence for the modern cultivated peanut in a paper published in Nature Genetics on May 1.

The researchers used new advances in DNA-sequencing technologies to produce a complete genome sequence of unprecedented quality. The sequence consists of more than 2.5 billion base pairs of DNA arranged in 20 pairs of chromosomes, 10 pairs from each of the ancestral species.

The information in the sequence sheds light on parts of the plant's genetic code that control traits like seed size and disease resistance, which are important to plant breeders. But the sequence also revealed more about the origin of peanut during the dawn of agriculture in South America and on the genetic mechanisms that have generated diversity and allowed adaptation to environments around the globe.

Using the new genome sequence as a framework, the team was able to analyze the variations in more than 200 of the most diverse peanuts from all of over the world. Researchers found characteristic genetic fingerprints shared by all the peanut plants tested, providing new evidence that all modern peanut varieties stem from the same original hybrid.

"The new study underlines how peanut's origin was due to very special circumstances thousands of years ago. Ancient farmers transported one species into the range of another, allowing their hybridization and the formation of a new crop species," said Soraya Leal-Bertoli, a senior research scientist with the UGA Institute of Plant Breeding, Genetics and Genomics and the CAES department of plant pathology.

Scientists with the initiative had previously found the male donor of the original hybrid and origin of peanut's "B" subgenome. In this new study they identified the female donor, tracking the population of wild ancestral peanut that contributed the peanut "A" subgenome in Rio Seco, Argentina. These individuals form the "mother" population of peanut.

But the evidence that all modern peanuts can be traced to a single original hybrid sets up another mystery, Leal-Bertoli said. How does a plant with such a narrow genetic base develop so many variations and varieties?



Most flowering plant species rely on animals or weather to spread their pollen or seeds to other plants to generate genetic diversity. Pollen and seeds can travel for miles, spreading newly occurring traits to new populations.

But peanuts, which produce their seeds underground, don't do that. It took early human farmers and their long-distance transport of seeds to get the first two ancestral peanut parents together.

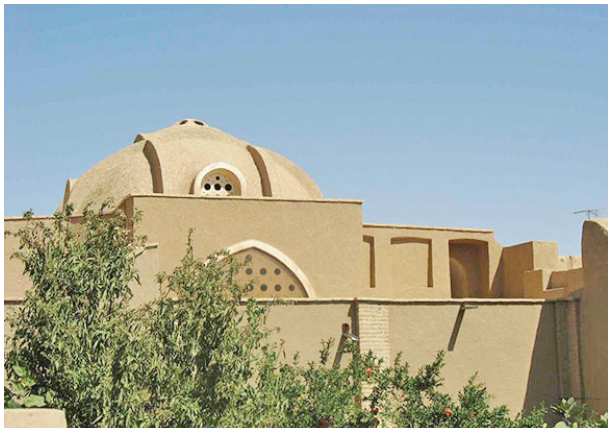
Since then, however, the plant has used a new mechanism for creating diversity.

For this research the International Peanut Genome Initiative brought together scientists from the U.S., Argentina, China, India, Japan and France. The initial sequencing was carried out at the Hudson Alpha Institute, Huntsville, Alabama, and USDA Agricultural Research Service Genomics and Bioinformatics Research Unit in Stoneville, Mississippi. The project was funded by the National Peanut Board, the American Peanut Shellers Association, and other growers, shellers, manufactures and allied industries.

(Source: Science Daily)

Restoration underway on Mulla Sadra's home in Kahak

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — On a day in the 17th century in Iran's Kahak, one might have heard the mellow tone of Mulla Sadra teaching his pupils at his home, where it is now teemed with sounds of hammering or the scraping of paint to be restored in honor of the influential Iranian philosopher.



The project comprises rooftop insulation, vault solidification, crafting, plastering and roofing, a provincial official Hamid Yazdani said on Wednesday, IRIB reported. Mulla Sadra, also called Sadr-ol-Mote'allehin (born c. 1571, Shiraz, Iran—died 1640, Basra, Iraq) is commonly regarded by Iranians as the greatest philosopher their country has produced. Expounding his theory of nature, Mulla Sadra argued that the entire universe—except God and his Knowledge—was originated both eternally as well as temporally. Nature, he asserted, is the substance of all things and is the cause for all movement. Thus, nature is permanent and furnishes the continuing link between the eternal and the originated.

Chinese tourists to drive Malaysian tourism sector growth: analysis

KUALA LUMPUR (Xinhua) — Chinese tourists who have been the key growth driver across Southeast Asia over the past decade, will continue to support Malaysian tourism growth, says a Malaysian research house. Maybank Kim Eng said in a report Wednesday that it expects more Chinese to visit Malaysia. As Chinese visitors spend more than any other major source of visitors, the research house believes more inbound Chinese visitors this year will moderate the adverse impact of fewer Singaporean visitors on Malaysian tourism industry. Although Malaysia's overall tourist arrivals dipped 0.4 percent year-on-year to 25.83 million last year, Chinese inbound tourists surged 29 percent to 2.94 million. While Malaysia's tourism receipts rose 2.44 percent year-on-year to 84.1 billion ringgit (20.3 billion U.S. dollars), Chinese tourist expenditure surged 35.9 percent to 12.3 billion ringgit. "The improving tourism receipts is partially due to more Chinese visitors to Malaysia," said Maybank Kim Eng, adding that average Chinese visitor to Malaysia spends 4,200 ringgit last year, more than any other major sources of visitors.



ROUND THE GLOBE

Historic center of Salzburg

Salzburg in Austria is an outstanding example of an ecclesiastical city-state, peculiar to the Holy Roman Empire, from Prussia to Italy. Most disappeared as political and administrative units in the early 19th century and adopted alternative trajectories of development. No other example of this type of political organism has survived so completely, preserving its urban fabric and individual buildings to such a remarkable degree as Salzburg.



Salzburg is the point where the Italian and German cultures met and which played a crucial role in the exchanges between these two cultures. The result is a Baroque town that has emerged intact from history, and exceptional material testimony of a particular culture and period. The center of Salzburg owes much of its Baroque appearance to the Italian architects Vincenzo Scamozzi and Santino Solari. The Salzburg skyline, against a backdrop of mountains, is characterized by its profusion of spires and domes, dominated by the fortress of HohenSalzburg. It contains a number of buildings, both secular and ecclesiastical, of very high quality from periods ranging from the late Middle Ages to the 20th Century.

Inscribed on the UNESCO Cultural Heritage list, Historic center of Salzburg is rich in buildings from the Gothic period onwards, which combine to create a townscape and urban fabric of great individuality and beauty. Salzburg is also intimately associated with many important artists and musicians, preeminent among them Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

(Source: UNESCO)

Iran's cave offers new glimpses of Paleolithic life

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — In one of significant archaeological finds of Iran's Lorestan province, Kaldar cave has yielded further evidence for its Paleolithic residents.

"A fresh insight about traditions of making [stone] tools related to Middle Paleolithic and Upper Paleolithic eras have been obtained during [recent] excavations in Kaldar cave," director of the Iranian Center for Archaeological Research has said, Mehr reported. On the sidelines of a visit to Kaldar, where the third season of excavation is being conducted, Rouhollah Shirazi stated, "In this season, we have also gained evidence of everyday life in the Paleolithic epoch, and our findings will be completed when necessary tests are completed."

Kaldar is a key archaeological site that provides evidence of the Middle to Upper Paleolithic transition in Iran. Excavations at the site in 2014–2015 led to the discovery of cultural remains generally associated with anatomically modern humans (AMHs) and evidence of a probable Neanderthal-made industry in the basal layers.

It also offers an opportunity to study the technological differences between the Mousterian and the first Upper Paleolithic lithic technologies as well as the human behavior in the region.

The cave is situated in the northern Khorramabad valley and at an elevation of 1,290m above sea level. It measures 16meters long, 17meters wide and sevenmeters high.



Thousands-year-old vase to be unveiled in Ardebil

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — On May 18, concurrent with the International Museum Day, a three-thousand-year-old silver vase, which was recently found in Iran's Ardebil province, will be unveiled in museum exhibition, provincial tourism chief has said.

The object is on par with other silver vases that have so far been excavated in Hassanlu archaeological site, north-western Iran, Nader Fallahi stated.

Hasanlu, which Iran endeavors to put it on the UNESCO World Heritage list, has yielded the famed Golden Bowl of Hasanlu, decorated silver bowls, iron garment pins headed by bronze lions, a knife handle with gold cloisonné, and two

hollow bronze horse heads served to hold liquids, among others.

The Mannaeans lived in the territory of present-day northwestern Iran south of Lake Urmia, around the 10th to 7th centuries BC. At that time they were neighbors of the empires of Assyria and Urartu, as well as other small buffer states between the two, such as Musasir and Zikirta.

Excavations that began in 1956 succeeded in uncovering the fortified city of Hasanlu, once thought to be a potential Mannaeian site. More recently, the site of Qalaichi (possibly ancient Izirtu/Zirta) has been linked to the Mannaeans based on a stela with this toponym found at the site.

Rudkhan Castle, marvelous stronghold on peak of mountain

By Zahra Mirzafarjouyan

TEHRAN — Rudkhan Castle is a brick and stone medieval castle in Iran. It is 30 km away from the city of Fuman and just nearby its hiking starting point, lays the village of Rudkhan. To reach the castle, there are hundreds of stairs to climb and that is one of the reasons this castle is also known as "The Thousand Step Castle".

Rudkhan Castle was a military medieval fortress built during the Sasanian Empire (224 – 651 AD) to defend the northern part of the country from southern Arab invaders. This large castle has been renovated and strengthened several times throughout the centuries.

For most of the duration of its life, the castle has been mostly used for uprisings and riots against the central power in the country, and even though it has gone through a huge amount of violence and brutality, it still stands strong, hidden in the middle of northern Gilan's jungles. In fact, Rudkhan Castle is one of the best well preserved remains of fortifications in ancient Iran.

This one-thousand-year old castle is built with an area of 2.6 hectares and sits smartly at the two peaks of a mountain with 670 and 715 m tall and occupies 50,000 square meters of area. It is also reinforced by strong fortifications and



battlements at a length of 1,550 meters. While constructing the fort, the architects benefited from the natural mountainous features of the territory. The castle's 42 towers still stand intact.

The castle consists of several parts, most notable of which are the water reservoir, twelve gates, the prison, 42 watchtowers, housings, and the king's

quarters. The king's quarters are located on the highest point of the castle and feature breathtaking views of the surrounding area. Castle has two sections, namely one royal residence for the king and royal family, and another residence for soldiers and military activities. The east side of the Fort is a bit smaller and has more military characteristics.

Tourism threatens corals of the Red Sea's turquoise waters

The crystal-clear turquoise waters are the home of small pink jellyfish, which surround amateur scuba divers from all over the world. They visit the place to admire the depths of the Red Sea, whose mesmerizing corals are currently threatened by Egypt's growing tourism sector.

On the touristy coast of Hurghada, in the east, clownfish, porkfish, and butterflyfish swim among the violet and green coral reefs, ten meters below sea level.

With fins, oxygen masks and a professional guide, a group of tourists, many of them Europeans, admire this peaceful show, in stark contrast with the bustling dry land life.

Hurghada has countless bazaars and hotel complexes with affordable prices to attract as many customers as possible.

"It's much cheaper than the Caribbean," Daniel, a 29-year old German, confesses, as he enjoys the sun on a private beach. Like him, many other tourists are coming back to Hurghada. However, increased tourism threatens coral reefs.

The Egyptian tourism sector experienced an abrupt downfall after the revolution that deposed President Hosni Mubarak in 2011. The number of visitors dropped from 14.7 million in 2010 to 5.3 million in 2016, a year after the attack against a Russian airplane, killing 224



people in Sharm el-Sheikh, another tourist city on the coast of the Red Sea.

The situation has been improving since 2017. In 2018, tourism contribution to the country's gross domestic product increased by 16.5%, reaching its highest peak since 2010, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC). Egypt did not report last year's visitor figures.

"The spike in Egyptian tourism is positive, but the pressure (on the reefs) has increased," Heba Shawky, the director general of the NGO Hurghada Environmental Protection and Conservation Association (Hepca),

reveals. The association was founded in 1992 by diving professionals concerned about the impact of tourism on the aquatic environment.

A scuba diver who guides tourists says that "there is tourist activity" in Hurghada and "places where (corals) have disappeared". But "their preservation is much better than what we can see in Sharm el-Sheik and Marsa Alam," other touristy areas, he adds.

According to the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), at least 20 percent of the world's "most beautiful, most sensitive and more diverse ecosystems" have been destroyed and 60 percent are threatened by climate change, tourism or predatory fishing.

Scientists consider that Red Sea corals are the most resistant to climate change and can become a global "refuge" for marine biodiversity, but they need protection from other hazards.

About 1,700 tour boats navigate these waters, as well as trading ships that cross the Suez Canal. The NGO Hepca implemented at least 1,200 markers in different diving areas to avoid the use of coral-destroying anchors, Shawky says. He adds that there is still plenty to do, such as reducing the size of dive boats, which reach 50 meters in length, while limiting their number as well.

(Source: Tourism Review)

Hotgram, Talagram to be appeared as independent apps: official

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — The **d e s k** Hotgram and Talagram, the messaging apps known as the Telegram varieties in Iran, will be available as independent apps in the near future, Abolhassan Firouzabadi, the secretary of the Supreme Cyberspace Council announced, Mehr reported on Tuesday.

Hotgram and Talagram are two messaging apps produced by the Iranian company Rahkar Sarzamin Hooshmand (Smart Land Strategy) using Telegram's open source code and servers. With 25 million users in Iran, the applications were warmly welcomed since it was banned in the country on April 30, 2018.

Telegram, with 40 million subscribers in Iran, was on top list of messaging applications in the country. Hundreds of people and companies in Iran used the app for their marketing and sales.

The Hotgram and Talagram were active with the permission of National Center for Cyberspace and coordination of judicial system of Iran, Firouzabadi announced.

The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Ministry provide bandwidth for two messaging apps according to the permission of judicial system of Iran, he said.



He said that may be they cannot afford the budget for being independent from Telegram

servers in due time.

"The ICT Ministry does not buy any server

The Hotgram and Talagram were active with the permission of National Center for Cyberspace and coordination of judicial system of Iran

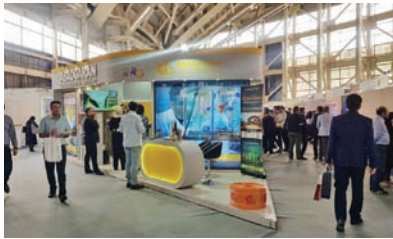
Iranian knowledge-based companies to attend Erbil telecom expo

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — Iranian **d e s k** knowledge-based companies will participate in Iraq's communication, electronics and media conference and expo, which will be held from June 13 to 16 in Erbil.

A total of 12 companies will offer their products at the Iran national pavilion, an official with the Iran National Innovation Fund Siavash Malekifar said.

The fund supports the knowledge-based companies for renting a booth up to 70 percent and up to 300 million rials (about 7,000 dollars).

Companies active in the field of internet, designing website and software developers, telecommunication devices,



photography camera, CCTV and industries related to radio, TV and satellite can attend the event.

The Iran pavilion aims to develop export, expand scientific and technological cooperation between Iranian knowledge-based companies and others, he said.

Iran to introduce 250 new nano products

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** -- Iran **d e s k** Nanotechnology Innovation Council plans to introduce 250 new nano products during the current year, Mehr reported on Tuesday.

During the Iranian calendar year 1397 (March 2018-March 2019), there were 180 nano products, which has increased to 580 types, the secretary of the council Saeid Sarkar announced.

The nanotechnology has already covered 15 different industrial field, he said.

Iran exports nano products to 45 countries including South Korea, Australia, China, Indonesia, and Malaysia as well as European, Canadian and African countries. Iran exported 65 million dollars of nano



products to the countries during 1397 and it is planned to increase the amount during the current year, he added.

In early February, the Iran Nanotechnology Innovation Council announced that knowledge-based companies manufacture 12 to 15 new nano products per month.

'Production of items banned by sanctions high on agenda'

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — **d e s k** Domestically production of items, imports of which are banned due to sanctions is a high priority of the vice presidency for science and technology, the vice president Sourena Sattari announced, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

Industries like drug manufacturing can have a great role in solving problems emerging from sanctions, he said.

He named supporting knowledge-based companies and innovation ecosystem as other programs of the vice presidency.

The knowledge-based companies are active in 30 to 40 kinds of ecosystems, which should be supported by the development funds and banks, he said.

The vice presidency supports research centers, state-run universities and



private sector, which have a great role in innovation ecosystem.

In mid-April, Sattari announced that the number of knowledge-based companies

were 3,000 ones during the Iranian calendar year 1395 (March 2016-March 2017), it increased to 3,338 ones during the Iranian calendar year 1396 (March 2017-March 2018).

Knowledge-based companies exported \$450 million of products in the previous Iranian calendar year 1397, which ended on March 20, he announced.

Sattari said that the knowledge-based companies sold 900 trillion rials (about \$21 billion) of products during the past year.

Meanwhile, the vice presidency announced that Iranian knowledge-based companies have created job opportunities for 140,000 applicants until the end of the Iranian calendar year 1397 (March 20, 2019).

Ways to get more value out of your CPQ strategies

The growing disconnect between what manufacturers need their CPQ strategies to deliver and what those systems are capable of today is growing. Improving user experiences to streamline onboarding and support omnichannel selling, enabling broader CPQ and product integration to include e-commerce, and transitioning from custom to native integration are the foundations of successful CPQ strategies. The following are a few of the many challenges manufacturers face when trying to compete and win business with their existing CPQ and product configuration systems:

Improving user experiences that drive more sales, increasing product quality by quoting the most buildable products, and enabling CPQ selling in every channel is how manufacturers grow. Ten ways they are getting more value out of their CPQ strategies include the following:

- Stay current on the latest CPQ and product configuration technologies, creating a customer-driven roadmap of how technology shifts can improve your selling and profitability. Those manufacturers succeeding with CPQ and product configuration strategies today have a well-defined roadmap of how current and future technologies can increase sales and profits per order. Attending conferences is a great way to learn more.

- Improving user experiences using a Cloud-based CPQ platform is scaling across omnichannel strategies today. One of the primary factors driving Cloud CPQ adoption is the greater adaptability and speed of being able to customize user experiences by sales channel. An added benefit of a Cloud-based CPQ platform is that it makes onboarding their own new sales reps and channel partners' sales teams simpler, getting them up to speed on interfaces many already know.

- Tracking quote versions and being able to perform advanced analytics on them to see which selling strategies are working by channel. A global manufacturer of telecommunications equipment consolidated over 40 legacy on-premise systems into a single CPQ cloud platform, integrating it with Salesforce, their native ERP instance,

pricing, and service. They're using DOMO running on top of Salesforce to track quote effectiveness rates by the campaign, channel, rep and product. They've been able to increase close rates over 20% in EMEA using this approach.

- Re-evaluate how strong or weak system integrations are to CPQ and product configuration systems, focusing on option, rule and price changes first. Solving configuration bottlenecks first often delivers exponential improvements in quoting, pricing and product configuration workflows. Focus on how option, rule and price changes, in addition to lead time calculations, date affectivity and order change logic may have changed. Manufacturers are adopting native configurations, so they don't have to manage this manually.

- Benchmark and look for new ways to surface or expose CPQ applications across every channel you're selling through. Omnichannel selling strategies are one of the catalysts making Cloud CPQ platforms improve. A good test of any CPQ system is how well it can scale in response to omnichannel selling requirements. Benchmark order accuracy, speed and quote performance to see how this can be improved.

- Start piloting machine learning-based CPQ applications to see how you can capitalize on these technologies' strengths in serving your customers. Machine learning is changing CPQ and product configuration quickly and permanently today. Manufacturers are relying on pilots to see how they can evaluate customers' unstructured data like customer specifications to propose the best possible configurations for them. Machine learning is also being applied to CTO and ETO product configurations to ensure only buildable products are quoted.

- Look for Cloud-based CPQ platforms that support guardrails for margin health and pricing. According to Sales VPs and Sales Operations leaders, this is one of the most valuable features they rely on daily in managing quotes. Look for a CPQ product which provides guardrails for margin health and guidance on margins. Look for

a Cloud-based CPQ system that can provide real-time updates to margin health based on quantities, list price and discount percent. It also needs to provide real-time visibility of margin values based on quantity, price, and discount % definitions. Sales VPs says this makes it possible only to accept the most profitable orders.

- Save Sales Operations', Sales Engineering, and the Pricing departments' valuable time by automating configuration validity and pricing workflows. By having an automated approach to validating special pricing requests and price exceptions on CTO and ETO products, manufacturers are saving Sales Operations hundreds of hours a year. Using automated approvals based on rules and constraints defined by sales engineering, the validity, and buildability of a configurable product can be verified. Pricing can automate the majority of exceptions they deal with, further freeing them up for more complex projects.

- Simulate how new product models and their configuration options will impact the quoting, ERP, supply chain, pricing, and omnichannel systems in place today. Manufacturers pursuing smart, connected products to drive services revenues are actively doing this today. Simulating new product configurations and their impact on supply chains is essential for having a successful launch.

- Visual configurators are simplifying complex selling and are worth looking into if the majority of your Configure-To-Order (CTO) Or Engineer-to-Order (ETO). The latest generation of visual configurators is designed to increase collaboration between engineering and sales, increasing the speed and quality of quotes. Rapid advances in visual configurators are forcing manufacturers to improve the configurable options, ergonomics, and usability of their products faster than would otherwise be the case. For more on how visual configurators are revolutionizing CPQ and product configuration, please see the Forbes article, 5 Ways Visual Configurators Are Revolutionizing CPQ.

(Source: forbes.com)

From newborn baby to Mexican corn, weird items left in e-hailing cars

By Setareh Behroozi

TEHRAN — People leave behind items in taxis many times. May be you have the experience to leave your phone, purse or shopping bag in a taxi.

In recent years, people in different cities of Iran use e-hailing cars for their daily commuting and as a part of transportation system people live with, they also turned into a place where people leave their items behind.

Recently, a renowned e-hailing service in Iran released an interesting report about the most common and weirdest items passengers leave in cars.



The most forgetful days of the year

Some 86044 reports of leaving items received during the second half of the Iranian calendar year 1397 (March 20, 2018-March 20, 2019). The highest number of items left was reported on March 13, 2019, namely the last Wednesday of the year.

In general, the riders leave their items mostly on Wednesdays, before weekend holidays in Iran.

In holidays and Fridays (Iranian weekend), the number of forgotten items decreased. The date September 28, 2018, which falls on Friday, the least number of lost items was reported.

The most common items left

Cellphone is the most common thing that the riders leave behind in the cars. However bags, keys, documents, mobile chargers and glasses are also seen in the most common items left.

The newborn baby left in the car

Approximately the center received 470 reports about leaving items each day. The weirdest one belongs to an e-hailing driver who announced that the passenger left his or her newborn baby in the car.

Leaving rabbit or Mexican corn were another strangest items reported to the center.

The most valuable items returned

A four-billion-rial (about 95,000 dollars) cheque, a purse containing 20 thousand dollars in cash, and jewelry pieces are amongst the expensive items left in the cars which were returned to their owners.

Tehrani citizens, the most absent-minded passengers

According to the report, Tehrani citizens are on the top list amongst 120 cities of Iran as the most forgetful riders.

Mashhad, Isfahan, Qom, Karaj, Yazd and Qazvin and Ahvaz are in the next places respectively.

The bottom line

With an overall look, you can find traces on busy minds and busy lives in forgetfulness. People leaving in bigger cities, the days at the end of the week are on the top list of forgetting items in the cars. Technology is a great opportunity for us, which makes our life easier and with less concerns in many cases. However, the free mind is something which is achieved by our choices and general lifestyle, a thing that is important in all times and all places. Do not forget.

Iran, Germany seek to boost cooperation in surveying engineering

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — Officials of Iran National Cartographic Center and a delegation from Germany's University of Hanover discussed further cooperation in the field of surveying engineering during a meeting in Tehran on Tuesday, IRNA reported.

Established 66 years ago, Iran National Cartographic Center is known as a renowned organization, the head of the center Masoud Shafiei said during the meeting.

Iran is cooperating with Asian and European countries including France, he said.

In Iran, there are professional experts who can cooperate with other countries in sabbatical leaves, he said.

Shafiei said that Iran needs some cooperation in the field of crisis management.

"There is a network of geodynamic stations in Iran, which need construction," he said.

Iran is a great country and there is no access to satellite images, which faces the country with producing location data, he said.

The German delegation invited the center to take part in the 11th International Symposium on Mobile Mapping Technology, which will be held from May 6 to 8 by the International Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing in France.

Social media has limited effects on teens, study finds

New research from the University of Oxford suggests that the links between social media use and wellbeing are actually trivial.

Using social media has very limited effects on teenagers' wellbeing, according to a new large-scale study from the University of Oxford.

Researchers at the Oxford Internet Institute (OII) surveyed 12,000 people to find out whether adolescents who spent a lot of time on social media were unhappier because of it.

Their findings, contrary to much of the existing literature on the topic, suggested that most links between how fulfilling teenagers found their lives to be and their level of social media use are actually quite trivial.

However, they warned that without greater access to the data held by social media companies such as Facebook it wouldn't be possible to fully understand their impact.

In the paper published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) the scientists criticised the standards of previous research.

Professor Andrew Przybylski, director of research at the OII, said: "Given the rapid pace of technological advancement in recent years, the question of how our increasing use of technology to interact with each other affects our wellbeing has become increasingly important." (Source: news.sky.com)

Bengal tigers may not survive climate change, UN report finds

Climate change and rising sea levels eventually may wipe out one of the world’s last and largest tiger strongholds, scientists warned in a new study.

The cats are among nearly 500,000 land species whose survival is in question because of threats to their natural habitats, according to a report by the UN published on Monday.

The Sundarbans, 4,000 square miles of marshy land in Bangladesh and India, hosts the world’s largest mangrove forest and a rich ecosystem supporting several hundred animal species, including the endangered Bengal tiger.

But 70 per cent of the land is just a few feet above sea level, and grave changes are in store for the region, Australian and Bangladeshi researchers reported in the journal Science of The Total Environment.

Changes wrought by a warming planet will be “enough to decimate” the few hundred or so Bengal tigers remaining there.

“By 2070, there will be no suitable tiger habitats remaining in the Bangladesh Sundarbans,” concluded the study by 10 researchers.

The paper, which relies on climate scenarios developed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change for its simulation models, adds to existing studies that offered similarly grim predictions for wildlife in the Sundarbans.

In 2010, a study led by the World Wide Fund for Nature projected that a sea level rise of 11 inches could reduce the number of tigers in the Sundarbans by 96 per cent within a few decades.

Climate change has harmed almost half of the world’s endangered mammals, far more than previously thought, a recent study found.

Sharif A Mukul, lead author of the new report on the Sundarbans, and his colleagues looked for risks to the tiger beyond sea level rise, which accounted for 5.4 per cent to 11.3 per cent of the projected habitat loss in 2050 and 2070.

Other factors related to climate change were more damaging to the Sundarbans’ tigers, one of the largest remaining populations of wild tigers in the world, the researchers found.

Since the early 1900s, habitat loss, hunting and the illegal trade of animal parts have decimated the global population of tigers from around 100,000 to fewer than 4,000.

In the Bangladesh Sundarbans, a spike in extreme weather events and changing vegetation will further reduce the population, the study found. And as the Sundarbans flood, confrontations may grow between humans and tigers as the animals stray outside their habitat in search of new land.

“A lot of things might happen,” said Mr Mukul, an assistant professor of environmental management at Independent University, Bangladesh in Dhaka. “The situation could be even worse if there is a cyclone or if there is some disease outbreak in that area, or if there is a food shortage.”

In October, a landmark report by the UN’s scientific panel on climate change found that if greenhouse gas emissions continued at the current rate, the atmosphere would warm as much as 1.5C above preindustrial levels by 2040.

That increase would have significant consequences for food chains, coral reefs and flood-prone areas. It may also disproportionately affect poorer, densely packed countries like Bangladesh, which is home to 160 million people.

In an analysis of decades of tidal records, scientists found that high tides were rising much faster than the global average in Bangladesh, which sits in the Ganges Delta, a complex network of rivers and streams.

Sugata Hazra, an oceanographer at India’s Jadavpur University, said there may be some loss of land in the Sundarbans, but his research suggested a less dramatic impact on tigers.

Some steps have been taken to protect low-lying areas and the tigers living there, said Zahir Uddin Ahmed, an official with Bangladesh’s forest department.

Crops that can survive higher levels of water salinity are being introduced. The government has built storm surge walls. Sediment redistribution has also naturally raised the height of some islands, he said.

Still, Prerna Singh Bindra, author of The Vanishing: India’s Wildlife Crisis, said tiger habitats would continue to shrink – whether because of climate change or the development of industry – and that good conservation options were hard to come by.

(Source: The Independent)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Violent teenagers in U.S. detention centers

July 15, 1999
BBC Correspondent Stephen Sackur reported on America’s violent youth. We also heard from an inmate of a prison for teenage murderers in Texas.

Dawn breaks over Giddings State School. Twenty teenage boys **sporting** regulation white t-shirts are on the move. Here in the heart of conservative Texas, young criminals, murderers and **thugs** are forced to confront military style discipline, a traditional view of right and wrong. But Giddings is more than a **boot camp** devoted to breaking down angry adolescents. This place also offers **inmates a glimpse of redemption** but only if, like eighteen year old Leanne, they are prepared to confront their crimes head on.

‘I was standing behind my mother and I pulled out a twenty five caliber pistol and I shot her in the back of the head and killed her.’ Just because my mother **abused** me and took her anger out on me and intentionally hurt me all those years that gave me no right to take her life. I’m not the judge, I’m not an executioner. You know, it’s not my place. And I’ve started realizing all the other **options** that I had. I could have left. **I could have** went and told someone, tried to seek some kind of help. There was a lot of things that I could have done **but I x-ed them all out** and said ‘no, this is the only way’.

■ **WORDS**
dawn breaks: poetic English which means ‘the day begins’
sporting: wearing with pride, sometimes to show off
thugs: rough violent people, usually criminals
boot camp: U.S. English - a military training camp especially for new soldiers
inmates: prisoners
a glimpse of redemption: literary/poetic expression meaning an opportunity to reform
to abuse: to mistreat a young person
options: choices

I could have went: non-standard colloquial English - standard form would be ‘I could have gone’
but I x-ed them all out: American slang, not used in British English. Here it means ‘I crossed them off my list of possibilities’
(Source: BBC)

Climate change or poor management: What are the major reasons behind devastating floods?

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — Although climate change could be a cause for recent torrential rainfalls and flooding, poor management and ignoring watershed management are also to blame for enhanced flood destruction, Seyed Mohammad Mojabi, head of environment committee of the Expediency Council has said.

In order to recognize a precise reason for the recent floods, we have to wait for the studies’ result carried out by special working group on flooding, however, responsible bodies have not been working properly issuing construction permits in the river beds and banks, ISNA news agency quoted Mojabi as saying on Saturday.

“Following recurrent droughts and low precipitation, related organizations believed that severe rainfalls seem far-fetched in a country with arid and semi-arid climate and decided to allow construction projects through river banks, which increased flood devastation,” he lamented.

The other reason behind expanded damages caused by flooding was not taking watershed management into serious consideration, he stated, adding, if watershed projects have been operational since past recent years, it could have reduced flood severity to a great extent.

“In particular, a large number of cities being located on steep slopes are prone to flood risk and will suffer irreparable damages,” Mojabi added.

Emphasizing on the need for preparing plans on presentation and overcoming the natural incidents, he noted that natural hazards in different areas must be identified and the effects of them must be minimized by proper planning.

He went on to say that currently flood in the country has become a major issue for the people and the related organizations because of the damage it has inflicted, so the opportunity must be seized in order to decrease the risks.

■ Reducing flood risk: planning ahead

Referring to the ways to reduce flood risks, he suggested that all the cities across the country must be assessed in terms of vulnerability to natural incidents.

“After identifying the natural hazards of each city and categorizing each of them, then construction standards and guidelines must be defined, and further the cities’ infrastructure must be improved in accordance



with the standards toward sustainability,” he further explained.

He also added that it is essential to ensure the sustainability of the cities, although the sustainability in the cities have been taken for granted and their principles have been forgotten due to intrusion on environment and natural resources.

All government and non-governmental organizations should play a role in urban monitoring projects; in addition to municipalities who are responsible for urban development and management, he stated, adding that the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, and even the Department of Environment, should join hand in this regard.

Insisting on the necessity for the cities to be improved in accordance with the standards, he lamented that that the management system in the country is in a way that attention is paid only to day-to-day problems and such issues are usually overlooked.

So, watershed plans, playing a significant role in reducing flood intensity, could have been carried out over the past years and at a low cost, he stated, adding that while floods in a few hours brought heavy financial losses for the country.

Unfortunately, studies will remain in the libraries and omitted in implementing development projects, he noted, suggesting,

first of all, the studies must be conducted precisely to become the center of focus when preparing projects.

“Integration is not practiced in the country, most of the related organizations take steps individually and are not willing to cooperate with each other to reach a favorable result,” he regretted.

To solve the problem, there needs to be strict policy-making, which obliges each organization to fully take responsibility toward the assigned tasks, and not to shift the blame to the other agencies when a catastrophe happens, he explained.

■ Environment benefitted from the floods

Elsewhere in his remarks, Mojabi said that although heavy rainfall resulted in flooding and imposed damages on the residents, it filled the long-dried wetlands across the country, each of which needed great conservation plans and fund to revive.

Currently, 80 percent of the wetlands across the country are filled completely, some of which are overflowing, therefore, we must take measures such as strong management policies and providing their water right to help them remain in the current condition and prevent them from depletion once again, he also added.

“Despite heavy rainfall and recent floods,

it should not be forgotten that Iran is an arid and semi-arid country and is still deeply involved with the drought and water shortage,” he also noted.

He went on to conclude that almost half of the country’s plains are in critical situation as being prone to severe subsidence, therefore, the drought remains a major problem in the country.

■ Increased precipitations nationwide

Based on the latest data published on Monday by National Drought Warning and Monitoring Center affiliated to Iran’s Meteorological Organization since the start of the current water year the whole country received 294.9 millimeters of rain.

The number amounted to 133 millimeters in the previous water year and 209.9 millimeters in the long-term, the data indicated. The numbers show a drastic increase of 121.8 percent compared to last water year. It also reveals a 40.5 percent increase compared to long-term means.

■ Why floods were catastrophic?

Ali Salajegheh, University of Tehran faculty in river engineering and watershed management said earlier this month that the only way for the country to overcome long-term droughts along with preventing floods is through comprehensive watershed management plans.

Moreover, distinguished environmentalist Mohammad Darvish has said that loss of vegetation covers and conversion of forests to rain fed farmlands has caused the country to be more vulnerable to flooding as proper vegetation cover could reduce flood damages.

He regretted that construction measure, tearing down the trees, excessive underground water withdrawal and soil erosion caused by the human have adversely affected forests and its vegetation cover.

Also, Masoud Baqerzadeh Karimi, director for wetland ecosystem office at the Department of Environment said in late April that ignoring technical issues in developing infrastructure of the water basin along with excessive soil erosion are what made the recent floods extremely devastating.

The reason which exacerbated flood wreckage is mostly environmental degradation, namely, soil erosion which is the result of illegal construction, land use changes, river basin destruction, and deforestation.

Attempts to revive Lake Urmia using technology

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — The vice presidency for science and technology will take measures in accordance with Lake Urmia restoration utilizing technology advances, IRNA news agency reported on Wednesday.

Technology development council of water, drought, erosion and environment affiliated to the vice presidency for science and technology has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Lake Urmia research center to enhance cooperation in using latest technology achievements to conserve the invaluable natural heritage.

As per the MOU, the vice presidency for science and technology is supposed to suggest technology-based policies and plans in order to efficiently revive the lake.

Shared between West Azarbaijan and East Azarbaijan provinces in northwestern Iran, Lake Urmia, was once the largest salt-water lake in the Middle East. However, decades of long-standing drought spells and elevated hot summer temperatures that speed up evaporation as well as



increased water demands in agriculture sector shrank the lake drastically.

In 1999 the volume of water which was at 30 billion cubic meters drastically decreased to half a billion cubic meters in 2013. Moreover, the lake surface area of 5,000 square kilometers in 1997 shrunk to one tenth of that to 500 square kilometers in 2013.

Kiumars Daneshjoo, CEO of West Azarbaijan regional water company said in late April that subsequent to heavy rainfalls in the country, the volume of water in the Lake Urmia has increased to 4.1 billion cubic meters which shows a 2-fold increase compared to the same period last year.

Iranian donations to flood survivors hit \$57m

SOCIETY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian philanthropists have contributed some 2.4 trillion rials (nearly \$57 million) to the people residing in flood-ravaged provinces across the country, head of the Red Crescent Society volunteer organization has said.

Following the recent floods, people have supported those flood-affected by offering contributions both in cash and in kind, Mehr news agency quoted Mohammad Nasiri as saying on Wednesday.

“Financial assistance paid by the people is estimated at 1.5 trillion rials (about \$37 million),” he stated, adding, non-cash donations also worth up to 830 billion rials (around \$20 million).

The Organization intends to provide household appliances packages for the families affected by flood, each of the packages worth 50 million rials (nearly \$1,200), he highlighted.

In order to purchase these packages among the households, we need a total budget of 4 trillion rials (approximately



\$95 million), he stated.

“We hope that with in-kind contributions of donors we will be able to provide the appliance packages and compensate for parts of the damages,” he concluded.

Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation has announced that Iranian donors have made contributions amounting to 880 billion rials (about \$20 million) to flood-hit families.

Heavy rainfall, beginning on March 19 has led to flooding in 28 out of 31 provinces affecting 42,269,129 inhabitants in 253 cities and causing widespread damage to municipal facilities, including health centers and hospitals.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A → ب → ج

Wetlands restoration requires a budget of \$14b: DOE chief

In order to restore wetlands in the country a budget of 600 trillion rials (nearly \$14 billion) is required, chief of the Department of Environment (DOE) Issa Kalantari said on Sunday.

There are 80 big and small wetlands in the country and some are dried out, Kalantari regretted adding that last year (March 2017-March 2018) more than 20 trillion rials (nearly \$475 million) was allocated to wetlands restoration and the amount is projected to increase to 25 trillion rials (nearly \$595 million) for next fiscal year (starting on March 21), he said.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“lipo-, lip-”

■ **Meaning:** fatty

■ **For example:** *Lipid* accumulation frequently leads to mental retardation or progressive loss of central nervous system functions.

PHRASAL VERB

Tear somebody away

■ **Meaning:** to make yourself or someone else leave a place when you or they do not want to leave

■ **For example:** He was enjoying the fun and couldn’t tear himself away.

IDIOM

A big ask

■ **Explanation:** an inconvenient request

■ **For example:** I know it’s a big ask, but could I borrow your car for a week?

Turkish opposition seeks cancellation of 2018 elections

TEHRAN— Turkey's main opposition party on Wednesday appealed to the country's top electoral body for an annulment of local election results in Istanbul's 39 districts, as well as last year's presidential and parliamentary elections, after the authority annulled its victory in the city's mayoral race and ordered a new vote.

Ruling in favor of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's governing Justice and Development Party, or AKP, Turkey's Supreme Electoral Board this week ordered a re-run the March 31 vote narrowly won by opposition candidate Ekrem Imamoglu. The board based its decision on the fact that some officials overseeing the mayoral election were not civil servants, as required by law, AP reported.

The AKP maintained that such irregularities impacted the outcome of the mayoral race.

In response, the main opposition Republican Peoples' Party, or CHP, submitted a formal request for the cancellation of the Istanbul district elections and last year's general elections, arguing that non-civil servants had also supervised those ballots.

The CHP cannot appeal the electoral board's decision to repeat the mayoral



election as it is final.

The AKP won a majority of the Istanbul districts as well as last year's general elections, which gave Erdogan a new mandate with sweeping powers.

"If you say that the local election was stained, then the same is valid for the June

24 (2018) elections," CHP legislator Muharem Erkek told reporters after submitting the appeal. "Ten thousand people who were not civil servants were on duty at the June 24 elections."

"If you cancel Mr. Imamoglu's mandate, then you have to cancel Mr. Recep Tayyip

Erdogan's mandate too," Erkek said, addressing the electoral board members. He added that there was no evidence to prove that the presence of non-civil servants at the ballot stations had affected the outcome of the voting.

Even though the Supreme Electoral board is not expected to uphold the opposition's appeal, the CHP's move serves to expose what it says is the decision's unfairness.

The CHP, which has questioned the electoral authority's independence, believes that its members succumbed to pressure by Erdogan. The party has accused the president of "stealing" the Istanbul city hall in order to cling to power in Turkey's largest city and commercial hub.

"We don't trust or believe (in the electoral body)," Erkek said. "This is a struggle for democracy. It is not about the CHP or Imamoglu."

The loss of Istanbul - and the capital, Ankara - in Turkey's local elections came as sharp blows to Erdogan.

Erdogan has insisted that rerunning the Istanbul mayoral vote will strengthen democracy by ensuring that the will of the people of Istanbul is truly reflected.

'U.S.-led coalition airdrops aid to Daesh remnants in Iraq'

TEHRAN — The U.S.-led coalition purportedly fighting the Daesh Takfiri terrorist group has reportedly dropped foodstuff and medical supplies to the remnants of the Daesh Takfiri terrorist group in Iraq's western province of Anbar and on the border with conflict-plagued Syria.

Arabic-language al-Maalomah news agency, quoting Qusay al-Anbari, a spokesman for Iraq's Badr Organization -- a part of the Popular Mobilization Forces better known by the common word Hashd al-Sha'abi, reported on Monday that Daesh terrorists are hiding in the heart of Anbar desert area, and could only be reached by U.S.-led military helicopters.

The report then cited locals, requesting not to be named, as saying that they have seen U.S.-led coalition aircraft dropping food and medicine to the Daesh Takfiris.

Back on February 17, local sources, requesting anonymity, told Syria's official news agency SANA that U.S.-led military



helicopters had landed in the Dashisha area of Syria's eastern province of Hasakah as well as Hajin town in Dayr al-Zawr

province, and transported dozens of Daesh commanders and militants to unknown locations following a deal.

The sources added that the extremists, in return, directed the U.S.-led forces to their caches of stolen gold east of Shaddadi town.

SANA, citing information received from local residents, reported on November 13 last year that American helicopters had evacuated several Daesh terrorists from the village of al-Suwayda in Hasakah to an unknown location.

The U.S.-led coalition has been conducting airstrikes and operations against what are said to be Daesh targets inside Syria since September 2014 without any authorization from the Damascus government or a United Nations mandate.

According to press TV, the military alliance has repeatedly been accused of targeting and killing civilians. It has also been largely incapable of achieving its declared goal of destroying Daesh.

Warm on North, chilly to South: Japan's Korea strategy could pose risks

TEHRAN — Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is reaching out to North Korea in the hope of arranging a summit, a strategy critics say poses risks given doubts about chances of a breakthrough, even as ties with U.S. ally South Korea deteriorate.

In an interview with Japan's Sankei newspaper last week, Abe offered to hold unconditional talks with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, a shift in tone if not substance from previous remarks that had predicated a summit on progress toward resolving a feud over Japanese citizens abducted by Pyongyang decades ago.

The outreach comes amid Japan's frosty

ties with South Korea due to intensifying rows over their wartime history, including Japan's 1910-45 colonization of the Korean peninsula.

"Abe seems to be keener to talk to Kim than to (South Korean President) Moon (Jae-in)," said one former Japanese diplomat who declined to be identified because the matter is sensitive.

"He should be doing the opposite: reach out to Moon ... and ignore Kim for the sake of rebuilding trilateral unity vis-a-vis North Korea."

A Japanese foreign ministry official said Tokyo, Seoul and Washington were united on the ultimate goal of getting North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons program,

which it carried out for years in defiance of U.N. Security Council resolutions.

Abe is the only regional leader who has not met Kim, after summits between Kim and Trump, Moon, Chinese leader Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin, and likely wants to show his domestic audience that he is not out of the diplomatic loop.

In a sign of the importance Japan places on the abduction issue, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga will speak in New York on Friday at a symposium on abductions, after meeting top U.S. officials in Washington.

Foreign ministry officials said there were no plans for Suga to meet North Korean

officials while in the United States.

In 2002, North Korea admitted its agents had kidnapped 13 Japanese decades before. Japan says 17 of its citizens were abducted, five of whom were repatriated. North Korea has said eight are dead and that another four never entered the country.

Abe has vowed not to rest until all the abductees come home, so whether or not he publicly sets "preconditions", the success of any summit would almost certainly be judged at home by whether there was progress on the topic.

Without progress, "the meeting would be categorized as a failure and the cost of failure would be very big", another former diplomat said.

Qatar accuses UAE of 'violence and hatred' at world court

Qatar accused the United Arab Emirates Wednesday of a "campaign of violence and hatred" against its citizens, urging the International Court of Justice to quash a case brought by Abu Dhabi.

The Persian Gulf states are locked in a battle at the UN's top court, where the UAE on Tuesday asked judges to stop Qatar "severely aggravating" a two-year-old crisis between Doha and other countries in the oil-rich region.

Qatar's lawyers however hit back, saying in fact it was Abu Dhabi who continued with "discriminatory policies that severely impacted Qatari citizens", AFP reported.

"It is the Qatari people who are the true victims in the racial discrimination case, not the government of the UAE," Qatar's representative Mohammed Abdulaziz Al-Khulaifi said.

This included Abu Dhabi's move to gag the Doha-based and state-funded Al Jazeera global news network, which was accused of spreading "propaganda", the lawyer told the Hague-based tribunal.

"The silencing of... media voices is part-and-parcel of

the UAE's campaign to incite violence and hatred against Qataris," Khulaifi said.

"Qatar has long been engaged in the fight against global terrorism and it continues to be."

Qatar has faced an economic and diplomatic boycott since June 2017 by Persian Gulf rivals who accused Doha of backing terrorism and being too close to regional rival Iran.

Doha has repeatedly denied the claims, accusing its rivals of seeking regime change and alleging the UAE broke the 1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD).

According to press TV, last June, in a case brought by Qatar, the ICJ ruled that the UAE must allow families which include Qatari members to be reunited, and that Qatari students must be given the chance to complete their education in the Emirates.

But Abu Dhabi on Tuesday went back to court, accusing Doha of blocking its own citizens from accessing Emirati websites to ease travel issues, and therefore failing to honor last year's judgment.

Khulaifi parried those claims on Wednesday, saying



that Qatar found a "high risk security breach" on the UAE's website including so-called "malware" designed to infiltrate Qatar's information systems.

He said Doha told Abu Dhabi about the breach but the UAE was "yet to take steps."

Iraq holds trial for over 500 Daesh terrorists

I→ Iraq declared victory over Daesh in late 2017 and began trying foreigners accused of joining the terrorist faction the following year.

It has condemned many to life in prison, including 58-year-old Frenchman Lahcen Ammar Gueboudj and two other French nationals.

It has also issued death sentences for other foreign Daesh members, although they have not yet been carried out.

Among those awaiting trial in Baghdad are 12 accused French Daesh members, who were caught in Syria and transferred to Iraqi custody in February.

Government sources have told AFP that Baghdad would be willing to try all foreigners currently held in Kurdish detention in northeast Syria for a price.

Around 1,000 suspected foreign Daesh terrorists are in detention in northeast Syria, in addition to around 9,000 foreign women and children in camps there.

Rights groups including Human Rights Watch have criticized the trials, which they say often rely on circumstantial evidence or confessions obtained under torture.

Wednesday's statement by the court "urged all trials of foreign terrorists to be moved to Baghdad, as most of the embassies are in the capital and so embassy representatives from the terrorists' countries can attend the sessions."

According to Press TV, Iraq has also already tried thousands of its own nationals arrested on home soil for joining Daesh, including women.

It has begun trial proceedings for nearly 900 Iraqis repatriated from Syria and sentenced four to death last month under its counter-terrorism law.

The country remains in the top five "executioner" nations in the world, according to an Amnesty International report released last month.

The number of death sentences issued by Iraqi courts more than quadrupled from 65 in 2017 to at least 271 last year.

But fewer were actually carried out, according to Amnesty, with 52 executions in 2018 compared to 125 in 2017.

Blast targeting police checkpoint kills 9 in Pakistan's Lahore

TEHRAN — An explosion targeting a police checkpoint in the Pakistani city of Lahore has killed at least nine people and injured 24 others.

According to police, the blast targeted the checkpoint near one of the gates of the Data Darbar Sufi shrine in Lahore, Punjab Province, on Wednesday.

"Police was the prime target in this attack. We are collecting forensic evidences to ascertain the nature of the blast. This attack has left nine dead and 24 injured," said Ashfaq Khan, the deputy inspector general of police operations in Lahore.

According to press TV, the grand Data Darbar shrine is a frequently visited place of worship.

The blast near the shrine took place one the second day of the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan.

The Pakistani Taliban later claimed responsibility for the attack.

Another main shrine, the Lal Shahbaz Qalandar in Sehwan, Sindh Province, was the target of a bombing attack in February 2017 that killed over 70 people.

South Africa's ANC seen winning election but support sliding

TEHRAN — The African National Congress faced its toughest electoral test on Wednesday as it sought to reverse a slide in support from voters frustrated by graft and racial inequalities a generation after it won power in South Africa's first all-race poll.

South Africa is holding parliamentary and provincial elections amid frustration with a lack of progress 25 years after Nelson Mandela's ANC swept to power at the end of white minority rule in 1994, Reuters reported.

Queues built up at polling stations through the morning. Some polling stations around Johannesburg opened late or did not have voting materials.

Officials have said the results could be announced on Saturday.

France confirms arms shipment to Saudi Arabia

TEHRAN— The French government confirmed Wednesday that a new shipment of weapons will head for Saudi Arabia, despite claims that Riyadh is using the arms in the devastating war in Yemen.

Defense Minister Florence Parly told BFM television the weapons would be loaded onto a Saudi cargo ship scheduled to arrive Wednesday in the French port of Le Havre.

She refused to identify the types of arms, but reiterated France's stance that they have been used only for defensive purposes by Saudi Arabia since it began its Yemen offensive in 2015.

"As far as the French government is aware, we have no proof that the victims in Yemen are the result of the use of French weapons," Parly said.

Pressure has been mounting on the government after the investigative news site Disclose leaked a classified military note last month detailing the use of French tanks and artillery in the war against Houthis.

Disclose alleged the new shipment included eight truck-mounted Caesar howitzers, though a government source told AFP this week that such cannons were not part of the delivery.

Saudi Arabia and its allies launched the war against Yemen in March 2015 in an attempt to reinstall the Riyadh-allied former regime and crush Houthis.

The invaders have, however, failed to achieve their objectives in the face of the Yemeni resistance.

The Western-backed war on Yemen, coupled with a naval blockade, has destroyed the country's infrastructure and led to a humanitarian crisis.

According to a December 2018 report by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), a nonprofit conflict-research organization, the Saudi war has claimed the lives of over 60,000 Yemenis since January 2016.

Militant rocket attack on Russian airbase in Syria's Latakia thwarted

The Russian Defense Ministry's Center for Syrian Reconciliation says its surface-to-air missile systems have managed to foil an attack by foreign-sponsored Takfiri militants against the country's strategic Hmeimim airbase in Syria's western coastal province of Latakia.

The center announced in a statement on Tuesday that militants positioned in the de-escalation zone of Syria's northwestern province of Idlib launched 27 rockets at the military facility on May 6, but none of the projectiles struck the site as Pantsir-S1 and TOR-M1 systems intercepted and shown them down.

The development came less than a week after foreign-sponsored Takfiri militants, who hold positions near the towns of Qalaat

al-Madiq and Bab al-Atika, sought to shell Hmeimim airbase.

Major General Viktor Kupchishin, the head of the Russian Defense Ministry's Center for Syrian Reconciliation, said on May 3 that militants had attempted to shell the base the previous day, but their attempt was repelled.

"No Russian servicemen were injured, and no damage was done to the facility," Kupchishin pointed out.

Russia has been helping Syrian forces in ongoing battles across the conflict-plagued Arab country.

The Russian military assistance, which began in September 2015 at the official request of the Syrian government, has proved effective as Syrians continue to



recapture key areas from Daesh and other foreign-backed terrorist groups across the country with the backing of Russian air cover.

■ Syrian troops recapture two villages in northern Hama

Meanwhile, Syrian government have wrested control over two villages in the northern countryside of the western-central province of Hama as they are engaged in an operation to flush Takfiri terrorists from the area.

The Arabic-language and pro-government al-Watan newspaper reported on Tuesday that Syrian army troops had captured the villages of al-Janabara and Tel Othman.

Syria has been gripped by foreign-backed militancy since March 2011. The Syrian government says the Israeli regime and its Western and regional allies are aiding Takfiri terrorist groups that are wreaking havoc in the country.

Badminton’s Lee to miss World Championship after cancer



Badminton star Lee Chong Wei will miss the World Championships in August after falling down the rankings following a prolonged absence due to cancer, an official said Wednesday.

It means the Malaysian former world number one loses the chance to win the world title for the first time, and deals another blow to his fading hopes of competing in the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

Michelle Chai, general manager of the Badminton Association of Malaysia (BAM), said Lee -- currently ranked 113 in the world -- would not play in the championships in Switzerland from August 19-25.

“Lee Chong Wei won’t take part in the world championship as he currently does not qualify on merit,” she told AFP.

A country can send a maximum of two players who are inside the world top 150 and there are two Malaysians currently above Lee -- Lee Zii Jia and Liew Daren.

BAM president Norza Zakaria confirmed the body would endorse players based on rankings released at the end of April.

“As we know, Chong Wei is not part of the list and he is still working on his fitness,” he was quoted as saying by The Star newspaper.

“The priority for Chong Wei now is for him to recover from his ailments, so let’s focus on that first.”

The triple Olympic silver medallist has been out since July last year when he was diagnosed with early-stage nose cancer.

The 36-year-old endured a tough treatment programme in Taiwan but opted not to retire and resumed training in January.

He skipped the All England Open in March and the Malaysia Open in April -- both tournaments where he had hoped to make a comeback -- and will also miss this month’s Sudirman Cup mixed-team event in China.

(Source: AFP)

Bolton left with little choice but administration - chairman

Bolton Wanderers chairman Ken Anderson said on Wednesday that placing the club into administration looks to be unavoidable after British businessman Laurence Bassini’s proposed takeover collapsed last week.

Bolton face a High Court winding-up petition brought by British tax authorities (HM Revenue and Customs) on Wednesday over an unpaid tax bill of 1.2 million pounds, British media reported.

Bassini had sought time last week to provide the English Football League (EFL) with proof of funds to buy the relegated Championship (second tier) club but Bolton said that nothing had been presented to the governing body to consider.

“Mr Bassini failed to provide any adequate and acceptable proof of current and future funding to the EFL... despite him telling the media he has the ability to perform since early March,” Anderson said in a statement on the club’s website.

Anderson said Bassini’s “continued time wasting” and “empty promises” had left him with little choice other than to place the club into administration, with “any likelihood of finding any resolution the High Court hearing not possible.”

“This had been a massive disappointment as I understand the serious implications administration will bring... but I have been left with no alternative, as this course of action will preserve the football club and all of its proud history.”

A Football League founder member in 1888, Bolton won the FA Cup three times in the 1920s and in 1958 but have struggled in recent years after relegation from the Premier League in 2012.

The club’s players had said they would boycott their final two games over unpaid wages, leading to the home match against Brentford being postponed and later called off.

(Source: Mirror)

Chelsea lose transfer ban appeal but can register minor players - FIFA

FIFA said on Tuesday that they have upheld Chelsea’s one-year transfer ban but the English Premier League club will be able to register youth players during the period following an appeal.

Chelsea were fined 600,000 Swiss francs (453,404.9 pounds) and sanctioned in February in relation to 29 cases where regulations relating to the international transfer and registration of players under the age of 18 were breached.

“The FIFA Appeal Committee has decided to partially uphold the appeal lodged by Chelsea FC against the decision of the FIFA Disciplinary Committee to sanction the club with a ban on registering new players at both national and international level for the next two complete and consecutive registration periods,” FIFA said in a statement.

“This ban applied to the club as a whole -- with the exception of the women’s and futsal teams -- and did not prevent the release of players.”

But FIFA’s Appeal Committee decided the club can still sign players under the age of 16 as they concluded imposing a ban on registering each and every minor “would not be proportionate to the offence committed”.

The next step for Chelsea could see them take their case to the Court of Arbitration for Sport to try and freeze or overturn the ban.

(Source: Reuters)

With an ‘impossible’ win, Klopp’s Liverpool write their own history

Juergen Klopp’s Liverpool wrote one of the most amazing chapters in the history of the club’s European triumphs with a 4-0 victory over Lionel Messi’s Barcelona in the Champions League semi-finals on Tuesday that stunned the world of football.

After a 3-0 defeat in the away leg, Liverpool’s season was heading for glorious failure on Sunday, with their 10 months of exhilarating football set to produce only a pat on the back with a runners-up spot behind Manchester City in the Premier League.

Instead, the 4-3 aggregate win means Liverpool’s season will not finish until June 1 when they compete in a second straight Champions League final against Ajax Amsterdam or Tottenham Hotspur in Madrid, aiming for their sixth European Cup triumph.

City will clinch the Premier League title with a victory at Brighton & Hove Albion on Sunday, no matter what Liverpool do at home to Wolverhampton Wanderers in their final match.

But if that happens to the Anfield club, the pain of missing out on a first domestic league crown for 29 years will be eased by the knowledge that European glory could be on the horizon.

Juergen Klopp’s Liverpool team faced a near impossible task of not only beating Barcelona by four goals, but trying not to concede at home to a team led by arguably the greatest forward the modern game has known -- Messi.

With the Argentine’s two goals in the 3-0 win in the first leg at the Nou Camp last week,



Messi took his tally for Barcelona to a barely computable 600 goals in 683 matches.

And because Liverpool failed to score an ‘away goal’, used to separate teams when aggregate scores are level, even a 4-1 or 5-2 win would not have been enough for the Reds to go through.

They simply had to deliver a devastating attacking display -- all the more difficult with injuries to key forwards Mo Salah and Roberto Firmino -- and produce a clean sheet.

But that is what they did -- to even their own astonishment.

■ Huge task

Such was the scale of the task that Klopp revealed the prospect did not even feature in their pre-match thoughts.

“Winning against Barcelona is one of the most difficult things in the world of football,” he said. “Winning against Barcelona when you are 3-0 down.... we had to score four goals and were not allowed to concede, even more difficult, so we did not really think about it to be honest.”

Before Tuesday night, Liverpool’s greatest comeback in Europe came in the 2005

Champions League final when they trailed 3-0 to AC Milan but emerged as the winners from a penalty shootout after fighting back for a 3-3 draw.

The latest great escape was something similar to that night in Istanbul when Steven Gerrard had led their unbelievable second-half comeback against a Milan side then viewed as by far the best team in Europe.

It was the sense of destiny, a phrase Klopp had used only last week to describe how this season was to evolve, which perhaps, given City’s advantage on the domestic front, was closer in his mind to fatalism.

Just like 14 years ago, when Milan froze like deer in headlights, Barcelona began to surrender, to lose their normal composure and shape, to do inexplicable things.

Nothing was stranger then when, with the aggregate score at 3-3, the entire Barcelona defence, made up of decorated experienced internationals like Gerard Pique, switched off and allowed Trent Alexander-Arnold to take a quick corner.

The 20-year-old full-back passed to the unmarked Divock Origi who, despite his undoubted surprise, kept his composure to slot in the winner while the Spaniards stared on in disbelief, unable to comprehend such an elementary error.

But how do you explain the two-goal performance from Origi, a lanky 24-year-old Belgian back-up player who was only in the starting lineup because of the two attacking injuries?

(Source: Reuters)

‘Biggest embarrassment of all time’: Spanish press digs knife into Barca



The Spanish and Catalan press were in unforgiving mood after Barcelona’s 4-0 surrender to Liverpool in the Champions League semi-finals denied them a place in the final by wiping out a 3-0 advantage from the first leg.

“The biggest embarrassment of all time,” said the front cover of Barcelona-based newspaper Sport on top of a black canvas after the 4-3 aggregate defeat, adding “Barca write the darkest page in their history”.

“A historic failure”, said Marca, listing all the factors in Barca’s favour before the game which deepened the scale of their defeat and denied Lionel Messi the chance to lift the trophy he had clearly targeted at the start of the season.

“They were 3-0 up, Liverpool’s stars were injured, the league was won, the final is in Madrid, Real Madrid were already out and they had the best player in the world.”

Parallels were drawn with Barca’s eerily similar capitulation in last season’s competition to AS Roma in the quarter-finals, when they crashed out on away goals following a 3-0 defeat in Italy after leading the tie 4-1.

Catalan newspaper Mundo Deportivo also talked of an embarrassment and

slammed Ernesto Valverde’s side for switching off for the fourth goal, scored by Divock Origi but set up by the quick thinking of Trent Alexander-Arnold.

“A ridiculous goal conceded from a corner will be the epitaph of this team, which repeated the mistakes of Rome,” said the newspaper’s cover.

Barca’s Luis Suarez and Sergio Busquets apologised to fans after the game, as did Valverde, and there is a feeling that the coach is unlikely to survive this latest European failure despite overseeing the team’s domestic dominance.

“The Champions League is too big for Valverde,” said an editorial in Sport.

“Without doubt Valverde holds a lot of responsibility for this disaster, because when the moment of truth arrived he made the same mistakes as last year.”

The players did not escape blame either. Marca’s ratings, which judge individual performances by awarding players between one and three stars, gave seven of Barca’s starting 11 no stars at all.

Sport’s player ratings meanwhile gave no player more than three marks out of 10, while midfielders Ivan Rakitic and Philippe Coutinho were each given a rating of zero.

(Source: Daily Mail)

Sarri buys time with unexpected top-four finish



After a turbulent first season at Chelsea, Maurizio Sarri goes into Thursday’s Europa League semi-final against Eintracht Frankfurt savouring some much-needed breathing space.

Sarri has spent most of the campaign engaged in a struggle to win over his sceptical players and fans. At one stage, it appeared the Chelsea manager was fighting a losing battle as a miserable run of results sparked reports he was on the verge of the sack.

Amid reports that Chelsea’s stars were sick of Sarri’s inflexible game-plan, monotonous training sessions and habit of criticising them through the media, the nadir came in February when Blues goal-keeper Kepa Arrizabalaga refused to be substituted during the League Cup final defeat against Manchester City.

Sarri has side-stepped one crisis after another just deftly enough that he has emerged from a bleak winter with his prospects of avoiding the axe looking brighter after Chelsea secured a top four finish in the Premier League last weekend.

With a place in next season’s Champions League sealed with a game to spare, Chelsea can turn their attention to winning the first trophy of Sarri’s reign.

A 1-1 draw in the semi-final first leg away

to Eintracht has put Chelsea in a good position for the return leg at Stamford Bridge.

Winning the final, against Arsenal or Valencia in Baku, would strengthen the Italian’s hopes of convincing the Chelsea hierarchy he deserves more time to impose his philosophy on a squad that has so far been unable, or unwilling, to adapt to ‘Sarri-ball’. There remain doubts in some quarters about Sarri’s ability to make his tactics work in the Premier League after the former Napoli manager’s troubled year.

Chelsea supporters are still underwhelmed by Sarri, despite their team’s qualification for the Champions League, which is worth at least an estimated £35 million. At half time of Sunday’s game against Watford they responded to a turgid display with jeers -- the discordant soundtrack to Sarri’s woes.

Chelsea roused themselves to secure a 3-0 win that proved enough to seal their top four berth after surprise draws for Arsenal and Manchester United.

Despite winning only once in four league games, Chelsea stumbled over the finish line in fittingly chaotic fashion. Even Sarri conceded they were “lucky” to beat Watford after such a disjointed opening.

(Source: AFP)

Kanter texts Olajuwon for Ramadan advice



Enes Kanter, a devout Muslim, is fasting from sunrise to sunset each day for the next month in observance of Ramadan. He even sought out an NBA legend for some advice on how to do it while maintaining a high level of play in the playoffs for the Portland Trail Blazers.

“I texted Hakeem [Olajuwon], because I met him like two years ago and I know what he did in, I think it was 1995, when he won the MVP in the playoffs. But I texted him and was like, ‘Hey, how did you fast through Ramadan and play at a really high level?’” Kanter said. “And he gave me some tips. He gave me what he was eating, when he would wake up -- like at 4 in the morning -- how much water he was drinking and stuff.”

Fasting for Ramadan means, throughout the day, no food, no water and, perhaps most importantly for Kanter and his injured left shoulder, no medication.

“I took medicine at like 4 in the morning and I will take medicine again right before the game, because I can break my fast before the game,” Kanter said. “But I’ll be fine.”

“I might just have someone get some peanut butter and jelly sandwiches on the bench for me to eat during timeouts,” Kanter said.

Kanter fasts each year during the regular season “once or twice a week” to get his body ready for Ramadan, and he was unconcerned about it affecting his play. He said he talked to Terry Stotts about it Monday, adding that the Blazers coach was “very respectful and respected everything.”

Olajuwon was his typical stellar self during Ramadan, even

producing better numbers in some seasons while fasting.

“As for fasting, it is a spiritual mindset that gives you the stamina required to play,” Olajuwon told The Undeclared’s Marc J. Spears in 2017. “Through Allah’s mercy, I always felt stronger and more energetic during Ramadan.”

Kanter sees it the same way. “It’s just mind over matter, man,” he said. “I think it just gives you so much positive vibes that just go out there to say, ‘You know what, I’m doing this for God, so God [will] help me.’” Kanter said when he reached out to Olajuwon that the Hall of Famer was “very happy and very proud” and that they talked a little about basketball. But mostly, the focus was on Ramadan, the discipline it requires and how observing it during the most high-profile part of the season can serve as inspiration for others.

“It doesn’t matter what your status is, what your position is, I just want to set an example for the young generation,” Kanter said. “Because it’s very important for them to follow their religion.”

“It’s awesome to get help from a legend,” he added, “so I would love to be the new Hakeem for younger generations.”

(Source: ESPN)

Zob Ahan qualify for AFC Champions League Round of 16

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Zob Ahan football team of Iran earned a place at the 2019 AFC Champions League Round of 16 with a 2-2 draw against Al Zawraa of Iraq at Karbala International Stadium on Tuesday.

Zob Ahan needed one point to advance to the next round with a game to spare, while Al Zawraa's hopes hinged on them bagging the three points at home.

Mohammad Zobeir Niknafs headed the visitors into the lead in the 28th minute. An in-swinging corner from Marion was nodded on by Mohammad Reza Hosseini for Niknafs who powered home his header at the far post to open the scoring.

Alaa Abbas levelled the score in the 44th minute.

Mohamad Abdul Raheem was on target for the Iraqi team in the 61st minute.

The home fans were left heart-broken as Zob Ahan clawed back the difference in added time. Reza Habibzadeh, who came off the bench in the 74th minute, equalized the match in the dying moments of the match.

Zob Ahan were reduced to 10 men after Milad Fakhreddini was sent off deep in added time, but Alireza Mansourian's men held on to earn the all-important point, sending them into the next round.

Zob Ahan's place in the last 16 is confirmed with a game to spare, as the Iranian side take their tally to 11 points. While Al Zawraa stay third with five points ahead of the final Matchday fixture against UAE's Al Wasl.



Zob Ahan complain to AFC over assault on players



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iranian football club Zob Ahan have lodged a complaint to the Asian Football Confederation after their players were attacked by the Al Zawraa's fans.

Zob Ahan scored a late goal against the Iraqi football team at the Karbala International Stadium and booked a place at the 2019 AFC Champions League Round of 16.

The hosts had looked set for all three points after Alaa Abbas and Mohannad

Abdul Raheem cancelled out Mohammad Zobeir Niknafs' opener but Reza Habibzadeh was on target in stoppage time to keep Zob Ahan top of Group A on 11 points.

After goal, some of Al Zawraa's fans came onto the field and attacked Zob Ahan players. Zob Ahan captain Ghasem Haddadifar was attacked by a fan and suffered a head injury.

Zob Ahan have complained to AFC over the incident.

Peterborough defender Tafazolli on Persepolis's radar



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Peterborough United defender Ryan Tafazolli is reportedly a target for the Iranian football giants Persepolis.

The center-back Tafazolli has left the Championship side following the expiry of his contract.

Persepolis have set their sight on signing Tafazolli since Shoja Khalilzadeh will reportedly leave the club in the summer to join a Qatari club. Mohammad Naderi will likely return to his Belgian club Kortrijk.

Tafazolli, 27, originally joined the Southampton Academy in 2005. He went on to captain the successful Under-18 youth team and also the reserve team.

Tafazolli, who was born in England, has an Iranian citizenship and is eligible to play for Iran.

Persepolis prepare for the winning Iran Professional League for the third time in a row.

The club's officials are going to extend Branko Ivankovic's current deal for three more years in the Iranian team.

Salman delighted with 'hard-fought' qualification

Al Sadd defender Tarek Salman commended his side for earning a hard-fought 2-1 victory over Al Ahli which sent the Qatari side to the 2019 AFC Champions League Round of 16 on Monday.

Ali Asad and Akram Afif scored inside the opening 15 minutes and Omar Al Somah pulled one back for Al Ahli in the second half in Doha as the hosts sealed the three points to book their place in the knock-out stage with a game to spare.

With qualification confirmed, the 2011 AFC Champions League winners can now take a breather following a busy season in which they lifted the Qatar Stars League title for the first time in six years and reached the Emir Cup semi-final just four days ahead of their win over Al Ahli.

"We had a busy calendar this season," said Salman. "We were a bit tired, especially as this is the first day of Ramadan and many of the players were fasting."

"Fatigue impacted us, especially in the second half, but



the players fought hard and we got the all-important three points, so we are extremely delighted with that."

Top scorer with 13 goals in the 2018 AFC Champions League, Al Sadd striker Baghdad Bounedjah endured a frustrating evening at Jassim bin Hamad Stadium, missing several chances to a combination of profligacy and some impressive goalkeeping by Al Ahli's Mohammed Al Owais.

"The first half was straightforward. We had more than five chances, but we missed more than we should. Fortunately, we scored two of those chances and that was crucial."

"In the second half, we made some defensive mistakes and conceded a penalty. But we were in control of the rhythm of the match and succeeded in holding until the end to win."

Al Sadd travel to Tehran in two weeks' time to face already-eliminated Persepolis in a repeat of last year's semi-final. Jesualdo Ferreira's men will look to get a result to end the group stage as group winners.

(Source: the-afc)

Al Wakrah Stadium's next generation cooling technology

Saud Abdul-Ghani, Professor at the College of Engineering at Qatar University, has been involved in developing cooling technology for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 since the country announced its bid for the tournament in 2009.

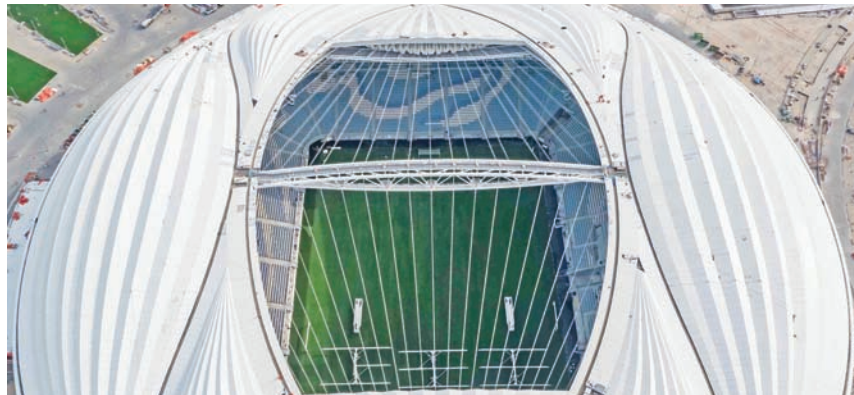
Saud led the installment of cooling technology at the redeveloped Khalifa International Stadium, which was inaugurated in 2017. Here, he explains how the technology will work at Al Wakrah Stadium, which will be inaugurated when it hosts the Amir Cup final on 16 May.

As well as explaining how the technology has developed over the past two years, Dr Saud discusses the potential health benefits for the local population.

■ How will the cooling technology work in Al Wakrah Stadium?

We use the platform of the stadium to defend it against the infiltration of warm wind. This means the stadium is a barrier that is basically containing a cold bubble inside. The technology works by maintaining the cold bubble for as long as necessary in order for people to watch the game, and so the players are comfortable.

■ How does the cooling technology at Al Wakrah Stadium differ from Khalifa International Stadium?



Every stadium has its own unique personality, form and structure. Khalifa International Stadium is a mature stadium with an athletics track. Inherently, the stadium has a big oculus and this challenge demanded unconventional treatment.

As Khalifa is a well-established, existing stadium we couldn't implement all the technology we wanted as we were bound by existing concrete structures and a lack of free space. We couldn't, for example, provide under-seat cooling but we used small nozzles which deliver the exact amount

of cold air required for people to enjoy the game comfortably.

At Al Wakrah Stadium, we are using an air circulation technique, which means we draw back some of the air that has been cooled already, re-cool it and then push it back to the supporters and players.

At Khalifa we were taking fresh air and pushing it to people. This is the reason the technology at Al Wakrah is much more efficient than at Khalifa. Moreover, a new line of under-seat diffusers has been developed in order to deliver the air to fans in a gentle manner.

■ How proud will you feel on 16 May when people experience the cooling technology at Al Wakrah Stadium for the first time?

We had a trial recently and – I shouldn't say this – but I was so happy that I cried. We've worked so hard to deliver this project and I remember when the stadium was simply a small model made out of plastic. At Qatar University, we've spent hours and hours in the wind tunnel, hours and hours in the lab trying to optimize the opening of the roof and the height of the stadium. But now we're delivering the cooling and it's good to see it's not only on paper anymore – it's the realization of a team effort.

■ What about the other Qatar 2022 stadiums?

For the other stadiums we have had the privilege of being involved in the design since day one. During every project we learn and develop the technology. I hope the country is enjoying our work and sees the benefits of it. This is a huge team effort – it's not just engineering, we have so many people involved in the delivery, it's a collective effort. Our cooling technology research group at Qatar University is supported by the SC and Aspire Zone Foundation, and we have strong collaboration. (Source: sc.qa)

Iran keen on performing better than last year: FIVB

Pool 1 of the men's 2019 FIVB Volleyball Nations League features the first match of the competition when Iran take on Italy at the Jiangmen Sports Center Gym in China on May 31. And what a way to get going in a pool where anything can happen, epitomizing the excitement that comes with a race between 16 of the best national teams in the world.



Iran, Italy, Germany and hosts China will try to score their first points in the run towards the spots at the final six tournament in Chicago, playing against each other in one of the four pools of the first competition weekend from May 31 through June 2, fivb.com reported.

Iran are certainly keen on performing at a higher level than last year and producing better results than their 10th place in the 2018 VNL and 13th place at the World Championship. Experienced players like Mir Saeid Marouflakrani, Amir Ghafour, Seyed Mohammad Mousavi Eraghi or Farhad Ghaemi, have been training hard alongside a fresh flow of young athletes at the national team preparation camp, with more star volleyballers expected to join as their club season duties come to an end. Montenegrin coach Igor Kolakovic has expressed his satisfaction that "the team is already in a better physical condition than last year; the VNL is a very attractive and difficult competition and Iran will give their best."

(Source: fivb.com)

Marc Wilmots nominated for Iran job: report

TASNIM — Ex-Belgium coach Marc Wilmots is reportedly a candidate to coach Iran national football team.

The Belgian, who led his homeland to the World Cup in 2014 and Euro 2016, is on the Team Melli's list of candidates.

Wilmots, whose last job was being in charge of Ivory Coast in 2017, has joined Dick Advocaat, Herve Renard and Bert van Marwijk on the list.

Iran have been without a coach since Carlos Queiroz left to take over as Colombia coach after Team Melli's AFC Asian Cup 2019 campaign in the United Arab Emirates in January.

Under guidance of the Portuguese coach, Iran lost to Japan 3-0 in Asian Cup semi-finals.

Team Melli are preparing for the 2022 World Cup qualifiers that will begin in the second half of this year.

Amir Ghalenoei shortlisted for Iran U23 football coach

IRNA — Sepahan coach Amir Ghalenoei has been shortlisted to take charge of Iran U-23 football team.

Ghalenoei, who was Iran senior coach from 2006 to 2008, is a candidate to succeed Zlatko Kranjcar in the Olympic team.

The 55-year-old coach has one year left on his current contract with Sepahan.

Padideh coach Yahya Golmohammadi also is a nominee to take charge of the team.

Under coaching of Kranjcar, Iran booked a place at the AFC U-23 Championship Thailand 2020 Final.

The competition will be held in Thailand from Jan. 8 to 26.

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.

Iran have not qualified for the Olympics since the 1976 games in Munich.

Russian athlete Savina gets 12-year ban

MOSCOW (Reuters) — Russian middle distance runner Kseniya Savina has been suspended for 12 years after she was found to have taken a banned substance and then provided false medical documents to avoid sanctions, the Athletics Integrity Unit said on Wednesday.

The 29-year-old Savina, whose ban essentially ends her career, tested positive in an out-of-competition test for the banned blood-boosting hormone EPO last year and was provisionally suspended.

She claimed at the time it was her coach and husband Alexei Savin who had needed the medication to treat what she said was chronic renal failure, and that it must have been mixed up with her own back pain medication, the AIU said.

After Savina provided medical documents to support the claim that her husband had chronic renal failure, further investigation by the Russian anti-doping agency (RUSADA) for the AIU showed the documents had been forged.

"The Athlete failed to respond as required by the specified deadline of 17 April 2019 and she is therefore deemed... to have admitted the first and second anti-doping rule violations and to have acceded to the consequences specified in the notice of charge," the AIU said in a statement.

Savina's suspension period is 12 years and all her results since May 2018 are void, the AIU said.

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He who warns you against evil is like one who brings you good tidings and gives you something to look forward to.

Imam Ali (AS)

Plays by Iranian writers published in Armenian

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Ten plays by Iranian writers have been published in Armenian in a book titled “Contemporary Iranian Plays”, the Iranian Theater Forum announced on Tuesday.

Among the plays are Ali Abedi’s “Horsefly” translated by Georg Asaturian and Milad Akbarnejad’s “Shakespeare in Love 2001” rendered by Emma Begijanian.



Front cover of the “Contemporary Iranian Plays”.

The collection also includes Sahra Ramezani’s “Vazarik Has Died” and Mohammad Yaqubi’s “Winter 66”, both translated by Nune Hovhannisyan.

Hovhannisyan is also the translator of Mohammad Rahmanian’s “Bombardment Hour” and “A Play for You”, both of which have originally been published in a single book.

The book also carries “Dream Room” by Afroz Foruzandeh, “A Call from Across the Line” by Behzad Sediqi, “The Club-Wielders of Varazil” by Gholamhossein Saedi and “The Wall” by Sharam Karami, all translated by Edward Haghighverdian.

“Contemporary Iranian Plays” has been published by the forum in collaboration with the Writers Union of Armenia.

Iranian shorts to go on screen at Odense film festival

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian shorts “Child Eater” by Mohammad Kart and “MagRalen” by Maryam Zarei will compete in the Odense International Film Festival (OFF) in the Danish city.



A scene from “Child Eater” by Mohammad Kart.

“Child Eater”, also known as “Pedovore”, is about a teenage boy laborer who falls in love with a teenage girl.

A co-production between Iran and Canada, “MagRalen” tells the story of a blind little girl who lives in a car graveyard with her family, but her older brother tries to picture a beautiful world for her.

OFF, which is an Oscar-qualifying short film festival, will be held from August 26 to September 1.

Tehran theater to host “Jacques and His Master”

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — A reading of Czech-born French writer Milan Kundera’s 1971 play “Jacques and His Master” will be performed at Tehran’s Shahrzad Theater on Friday.

Maryam Taheri will direct the reading performance with a cast composed of Mahyar Purbabai, Erfan Majuni, Jalil Hosseini, Alireza Minai and Sara Sibi.

The play follows two men, Jacques and his master, as they go on a journey and tell stories to each other to pass the time.



Bauhaus University to celebrate centenary with workshops in Isfahan

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — A team of artists and graphic designers from Bauhaus University Weimar, will be in Isfahan next week to celebrate the centenary of the famous German art school by organizing several workshops in the central Iranian city.

René Schwolow, Adrian Palko, Susann Paduch, Aryan Khosravani, Kristian Gohlke, Anne Marx, and Christina Much will be holding the workshops named “Manifest of Practice” at Isfahan’s Safavi House from May 13 to 18.

The workshops will center on graphic design, industrial design and architecture.

The participants will receive a certificate from Bauhaus University at the end of the workshops.

The university is currently marking its centennial by organizing similar programs in a number of German cities and several countries across the world.

German architect Walter Gropius (1883-1969) founded Bauhaus University one hundred years ago. This prestigious school of art and design still plays host to design, teaching, research and study.



A view of Bauhaus University Weimar, Germany.

Hot Docs audience impressed by Iran’s “Beloved”



A scene from “Beloved” by Yaser Talebi.

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian filmmaker Yasser Talebi’s documentary “Beloved” has taken first place among the top five mid-length films selected by audience votes at the Hot Docs festival in Canada, Toronto, the organizers have announced.

“Beloved” is about an 82-year-old woman who prefers a hard, solitary herder’s existence with her cows to a more comfortable life among people.

The film was followed by “Who Let the Dogs Out” by Brent Hodge from Canada, “I Told My Mum I Was Going on an R.E. Trip...” by Lindy Heymann from the UK, “El Toro” by Danielle Sturk from Canada, and “Your Last Walk in the Mosque” codirected

by Ubaydah Abu-Usayd and Abderrahmane Hedjoudje from Canada.

“Hope Frozen” directed and produced Pailin Wedel from Thailand was selected as best feature documentary in the international competition of the festival, which is North America’s largest documentary festival.

“For Sama” directed by Waad al-Kateab and Edward Watts from the UK, USA and Syria won the special jury prize in the international competition.

“Maxima” by director Claudia Sparrow from the United States was the winner of the Hot Docs Audience Award.

“Prey” by director Matt Gallagher from Canada also received the Rogers Audience Award for Best Canadian Documentary.

Disney delays “Avatar 2” sets dates for new “Star Wars” films



A poster for “Star Wars”

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Walt Disney Co on Tuesday pushed back the release of James Cameron’s sequel to box-office champion “Avatar” by a year, to December 2021, and announced debut dates for new “Star Wars” films starting in December 2022.

Disney acquired the “Avatar” franchise and several other movies through its recent purchase of film and TV assets from Rupert Murdoch’s 21st Century Fox, strengthening its dominant position at movie theaters.

“Avatar 2”, the follow-up to the 2009 blockbuster that is the highest-grossing film of all time, had originally been slated to reach theaters in 2014 but was delayed to 2017 and then to December 2020.

With the sequel now scheduled for December 2020, Disney moved “Avatar 3” to December 2023, “Avatar 4” to December 2025 and “Avatar 5” to December 2027.

A year ago, director Cameron told reporters he had begun filming on the second and third “Avatar” movies and had written the fourth and fifth films in the series.

The story of a blue, humanoid race on a lush moon known as Pandora, “Avatar” is the highest-grossing movie in history with \$2.8 billion in global ticket sales, though box office experts say its long-standing record could soon fall to current Disney hit “Avengers: Endgame” from Marvel Studios.

In between “Avatar” movies, Disney said it would release new “Star Wars” films in December 2022, 2024 and 2026.

The company did not release details, but it has previously announced plans for two “Star Wars” film series - one overseen by “The Last Jedi” director Rian Johnson and another to be written by David Benioff and D.B. Weiss, the creators of HBO’s hit television show “Game of Thrones.”

The “Avatar 2” delay moves one of Disney’s biggest movies off its 2020 slate. Films on next year’s schedule include a retelling of “Mulan”, two untitled Marvel films, and Steven Spielberg’s remake of Broadway musical “West Side Story.”

Eight Marvel movies are scheduled to be released between 2020 and 2022, the company said.

“Medea”, “Rabbit Hole” coming to City Theater



A poster for “Medea”.

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Tehran’s City Theater Complex will refresh its schedule with the plays “Rabbit Hole” and “Medea” this weekend.

Mehdi Sabbaghi will stage American playwright David Lindsay-Abaire’s Pulitzer Prize-winning play “Rabbit Hole” at Sayeh Hall tonight.

The play is about Becca and Howie Corbett, who have lost their four-year-old son Danny in a car accident. Becca tries to cope with her grief by giving away Danny’s clothes and things, while Howie accuses her of erasing their son from their life.

Masumeh Rahmani, Shirin Esmaeili,

Mahdieh Kuhestan and Mani Rahmani are the main members of the cast for the play, which will remain on stage until June 9.

Ali-Asghar Rasekh-Rad will direct “Medea” based on a loose adaptation of the ancient Greek tragedy written by Euripides at Qashqai Hall on Friday.

Mandana Abqari, Alireza Dehqani and Minu Nobahari are the main members of the cast for the play, which is about a couple, who are rehearsing the play “Medea” to perform it on stage. During the rehearsals the husband, who is also the director of the play, falls in love with one of the actresses.

The play will be on stage until June 21.

Barack Obama’s book not expected to be released in 2019



This Feb. 19, 2019, file photo shows former President Barack Obama speaking at the My Brother’s Keeper Alliance Summit in Oakland, California. (AP/Jeff Chiu)

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former President Barack Obama’s post-White House memoir isn’t expected to be released this year, setting up the likelihood that the highly anticipated book will drop during the 2020 campaign.

Publisher Penguin Random House started alerting foreign partners and others about the status of Obama’s book on Tuesday. The former president has been writing the book himself, handwriting a first draft on legal pads, the same technique he used for numerous White House speeches and his first best-seller, “Dreams from My Father.”

The former president and his wife, Michelle Obama, signed lucrative book deals in 2017. Mrs. Obama’s book was released last year and quickly became one of the most popular political memoirs in history, with more than 10 million copies sold worldwide.

The timing of the former president’s book release is trickier. A 2020 book launch could thrust Obama back into the spotlight just as Democratic voters are choosing a presidential nominee,

prompting fresh discussion of his legacy and putting him on the spot about the candidates hoping to build on it.

That would be a particularly delicate dance given that Obama has made clear he has no plans to play a role in the Democratic presidential primary, including declining to endorse his vice president, Joe Biden, or any other candidate. But as the most popular Democrat in the country, even more than three years after leaving office, Obama’s every word about the campaign will be scrutinized for signs of which candidates he favors.

The publisher did not give its partners any updates on a launch date, according to a person with knowledge of the matter. The person was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The Obamas signed with Penguin Random House in 2017. While the financial terms of the agreement were not released, the former president’s book was expected to garner the largest advance for any ex-president. The previous record is believed to be \$15 million for Bill Clinton’s “My Life.”