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‘No new limitation in Iran-Iraq trade ties’

TEHRAN — There is no new limitation in trade relations between Iran and Iraq and the two neighbors are strongly determined to strengthen and develop their trade cooperation, Iranian Commercial Attaché to Iraq Naser Behzad stressed.

In this due, the two countries are following up plans for increasing their

bilateral economic relation, the official website of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) quoted Behzad as saying.

The Iranian commercial attaché further said that Iran's monthly exports to Iraq is expected to be doubled in the current Iranian calendar month (ends on May 16) from its previous month. **→4**

Israel rushed to seek truce as Gaza upped rocket range: Haniyeh

TEHRAN — A senior leader of the Palestinian resistance movement, Hamas, says Israel scrambled to seek a ceasefire in its recent military aggression against Gaza. “After the range of the rockets fired from Gaza towards the Israeli-occupied territories, the regime sent representatives for talks with senior members of the Palestinian resistance front,” Ismail

Haniyeh, the head of Hamas’ political bureau, said.

Meanwhile, Palestinians are commemorating the 71st anniversary of the Nakba Day (the Day of Catastrophe) in the occupied West Bank and the blockaded Gaza Strip with mass protests against Israel and the U.S., the regime’s staunch supporter. **→13**

Yemeni drones target 10 vital Saudi facilities: Al Mayadeen

Yemeni forces have conducted a major drone operation deep inside Saudi Arabia. Several drones targeted pumping stations in the Kingdom. The attacks forced Saudi authorities stop pumping crude oil on a major pipeline across the country. The attacks were in response to Saudi Arabia’s continued aggression against Yemen,

Al Mayadeen News reported.

Meanwhile, Yemeni army forces, supported by allied fighters from Popular Committees, have intercepted and targeted an unmanned aerial vehicle belonging to the Saudi-led military coalition, as it was flying in the skies over a region in the country’s western-central province of Sana’a. **→13**



PERSPECTIVE

Hanif Ghaffari
Head of the Politics Desk of the TehranTimes

Saudi crown prince’s nightmare is coming true

Armed drones attacked two oil pumping stations in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday, two days after Saudi oil tankers were sabotaged off the coast of the United Arab Emirates.

The drone strikes caused damage to one of the stations supplying a pipeline running from its oil-rich Eastern Province to the Yanbu Port on the Red Sea, Saudi Energy Minister Khalid al-Falih confessed in a statement carried by the state-run Saudi Press Agency.

The reality is that the Saudi terrorist regime faces a difficult situation. US President Donald Trump seems to have been unable to rescue Al Saud from the failure of the Yemeni war. On the other hand, the prolongation of the Yemeni war has made Western countries look suspicious about the future and the end of this battle. During the presidency of Barack Obama and the presence of Democrats in the White House, the Yemeni war began.

At that time, the Saudi authorities, and at the head of them, the brutal prince of Saudi Arabia, Muhammad bin Salman, thought they would be able to capture Sana’a and Aden and suppress the revolution of the Yemeni people for a very short time (two weeks)! Even the Saudi authorities guaranteed the Obama administration in this regard.

It’s been more than 4 years since the start of the Yemeni war! The main fear and nightmare of the Saudi crown prince, Mohamed bin Salman, is that Riyadh will have to retreat from this battle without reaching its preset goals in Yemen. This nightmare is being interpreted! Undoubtedly, in the near future, Saudi officials will have to accept a major defeat in Yemen. In this huge and irreparable failure, American officials and European countries like Germany, Britain and France share. The role of these countries in killing innocent Yemeni children is no longer a denial.

U.S. does not seek war with Iran, says Mike Pompeo

TEHRAN — U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has said the United States does not seek a war with Iran, amid rapidly growing tensions between the two countries.

Meanwhile, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has also said there will be no war with the U.S.

Speaking during a trip to Russia, where he met President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, Pompeo said the U.S. “fundamentally” did not seek a conflict with Iran, Al-Jazeera reported.

In remarks carried on state media and on his Twitter account, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei repeated Tehran’s position that it would not negotiate with the U.S. on a nuclear deal to replace the one President Donald Trump withdrew from last year.



Mike Pompeo met Sergey Lavrov in Sochi to discuss a range of issues including Iran, Venezuela and Ukraine [Pavel Golovkin, Pool/AP]

On Monday, President Hassan Rouhani told a meeting with clerics that Iran was “too great to be intimidated by anyone”, saying: “God willing we will pass this difficult period with glory and our heads held high, and defeat the enemy.”

“No possible confrontation or warlike action is envisaged (by Spain) and it is for this reason that the participation is suspended for the moment,” the spokesman added.

On Tuesday, President Trump dismissed a New York Times report suggesting the military had plans to send up to 120,000 troops to the Middle East should Iran attack U.S. forces there.

“We have not planned for that. Hopefully we’re not going to have to plan for that. And if we did that, we’d send a hell of a lot more troops than that,” Trump said.

Trump considering replacing John Bolton: Report

TEHRAN — U.S. media reports suggest that President Donald Trump is considering replacing his hawkish National Security Adviser John Bolton over his plans to push the United States towards a military conflict with Iran, Venezuela and North Korea.

Bolton “is headed for the exits, having flown too close to the sun on his regime change efforts for Iran, Venezuela and North Korea,” The National Interest magazine reported Tuesday, citing sources familiar with the matter.

“Hearing that Trump wants him out,” a former senior Trump administration official told the magazine.

According to Press TV, there is speculation in Washington “that there’s now daylight between

Trump and Bolton,” the report added.

The fighting has also expanded to include U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, officials say. A State Department official and a former White House official both report that Bolton and Pompeo are “fighting all the time.”

A former senior official in the State Department said Pompeo is enthusiastic about isolating Iran, but fearful of an actual war that might engulf much of the Middle East.

“John Bolton is the problem... Trump’s national security adviser is getting dangerous... particularly to the president’s ideals,” Douglas Macgregor, a Bolton rival and would-be successor, writes in Spectator USA.

Trump ran his election campaign on the

promise to pull the U.S. military out of Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria -- unwinable post-9/11 wars that have consumed American lives and military budgets.

That partial retreat remains one of Trump’s strongest points in his pitch to be the so-called outsider president.

But Bolton is working in exactly the opposite direction.

The United States has been ratcheting up economic and military pressure on Iran, with Trump recently urging Tehran to talk to him.

“What I’d like to see with Iran, I’d like to see them call me,” Trump told reporters at the White House on Thursday. **→13**

Artists, experts receive Ferdowsi Medals

TEHRAN — Russian graphic designer Sergey Feofanov, Iranian experts Seyyed Fat’hollah Mojtabai and Sajjad Aidanlu, and a performer of naqqali, Mostafa Saeidi, were honored with Ferdowsi Medals during a ceremony in Mashhad on Tuesday.

The University of Ferdowsi was the main organizer of the ceremony attended by Cinema Organization of Iran director Hossein Entezami and a number of art and cultural figures.

Feofanov is a senior stage and graphic designer. He has also created paintings and sculptures inspired by the Shahnameh, the epic masterpiece of the Persian poet Ferdowsi. **→16**



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REPORT

Ramin Hossein Abadian
Mehr News Agency
journalist

Yemen drone capabilities turn the tide in the war

Yemeni sources reported of extensive military operations against Saudi Arabia on Tuesday.

An unnamed Yemeni military source announced that seven drones attacked some Saudi fundamental installations. According to the Yemeni official, “this large military operation is in response to the continued aggression and blockade of our people [by Saudi Arabia].”

Yemeni military spokesman Yahya Saree said seven drones carried out the strikes on the Saudi oil installations in towns of Dawadmi and Afif. The affected east-west pipeline carried oil from the eastern oil-rich Ras Tanura oil terminal to Red Sea port city of Yanbu in the west.

In a statement carried on state-run Saudi Press Agency, Energy Minister Khalid al-Falih confirmed the attack. he said at 6-6:30 a.m. local time [on May 14, 2019], drones attacked a petroleum pumping station supplying a pipeline running from its oil-rich Eastern Province to the Yanbu Port on the Red Sea. A fire broke out and firefighters later brought it under control.

Such an extensive operation against Saudi fundamental facilities in the city of Yanbu reveals the drone capabilities of Yemeni nation and army, in addition to their powerful missile work. Tuesday drone operation showed Yemen’s drone capabilities to Saudis.

Of course, Yemen drone work is not a new development. Two years ago, Yemeni officials displayed their homemade drones in an exhibition where the variety of drones were introduced to the visitors. In fact, Yemen started producing drones just 700 days after Saudi Arabia’s coalition started its brutal attack against the country’s defenseless citizens.

Ansar Allah drone capability was beyond expectations. In a recent report, Wall Street Journal said that according to the people familiar with the matter, “they have launched armed drone attacks with far more precision and reach than the U.S. and its allies have publicly acknowledged.” **→13**

Zarif says Iran most sustainable, secure partner in region

TEHRAN (FNA) — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said that his country is most reliable and secure country in the region, voicing Tehran's readiness for broadening regional cooperation.



"Just had excellent talks in Turkmenistan and India. Those who actually live in our fragile neighborhood have a real national security interest in promoting peace, stability, cooperation and connectivity," Zarif wrote in a Tuesday tweet on a two-nation tour to India and Turkmenistan, adding, "Iran remains a most accessible, efficient, sustainable and secure partner."

The top diplomat stressed that people of Iran's fragile neighborhood are interested in promoting peace, stability, cooperation and connectivity.

Earlier, upon his arrival in New Delhi, Zarif voiced his satisfaction in the level of bilateral relations between Tehran and New Delhi, and said that the two countries have always consulted on important issues.

"India is Iran's close partner and both sides have developed their relations in various fields," he added.

He noted that Tehran and New Delhi have extended their relations in various fields, and said, "The two countries have designed special financial system to augment trade and economic cooperation."

The Iranian foreign minister reiterated the fact that India is one of the biggest customers of Iran's crude oil.

Before arriving in New Delhi, Zarif, heading a high-ranking economic delegation, visited Turkmenistan to hold talks with senior Turkmen officials.

During his stay in Turkmenistan, the Iranian foreign minister met with Turkmen president and foreign minister.

Zarif and Turkmen officials discussed various bilateral, regional and international developments.

Iran has stopped implementing parts of JCPOA: source

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — An informed source at the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) tells the Tehran Times that Iran has stopped implementing some parts of its commitments under the 2015 nuclear deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

It came a week after the SNSC announced "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."

Iran also gave Europe 60 days to ensure Iran's interests were protected under the agreement. Otherwise, Tehran is ready to take further steps towards leaving the nuclear deal, President Rouhani said.

The source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, further said that Iran has stopped complying with the limitations on its stockpiles of enriched uranium and production of heavy water in the Arak nuclear site which were emphasized in the 60-day ultimatum last week.

In order to raise public awareness about the measures, there will be programs in the coming days for some journalists to visit Natanz and Arak nuclear sites, which will be announced soon, the source added.

'U.S. not looking for war with Iran'

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Brian Hook, the U.S. special representative for Iran, has said that the U.S. is not looking for war with Iran

"We have repositioned our military assets accordingly just to be ready and to be in defensive position. President [U.S. President Donald Trump] has said it clear so has the secretary of state Mike Pompeo] that we are not looking to get into war with Iran," he told BBC on Tuesday.



According to Al Jazeera, the U.S. has approved the deployment of a Patriot missile defense battery and another warship to the Middle East amid increasing tensions with Iran.

The USS Arlington, which transports marines, amphibious vehicles, and rotary aircraft, as well as the Patriot missiles, will join the USS Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group, which already passed through Egypt's Suez Canal on Thursday, and is currently sailing in the Red Sea, according to CNN.

The U.S. says the deployments of military hardware to the region comes in response to what it claimed "heightened Iranian readiness to conduct offensive operations".

The Patriot missile system is currently deployed in Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

"The Acting Secretary of Defense has approved the movement of USS Arlington (LPD-24) and a Patriot battery to U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) as part of the command's original request for forces from earlier this week," a Pentagon statement said.

Neither a war will happen; nor will we negotiate: Leader

TEHRAN (khamenei.ir) — On the eighth day of the auspicious month of Ramadan, the heads of power branches, officials and government authorities as well as a group of senior managers of various sectors, members of parliament, political, social and cultural activists met with the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Tuesday.

In that meeting, the Supreme Leader stressed that negotiating certain national assets is absolutely harmful and held: Some people in the country claim there is no harm in negotiating. Negotiating is poisonous as long as the U.S. continues with the same course of action; besides, negotiating with the current government of the United States is all the more poisonous.

His Eminence further explained: Negotiation is a mutual give and take. But the United States has targeted our strengths.

Ayatollah Khamenei slammed U.S. efforts to take Iran's defensive capabilities away and asserted: They talk about negotiating our defense capabilities, and question the range of our missiles. They say: 'you must reduce this range so that if we ever strike on your bases you won't be able to strike back at our bases!' Or, for instance, they seek to negotiate about our strategic influence in the region, meaning they want us to back away.

The Leader of the Revolution described U.S. authorities as not committed and held: Negotiating is wrong, even with an upright person. Those in the U.S. government are not even upright and they do not abide by anything.

Ayatollah Khamenei reminded his audience that: Of course no one among our officials seeks to negotiate. Obviously no dignified and wise Iranian would negotiate their national strengths.

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution referred to faulty estimations and perceptions of the U.S. President regarding the Islamic



Republic and said: Their president claims there is a protest against the establishment in Tehran every Friday. First off, it is not on Fridays, but on Saturdays. Second, it is not in Tehran, but in Paris.

His Eminence mentioned that the U.S. regime's hostility towards the Iranian nation started right after the Islamic Revolution of the Iranians gain victory, adding that: There is no doubt that the U.S.'s animosity—which started with the Revolution—has taken a more overt form today. This animosity existed previously, but not as explicit as it has now become. Now they explicitly announce it and threaten us. It is important to know the one who makes an uproar threatening others is actually weaker than they claim.

Ayatollah Khamenei referred to U.S.'s unconditional support for the barbaric Zionist regime and asserted: They [the U.S. officials] prefer the interests of the Zionist Regime

over any other governments. Many of their actions come upon orders by the Zionists.

Pointing to the uproar the U.S. regime makes posing as a superpower, Ayatollah Khamenei maintained: The U.S. government is in need of making uproars. They claim their behavior has changed Iran. They are right; the change brought to Iran was that the Iranian people's abhorrence towards the U.S. regime increased tenfold; their chance of infringing upon the interests of the Islamic Republic grew slimmer; the zeal of our youth for maintaining the country prepared has increased; and our police and security forces have become more vigilant.

Ayatollah Khamenei informed his audience across the globe that, "The United States will definitely fail in its policy of countering the Islamic Republic and their plots will end up to our benefit.

His Eminence went on to say: The United States is dealing with many social and

economic problems at home. Their government lacks coherence. Someone makes a claim. The next day another comes out to refute those claims. This is a sign of disarray. The Ministry of Agriculture in the U.S. has reported 41 million Americans in need of food.

Advising his audience, Ayatollah Khamenei further elaborated on the problems the U.S. regime is facing within its borders and said: Regarding social issues, the U.S. national statistics center has reported that over 40 percent of babies are born out of wedlock. There are 2 million and 200 thousand prisoners, and they have the highest rate of drug abuse, while 31 percent of mass shootings in the world happen in the U.S. This is their social situation.

The Supreme Leader then advised everyone not be awe-stricken by U.S.'s outward glory and asserted: So beware not to glorify the enemy. Of course, we cannot underestimate them either; but they are not that strong and they suffer from a lot of problems.

His Eminence went on to assert: No one should fear the apparent grandeur of the U.S.; neither their grandeur nor the wealth of the Qaruns of the Persian Gulf: their real power is much less than their uproar. No one should fear the apparent grandeur of the U.S.; this is a big mistake.

Finally, Ayatollah Khamenei reminded his audience of the many fiascos of the U.S. in their policies against the Islamic Republic and added: Their plots have usually bounced back at them and ended up being harmful to themselves both politics and security wise. Through their media, the economic experts in the U.S. are warning their politicians that this pressure will lead to an economic boom in Iran. The domineering powers seek to reach their goals by making uproars, however, their power is much less than their claims. Billions of dollars have been spent against us, yet they failed to do anything.

Rouhani says Iranians can pass problems through unity

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Tuesday that the Iranians can pass problems through unity and solidarity.

"We can pass problems through unity, coordination and better management," he said during his speech at a meeting of authorities with Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

Rouhani noted, "What the people and authorities did in the floods incident was extraordinary. Today, we need a unity like that to turn a threat into an opportunity."

He said that it is not possible to manage the country without making change to structure of budget and economy which cannot be done by just the government.

"This is not just under the authority of the government. Authorities need to converge and the understanding of the parliament and the government about the country, region and world need to be the same," he said.

He noted that oil income can be replaced by non-oil income.

"The U.S. imagined that they could bring the Iranian great nation to knees with its miscalculations. They set dates for this issue. However, the Iranian people created golden pages in history of the Islamic Revolution of Iran through resistance," he said.

Pointing to the U.S. withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal, Rouhani said that Iran has given remaining parties to the agreement enough time to fulfil their duties.

He said that Iran has taken the legal path and has stopped implementing two of its obligations for 60 days.

On May 8, Iran officially announced



that it stops selling stockpiles of enriched uranium and heavy water for 60 days. However, Iran warned if a conclusion is not reached in this time period, it will take other measures step by step and will accelerate its uranium enrichment activities.

Under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, Iran's stockpile of low enriched uranium is capped at 300kg and heavy water reserve at 130 tons.

"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," President Hassan Rouhani told a cabinet meeting on May 8.

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 President Donald Trump 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.

Iranian MP criticized Europe for lack of actions against U.S. violation

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Deputy Chairman of Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee Kamal Dehghani Firoozabadi has said that Europe has not stood against the U.S. violations.

"The European countries have said they will remain in the JCPOA [the 2015 nuclear deal, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action]. However, more important than that is to ask them what they have done to counter the U.S. illegal actions? Are they afraid? Are they weak and dependent?" he told ISNA in an interview published on Wednesday.

He added, "Trump [U.S. President Donald Trump] believes in unilateralism in the international relations and has created a whirlpool which hurts credibility of the U.S. and some of its allies."

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

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

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

On March 20, Iran's central bank governor Abdolnaser Hemmati announced that a mechanism similar to INSTEX has been registered in Iran, officially called the Special Trade and Finance Institute (STFI).

During a meeting with a group of Austrian MPs in Tehran on April 29, Iranian



Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi criticized European delay in implementing its special mechanism to save the JCPOA.

Speaking at the 9th round of Iran-Norway political consultations on April 30, Araqchi said the international community has not responded properly to the U.S. illegal act in withdrawing from the JCPOA.

"The U.S. proved that it does not understand language of respect and interaction and can just talk with language of bullying," he said.

On May 8, Iran officially announced that it stops selling stockpiles of enriched uranium and heavy water for 60 days. However, Iran warned if a conclusion is not reached in this time period, it will take other measures step by step and will accelerate its uranium enrichment activities.

In an interview with Le Monde published on Monday, Kamal Kharrazi, chief of the Strategic Council on Foreign Relations, said that Iran seeks to preserve nuclear deal.

"We believe that the European countries have not kept their promises, and we give them two months to do it," he said.

In an interview with ISNA published on Tuesday, Hossein Naghavi Hosseini, a member of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, said that the Europeans should abide by their obligations under the JCPOA.

He said that Iran has fulfilled its obligations and Europe should do the same.

'No increased threat from Iran,' says British general in remarks he refuses to restate

TEHRAN (Press TV) — The British general overseeing the so-called U.S.-led coalition forces in Syria and Iraq has asserted that there has been "no increased threat from Iran" amid the U.S. military buildup in the Persian Gulf, a posture at odds with the United States.

British Major General Chris Ghika said at a Pentagon news briefing Tuesday that the coalition has seen "no increased threat from Iranian-backed forces" in the two countries.

The coalition has observed "no change in their posture since the recent exchange between the United States and Iran and we hope and expect that that will continue... We don't see an increased threat from them at this stage," Ghika told reporters.

He refused to admit that his statement defies the White House's, asserting that "we're on exactly the same page."

"I don't think we're out of step with the White House at all," added that British general, further claiming that the coalition keeps a close watch on Iran in the wake of the United States' unilateral pressure.

"We've reviewed them obviously in light of the events of the past week or so," he said of the coalition's security



A military vehicle with the U.S.-backed coalition is seen in the countryside of the eastern Syrian province of Deir al-Zour on February 14, 2019. (AFP photo)

measures. "We find them completely satisfactory and we don't intend to change them."

The British senior general refused to reiterate the same stance, when reporters pressed him about remarks he had made moments earlier at the Pentagon news briefing.

The U.S. immediately announced that the threat level was increased in an attempt to debunk Ghika's allegations, which would question the U.S. motive in escalating tensions with Tehran.

"Recent comments from OIR's Deputy Commander run counter to the identified credible threats available to intelligence from U.S. and allies regarding Iranian-backed forces in the region," said Captain Bill Urban, lead spokesman for the United States Central Command. "U.S. Central Command, in coordination with Operation Inherent Resolve, has increased the force posture level for all service members assigned to OIR in Iraq and Syria... As a result, OIR is now at a high level of alert as we continue to closely monitor credible and possibly imminent threats to U.S. forces in Iraq."

Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) aerospace division General Amir Ali Hajizadeh asserted Sunday that the U.S. forces stationed in the Persian Gulf "will be hit on the head" if they make a mistaken move.

Washington's threats against Iran are aimed to gain more leverage: MP

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — A top Iranian lawmaker says Iran is not interested in a war with the United States, emphasizing that Washington's empty threats are just a tool to gain more political leverage.

"Of course, the U.S. won't take this risk to enter a military conflict with Iran since we have strengthened our deterrent ability," Mojtaba Zonnour, chairman of the Majlis Nuclear Committee, told Mehr news agency on Wednesday.

"If the U.S. wages a military conflict on Iran, it will surely face a response," Zonnour said, adding that Iran will strike more blows to America than the other way round.

"We are not the one who starts a war and we are not interested in that. We use our capabilities to avoid any war," he maintained.

The parliamentarian further pointed to Washington's cost-benefit analysis of a military action against Tehran, saying the Americans certainly won't do that for their own benefits.

"Rest assured that there will be no mil-



itary conflict between Iran and America," he reiterated.

On Tuesday, Leader of Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei asserted that

there will not be a military confrontation as neither Iran nor the U.S. seeks war because the Americans know that the war will not be beneficial for them.

In recent days, the U.S. reportedly deployed USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier strike group and the bombers into the Persian Gulf in order to counter Tehran.

Tensions have heightened between Tehran and Washington after Trump administration's decision in May 2018 to withdraw from the nuclear deal, also known as Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and to re-impose sanctions which were lifted under the JCPOA.

Washington's anti-Iran measures are not merely limited to sanctions. The U.S. has also put Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) on its list of foreign terrorist organization.

Iran, in response, has designated the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) in the Middle East as a terrorist organization.

Exactly a year after U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA, Iran announced that it would reduce some of its commitments under the deal, urging other signatories to comply with their own commitments and stand against U.S. unilateralism.

Diplomat advises U.S. not to test Iran's determination

By staff & agencies

Iranian Ambassador to London Hamid Baeidnejad has warned about the prospect of war in the Middle East and advised the U.S. not to test Iran's determination.

"While we have renounced any escalation in the region, I would assure you that Iranian armed forces are fully ready for any eventuality in the region, so they should not try to test the determination of Iran to confront any escalation in the region," he said in an interview with Sky News aired on Wednesday.

He called the U.S. threats of war with Iran "theatrical maneuvers".

"Our analysis is they, [or] at least President Trump, doesn't want to engage in military confrontation with Iran because of how costly it will be for the U.S. and for the region," he said.

According to Al Jazeera, the U.S. has approved the deployment of a Patriot missile defense battery and another warship to the Middle East amid increasing tensions with Iran.

"The Acting Secretary of Defense has approved the movement of USS Arlington (LPD-24) and a Patriot battery to U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) as part of the command's original request for forces from earlier this week," a Pentagon statement said.

Commenting on incidents for several vessels in the Sea of Oman on Sunday, Baeidnejad said, "It is very suspicious to us and we hope an international fact finding mission could really find the reasons for these sabotages which are really suspicious to us."

The United Arab Emirates confirmed on Sunday that four commercial vessels had been targeted by what it called acts of sabotage off Fujairah.

Iranian Foreign Ministry issued a statement on Monday urging a clarification on the issue.

■ 'Europe must do more to stand up to Trump's administration'

Baeidnejad also said that Europe must do more to stand up to the Trump administration to preserve the 2015 nuclear deal, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

"Iran has been implementing all its obligations, but the other sides have not been implementing their obligations and that's a situation that cannot continue in this manner. So Iran wanted to give a very important signal that things should be rectified and should be redressed," he said.

On May 8, Iran officially announced that it stops selling stockpiles of enriched uranium and heavy water for 60 days. However, Iran warned if a conclusion is not reached in this time period, it will take other measures step by step and will



accelerate its uranium enrichment activities.

Under the JCPOA, Iran's stockpile of low enriched uranium is capped at 300kg and heavy water reserve at 130 tons.

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 President Donald Trump 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.

Marzieh Hashemi: U.S. turning to oligarchy

TEHRAN (FNA) — Marzieh Hashemi, broadcast journalist, says only few individuals and families possess the wealth of the U.S., as if they own the country, and they stop anyone who tries to unfold the unreported systematic abuses in the U.S.

Speaking to FNA in an exclusive interview, Marzieh Hashemi said she is an activist and she has the responsibility of fighting for the oppressed, whether she returns to the U.S. or from elsewhere.

Marzieh Hashemi is an American-born Muslim convert who has lived in Iran for years. She was detained by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) at an airport in Saint Louis on January 13th and transferred to FBI facilities in Washington DC. She was forced to remove her hijab and was only offered non-halal food during detention. A U.S. federal court failed to indict her, and she was released after 10 days without any charges.

Below you may read the full text of the interview:

■ Arresting you sounded like a miscalculation of the U.S. authorities. What do you think was the worst consequence of this misconduct?

A: I do not think they had really realized that it was a risk. They knew I work for Press TV, but I do not think that they expected global action the way that it took place. I do not think there would be any ways that they can assess that, or could have thought that my arrest would get that type of reaction.

Thus, if you think that they sounded anxious at court and looked anxious, I think it is because of the reactions that they got that



they did not expect, and then really did not know how to handle it at that point in time.

■ Considering this, will you ever return to the U.S.? If so, would you pursue political activities?

A: I will continue to be an activist as I have been all my adult life. I will continue to fight for the rights of people all over the world. I will return to the U.S. or not, I'm not sure. I was not charged with anything; so, I should be able to go there; but whether I feel like going back there or not, it is a different story. I can tell you I do not feel like it right now.

I do not know the future. If I am there or wherever I am, I am always active. Because I

am an activist and I feel it is my responsibility to fight for of the oppressed Mostazafeen wherever I am.

■ Based on your experience, how do you assess the status of freedom of rights/speech in the U.S.?

A: The status of human rights and rights of free speech in the U.S. has changed a lot. We know from the U.S. constitution that technically we are supposed to have freedom of speech and various other rights. This was never absolute; there were clauses to it more or less.

So, when the constitution was originally written, even then the freedom of speech, and human rights were not across the board.

That was not for females; that was not for black people. So it's always been a qualified freedom. However, after the 9/11 attacks, I think that it has got even more controlled. They use other methods from alleged terrorism to control various freedoms.

When you have a capitalist country, that is basically not only capitalist, but also now turning to oligarchy, because the reality is just a few individuals, a few families have all the wealth and own the country.

The whole country has to work towards their goals. So, if they are in the weapons industry that you will see a push, as you see in the U.S. for example, to keep weapons to make sure that they can be sold or to make the war machines which are very well-equipped. If you are trying to work against their goals, you are going to pay a price.

If you try to educate the people, if you try to make the people aware of what is going on, why the U.S. is getting involved in all these wars, not because of protecting anyone, or spreading freedom all over the world, but actually the opposite: to control and basically support this oligarchy, they are getting as much wealth as they can for the few individuals at the top, it is not for the country, though. So, everything is qualified. It depends on what you are saying, to whom you are saying, and how much you are saying, as far as how much freedom or if you are allowed to speak at all. If you are saying something against the interests of the wealthy, of the oligarchs, or if what you are saying is going to have an effect on others, you would definitely be stopped in various ways.

Senator Sanders slams John Bolton for trying to drag U.S. into war with Iran

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders has denounced national security adviser John Bolton after the New York Times reported that he has ordered a plan to be drawn up to attack Iran.

"It is almost impossible to imagine that after the horror of the war in Iraq when we were lied to by the Bush administration and one of the leading architects was this very same, John Bolton," Sanders told MSNBC on Tuesday.

"You will remember how we got into the Vietnam war, the Gulf of Tonkin resolution, and it turns out the so-called attack in the Gulf of Tonkin did not actually take place. It was based on a series of lies," Sanders also said. "What worries me is that the architect of the effort right now to get us into a war in Iran is the guy who was the architect to getting us into the war in Iraq. That is John Bolton. I worry about provocations on the part of the United States against Iran."

Sanders, who is running for president in the 2020 elections, also tweeted that "If we go to war with Iran, we will destabilize the entire region and thousands of Americans

and Iranians will die."

"I am working right now with my Republican colleagues to stop this disastrous rush to war," he added.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has also strongly criticized Bolton, among others, for trying to drag the U.S. into a war with Iran.

Zarif has classified Bolton, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (bibi), Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed as the B-team who are working hard to push the U.S. toward a war with Iran.

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

Meanwhile, Ben Rhodes, who served as deputy national security advisor under Barack Obama, on Wednesday tweeted



that "Trump pulled out of the Iran Deal even though Iran was complying, and has been trying to provoke Iran into giving him a pretext for war ever since."

"He lied to the American people about getting us out of wars, lied about the Iran Deal, and is lying about Iran now," Rhodes added.

Amoli Larijani donates \$6,000 for prisoners' cause



POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Chairman of the Expediency Council Ayatollah Sadeq Amoli Larijani has donated 200 million rials (nearly \$6,000) for the release of those imprisoned for committing unintentional crimes.

Amoli Larijani also hailed the Diya (Blood Money) Foundation for raising money to free the prisoners and asked the nation to donate money to the cause as well, Fars reported.

Days ago, President Rouhani donated 2.7 billion rials, Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi 500 million rials and Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani 300 million rials to the cause.

According to Asadollah Jolaei, the managing director of the Diya Foundation, the foundation has held several fund raising events in Qazvin, Ardebil and Sistan-Baluchestan provinces to reduce the number of inmates who are in prison for debt and financial issues.

Political groups must unify against external enemy: Mohsen Hashemi



POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — The chairman of the Tehran city council says while disagreements between political factions would never end, they need to unify in the face of the enemy's anti-Iran measures.

"All political activists must be united in the face of an external enemy," Mohsen Hashemi said, Fars reported on Wednesday.

He advised political figures to avoid measures that would intensify domestic disagreements, especially in the current circumstances.

"In President [Rouhani]'s recent iftar dinner, great emphasis was put on this issue," Hashemi added.

Days ago, top political figures who were invited by President Rouhani for an iftar dinner praised the administration's initiative to gather round members of rival political factions and called for continuation of such meetings which will help strengthen unity in the country.

According to the Iran newspaper, all of the attendees acknowledged that the Iranian people are faced with harsh economic condition and called on the Rouhani administration to take steps to remedy the situation.

'Germany will spare no efforts to salvage nuclear deal'

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — German Ambassador to Tehran Michael Klor-Berchtold said on Wednesday that his country fully supports the Iran nuclear deal and will spare no efforts to salvage the deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Klor-Berchtold made the remarks in a meeting with Hossein Amir Abdollahian, a senior foreign policy advisor to the parliament speaker, IRNA reported.

"Because of the capacities existing between the two countries, Germany welcomes an expansion of relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran," the German envoy said.

During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views about regional and international affairs and highlighted their willingness to boost bilateral ties.

Amir Abdollahian pointed to Germany's key status within Europe, saying, Iran and Germany should be in continuous dialogue in order to deepen their ties.

The advisor, however, criticized Europe's inability to fully implement its trade mechanism with Iran (INSTEX), saying this is while Iran has fully complied with its obligations under the JCPOA.

Politically supporting the JCPOA is not enough and Europe should take practical measures to build Iran's lost trust toward Europeans, he suggested.

Amir Abdollahian further said that Europe's diplomacy in dealing with Washington's misconduct has "not worked properly."

INSTEX was introduced in January 2019 by France, Germany and Britain — three parties to the 2015 nuclear deal — to facilitate legitimate trade between European economic operators and Iran.

On March 20, Iran's central bank governor Abdolnaser Hemmati announced that a mechanism similar to INSTEX has been registered in Iran, officially called the Special Trade and Finance Institute (STFI).

One year ago, U.S. President Donald Trump formally pulled the United States out of the nuclear deal that was struck between Iran on the one side and the U.S., Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany on the other.

Since then, Trump has introduced economic sanctions on Iran and last month labeled Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) a terrorist organization, a move that heightened the tensions between Tehran and Washington.

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	211017.9
IFX	2583.46

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,076 rials
GBP	54,231 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$70.95/b
WTI	\$61.23/b
OPEC Basket	\$71.21/b
Gold	\$1,299.20/oz
Silver	\$14.86/oz
Platinum	\$855.45/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Iran, Turkmenistan to boost trade, transport co-op

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** – Iran and Turkmenistan explored ways of expanding trade and transportation cooperation in a forum in Ashgabat, IRIB reported.

An Iranian delegation including Iran's Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development Abdolhashem Hassan-Nia and headed by Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif visited the neighboring country to discuss expansion of ties in various areas including trade, transportation and customs.

According to Hassan-Nia, regarding the road transportation sector, the expansion of bilateral transport relations between the two countries and the opening of the Sarakhs border crossing were the two main issues raised and it was agreed that the two sides would take necessary measures to inaugurate the crossing as soon as possible.

The official also noted that the two sides considered elimination or reduction of the tolls for cross-roads between the two countries and decided to form an expert board to discuss the issue thoroughly.

Heading a high-ranking politico-economic delegation, Zarif arrived in Ashgabat on Sunday for a visit within the framework of bilateral consultations between the two states.

The visit comes one year after Iranian President Hassan Rouhani paid an official visit to Turkmenistan.

During the trip in March 2018, Rouhani signed 13 accords with his Turkmen counterpart in different fields.

Tehran, Prague to explore ways of expanding economic ties

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** – Iran and Czech Republic are going to explore ways of expanding mutual trade, Shada reported.

The decision was announced in the opening ceremony of Iran-Czech Republic Joint Economic Committee which was held in Tehran on Tuesday.

The event was attended by a handful of senior officials from both sides including Deputy Iranian Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs Ali-Mohammad Mousavi and Eduard Muricky, the Czech deputy minister of industry and trade.

As reported, in the meeting the two sides discussed future cooperation in a variety of areas including banking, investment, industry, mining, and health.

Speaking in the event, Mousavi who is also the head of Organization for Investment, Economic and Technical Assistance of Iran (OIETAI), emphasized the necessity of improving the level of bilateral trade between the two counties, noting "In this regard, strengthening of cooperation between the two countries' private sectors in the fields of industry and services is of outmost importance."

He stated that the Iran-Czech Joint Economic Committee would be an important basis for future cooperation between the two countries, adding "Important issues, including banking, investment, industry, mining, trade and healthcare will be discussed and hopefully agreed upon in the meetings of this committee."

Muricky for his part highlighted the good political and economic relations and cooperation between the two countries and called for further expansion of economic ties.

"There are many companies mainly in the energy sector which are eager for cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran," he said.

Downward trend in Malaysia's economic sentiments deepen

Malaysia Independent Economic Research (MIER) consumer sentiment index (CSI) and business condition index (BCI) is on a downward trajectory and with fading optimism, the gross domestic product growth for 1Q19 will moderate at 4.3%.

As per theindependent.sg, the rise in trade tension between the U.S. and China shows how vulnerable Malaysia's economy is to external factors. The country's currency is also faltering, falling to 4.1707 against the Dollar.

Bloomberg largely blames the current FDI outflow from Malaysia on fading hopes for reform from Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's administration, adding that portfolio managers do not expect to run back to Malaysia soon.

It says investors are losing patience and global funds are bypassing the country in favor of other markets.

But Dr. Mahathir's government is altogether not in a hurry to fix the market outflow as it has set its own pace for reforms.

Its priority in its first year in power was to fight corruption which bogged down the government apparatus while the freezing of mega projects built on the suspicion of flawed business foundations impacted the corporate profit. This did not give the right signal to investors.

‘Iraq, Afghanistan, Turkey proper markets for Iran’s copper during sanctions’

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iraq, Afghanistan and Turkey are appropriate markets for Iran's copper during the sanctions time, Kourosh Shabani, the vice chairman of National Iranian Copper Association, said in an interview conducted by the news portal of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mine and Agriculture (ICCIMA).

In a statement released on May 3, U.S. President Donald Trump said that the new anti-Iran sanctions target Iran's revenue from the export of industrial metals.

He also warned other countries that "allowing Iranian steel and other metals into your ports will no longer be tolerated."

The announcement was made on the first anniversary of Washington's unilateral withdrawal from the nuclear agreement — officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Since then, the Trump administration has reimposed sanctions on Iran's energy, shipbuilding, shipping, and banking sectors under a campaign of "maximum pressure" against the Islamic Republic.

Iranian officials say the new U.S. sanctions do not affect Iran's metal industry significantly as the country has its own customers for these products.

On May 12, Iran's deputy minister of industry, mining and trade said the country



is not much concerned about the United States' recent sanctions on its metal exports, as Iranian steel, copper and aluminum have already their own customers.

In an interview conducted by Tasnim news agency, Jafar Sarqini said that the fresh restrictive measures imposed by the U.S. president on Iran's iron, steel, aluminum, and copper sectors, seem "unlikely" to sig-

nificantly affect the country's metal industry.

"There is not much concern about these sanctions as Iranian steel, copper and aluminum have their own special customers in the world," he said.

Sarqini also stressed that Iranian goods in the metal sector have high-quality and meet global standards.

"There is no specific problem regarding

‘No new limitations in Iran-Iraq trade ties’

1 → As previously reported by TPO, following an agreement on establishment of an Iran-Iraq trade committee, officials from the two sides held a meeting to discuss the issue in Tehran on May 5.

According to Masoud Kamali Ardakani, the director for Industrial and Mineral Products Export Development Office of TPO, in the meeting, the two sides discussed several issues including joint investment and establishment of industrial zones, facilitating the transit of goods, facilitating business travels, organizing pilgrimage and health tourism, as well as solving the existing problems regarding mutual trade.

The official pointed to a 37-percent increase in Iran's exports to Iraq in the last Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), saying "Obviously, the formation of this committee will be an important step towards reaching the goal of boosting the trade between the two countries to \$20 billion by 2021."

Also, following the visit of a high-ranking Iraqi delegation to Tehran, Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) hosted an Iran-Iraq business forum on April 7.

The event was attended by several senior officials from both sides including Iran's First Vice President Es'hag Jahangiri, Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi as well

as Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian, Iraqi Minister of Electricity Louay Al Khateeb, Iraqi Trade Minister Mohammad Hashim Abdul Majid Jasim, Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani, Head of Basra Chamber of Commerce Majed Mozan, and ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafeie, along with representatives of private companies.

During the business forum, the two sides called for further expansion of the trade ties between the two countries and the officials delivered speeches addressing various trade related issues.

In his speech, the Iranian vice president mentioned Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's visit to Iraq in early March, saying that the visit of Iraqi delegation less than a month after President Rouhani's visit to their country is an indication of the two sides' determination for expanding economic ties.

He also pointed to the desirable talks and agreements which have been reached during the Iraqi delegation visit to Iran and noted that "following the agreements reached during president Rouhani's visit to Iraq these new agreements can provide a reliable basis for future cooperation between the two countries' private sectors."

Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi, for his part expressed his country's eager determination for expansion



of relations with Iran in all areas and noted that the two countries should join hands in order to reach a level of development which they deserve.

The official further called on Iranian private sector to cooperate with their Iraqi counterparts in reconstruction of Iraq's infrastructure.

He mentioned some of the memorandums of understanding (MOUs) which were signed between the two sides, including an agreement on building a cross-border railway, easing travel conditions and exports of electricity and gas from Iran to Iraq and called for the two sides' all-out efforts for their realization.

German auto sector could drop as much as 12% if Trump announces tariffs, analyst says

Germany's automotive sector could fall as much as 12% over "three bad trading days," if President Donald Trump imposes tariffs on European car manufacturers, one analyst told CNBC.

According to cnbc.com, Trump has until Friday midnight (Washington time) to decide whether to impose duties on car imports. This would likely hurt Germany, the EU's traditional growth engine, given that it is one of the largest direct car exporters to the U.S.

The German stock market could fall as much as 6% and its automobile and components sector, specifically, could see losses of up to 12%, according to Christoph Schon, executive director of Axioma, a risk management solutions provider. He told CNBC over the phone that the losses could happen over a period of three trading days, or over five to 10 sessions.

Germany's DAX is up by about 14% so far this year, while the overall European auto sector is higher by about 11% this year. Volkswagen and Daimler are up by around 7% and 15%, respectively.



■ Tariffs on European cars

Trump threatened to impose 20% tariffs on European cars back in 2018, arguing there's a trade imbalance threatening the U.S.'s national security. The EU is the largest exporter of motor vehicles in the world, whereas the United States is the largest importer.

"Germany is the tail on the U.S.-China trade war dog and at the end of the day, 47% of GDP (gross domestic product) from Germany is exports — the majority of that going to those two trading partners. If they blow up in a trade war, Germany is

probably the place that gets hits worse," Mark Phelps, chief investment officer at AllianceBernstein, told CNBC's "Squawk Box Europe" Wednesday.

The EU has made every effort to ensure these tariffs are avoided. European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker traveled to the U.S. last year and agreed with Trump to work together to bring existing tariffs toward zero on non-auto industrial goods; to buy more liquefied natural gas from the U.S. and to find ways to bring their standards closer together.

However, both sides have not yet started discussing a trade deal. The ongoing escalation in tensions between China and the U.S. has created more jitters in Europe, with analysts expecting Trump to keep a strong stance against the EU too.

"If indeed we get U.S. car tariffs on imports from the euro zone — not just their announcement, you could forget our economic forecasts completely. No chance of a sustained pick-up in activity throughout the second half as we expect," Florian Hense, European economist at Berenberg bank,

told CNBC via email.

The euro zone economy has lost steam recently, with weaker manufacturing and growth data. The European Central Bank (ECB) even had to cut its growth projections for the year back in March. Growth in the EU is highly sensitive to external shocks, due to its export-driven economy.

The "euro zone growth engine has lost a lot of cyclical velocity in the past year, exposing vulnerabilities to slower Chinese growth, weaker global trade and structural problems in the German auto sector. The fear is that we are just one shock away from a recession," Lena Komileva, chief economist at G+Economics, told CNBC via email.

Some analysts believe Trump could decide this week to postpone its decision on car tariffs and focus on the ongoing talks with China instead.

"For the time being Trump will probably be busy with China and choose to extend Saturday's deadline (European time) before escalating the conflict with the EU over cars and car imports," Hense told CNBC.

Investors wrongfooted by downturn at emerging Asian economies

The engines of the world economy are sputtering. Last week the central banks of Malaysia and the Philippines cut their interest rates, to the surprise of many observers. Indonesia, which begins a two-day policy meeting on Wednesday, is expected to stay on hold. But, increasingly, analysts expect the central bank to join the rate-cutting club by the end of this year.

As per ft.com, this is not what many investors expected from emerging Asia, often seen as one of the few parts of the world able to deliver solid and sustainable economic growth.

Capital Economics, a consultancy, blamed a "sharp slowdown" in Malaysian growth and "underwhelming" growth in the Philippines, along with benign inflation, for last week's rate cuts. It said its proprietary growth tracker also pointed to a sharp slowdown in Indonesian output in the last quarter of 2018, and saw gross domestic product growth slowing further this year.

Adam Wolfe at Absolute Strategy Research, a consultancy, expects the headwinds facing the region's economies to last for some time. "You still have significant drag from (negative) global export growth and we haven't seen the bottom yet," he said.



■ Data on world trade volumes

Widely followed data on world trade volumes from CPB of the Netherlands show that global exports, on a rolling three-month basis, began contracting in December and were down more than 2 per cent in February, the most recent month of data.

ASR's proprietary leading indicator for Asia ex-Japan, meanwhile, has just turned negative for the first time in more than three years. Industrial production in the region, too, has taken a downward turn in recent months, to its lowest

level in more than a decade.

Mr. Wolfe says the semiconductor cycle is especially problematic, as the industry awaits the roll-out of 5G mobile internet technology. "Until semiconductor prices firm up and feed into the electronics supply chain, it is hard to see a pick-up in regional growth," he said.

China's economy has a dominant influence. Steel production there, Mr. Wolfe notes, has been propping up economies in the rest of emerging Asia but has slowed significantly this year.

"If that were to turn over, it would point to further downside risk," he said. Such concerns are fed by weak housing demand in China, and limits on the ability of Chinese local governments to raise finance for infrastructure investment, he added.

Others say fears of a regional downturn have been exaggerated. Sergi Lanau of the Institute of International Finance expects Chinese growth to stabilize around its current level and for other countries to keep up a healthy clip.

"Unless you think the world is really going to deglobalise and Asia won't be central to the supply chain any more. I don't see why that picture would change in the next four or five years," he said.

Iranian heavy crude oil price up over \$4 per barrel in April: OPEC

E N E R G Y TEHRAN — Iranian heavy oil price increased \$4.35 in April, according to OPEC's latest monthly report published on Tuesday.

The country's average heavy oil price was \$68.52 in April, up 6.8 percent from \$64.17 in March 2019.

According to the report, Iran produced 2.554 million barrels per day (bpd) of oil in the mentioned month, a 164,000 bpd decrease from 2.718 million bpd in the previous month.

The report put average Iranian crude output for the Q1 2019 at 2.725 million barrels per day indicating a near 257,000-bpd fall compared to the figure for Q4 2018.

The country's average heavy crude price was also reported to be \$62.53 since beginning of 2019 up to the report's publishing day.



Iranian oil industry has been under pressure from the U.S. efforts to isolate the country by reimposing sanctions. The new round of sanctions targeting Iran's oil sector were put in action on November 4, 2018.

Soon after the sanctions took effect, the U.S. government agreed to let eight countries, including close allies South Korea and Japan, as well as India, keep buying Iranian oil.

However on April 22 2019, the U.S. announced that Washington has decided not to extend waivers allowing major importers to continue buying oil from Iran. The waivers ended on May 2.

Asia's crude oil imports from Iran rose to the highest in eight months in March as buyers rushed for more cargoes to take advantage of the last days of the waivers to the sanctions the United States imposed.

'Electricity services account for 70% of Iran's service exports'

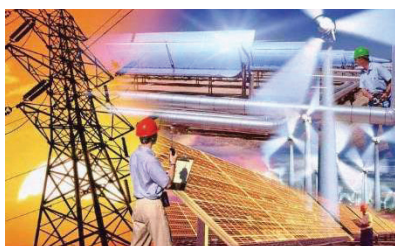
E N E R G Y TEHRAN — Iran's Deputy Minister of Energy for International Affairs Farhad Yazdandoust said electricity industry services account for 70 percent of the country's total engineering and services exports.

According to Yazdandoust the value of the country's exports of such services has reached \$5 billion, IRIB reported on Wednesday.

The official referred to some of the energy projects implemented abroad including the implementation of a water treatment complex in Iraq and a dam and hydroelectric plant in Tajikistan.

"The reconstruction of Syrian energy infrastructure including the implementation of Lazigee power plant are also among Iran's exports in this area," he said.

Referring to some hurdles in the way of the service exports, he added, "Delay in issu-



ing guarantees for exporting companies, lack of necessary financial support for marketing and continuous presence in international markets, and the need for easier customs regulations are among the problems in the way of such exports."

"Launching a supporting power supply system for Syria and construction of the third line of power transmission to Armenia are the energy ministry's latest activities in exports of technical services," Yazdandoust noted.

NPC planning to complete petchem value chain in Assaluyeh

E N E R G Y TEHRAN — Iran's National Petrochemical Company (NPC) is planning on completing the petrochemical value chain in Assaluyeh petrochemical zone in southwestern Bushehr province, Shana reported on Wednesday, quoting an official with NPC.

"Development of mid-stream and downstream projects in Assaluyeh has for long been considered as a strategy for NPC," Ali Mohammad Bossaqzadeh, director of projects at NPC, told NIPNA.

According to the official, production of the country's petrochemical products including methanol is planned to increase by 2021.

"Completion of various phases of South Pars gas field had added to feedstock supply of petrochemical plants

operating in the region and that will lead to a raise in the output," he said.

In early December 2018, President Hassan Rouhani officially inaugurated three major petrochemical projects in Assaluyeh petrochemical zone.

As reported, these projects will increase Iran's annual capacity of petrochemical production to 65.5 million tons from the current 62 million tons.

The port city of Assaluyeh is home to a number of petrochemical complexes which receive gas and gas condensate feedstock from the giant South Pars gas field, which Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf.

The huge offshore field is estimated to contain a significant amount of natural gas, accounting for about eight percent of the world's reserves, and approximately 18 billion barrels of condensate.

OPEC calls for regional peace after attacks on energy infrastructure

OPEC Secretary General Mohammad Barkindo said it was "too early" to talk about supply restrictions as he called for peace and stability in the Middle East after attacks on oil facilities in the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

According to thenational.ae, "We need peace and stability," Mr. Barkindo said in Abu Dhabi. "This region has seen enough turmoil.

"It's not about capacity, it's about peace. This is a strategic region. Whatever happens impacts the rest of the world."

On Tuesday, Saudi Arabia, the world's largest energy exporter, said two of its pumping stations linking a pipe that connects the eastern oil-rich region with the western industrial city of Yanbu came under attack.

The kingdom's Energy Minister, Khalid Al Falih, denounced the attacks carried out by drones in the early hours of Tuesday morning as "acts of terrorism" against global oil supply.

He said there were no disruptions to state oil producer Saudi Aramco's supplies. The pipeline, which carries 5 million barrels a day of crude, had been temporarily shut down.

After the sabotage, Brent topped a Monday rally ending three-weeks of bearishness to reach \$71.13 a barrel.

The benchmark rose quickly on Monday in response to sabotage attacks off the coast of Fujairah on four tankers, including two belonging to Saudi Aramco.

Mr. Al Falih said the Saudi tankers, one of which had been heading to the Saudi port city of Ras Tanura to load crude, suffered "significant damage".

■ Cutting or boosting of supplies

Mr. Barkindo said that during the coming meeting of OPEC and outside oil producers in Jeddah, the alliance would factor in geopolitical risks when considering cuts or boosts to supply.

The "master of MT Andrea Victory reported the crew were unharmed but there was a hole in the hull area of the aft peak tank. The ship is not in any danger of sinking," the ship's management company said in a statement. Reuters

In its latest report, OPEC projected crude demand for the third quarter to be higher by 1.17 million bpd.

Analysts have said the latest attacks on Middle East crude supply lines are likely to rattle a very sensitive market.

Tension in the region has been increased after the U.S. cancellation of waivers to Tehran's main oil buyers at the end of April, and the imposition of sanctions against Iran's



metals sector.

The U.S. has also made military maneuvers in the region by sending an aircraft carrier, B-52 bombers and missiles as it looks to further squeeze Iran.

Tehran, which is now likely to see nearly a million barrels of its crude taken off the market, has threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz, a significant choke point for global crude, and stop complying with parts of the 2015 nuclear deal.

Central Europe energy reforms help weather supply crisis

By Nick Coleman

The shutdown of Russian oil supplies to Europe due to a major contamination problem will bolster a decades-long drive by Central and Eastern European countries to reduce their dependence on their eastern neighbor.

The company was complaining about the quality of Russian crude even before the latest incident, in which millions of tons of crude have been contaminated by highly corrosive organic chlorides that entered the Druzhba system in southern Russia in April.

But the fact the pipeline normally supplies around 1 million b/d of crude to 10 refineries across the region does reflect a need: for parts of the Central European landmass, shipments by sea are not accessible, or cheap.

Following the shutdown of Druzhba, several governments authorized releases of emergency stocks. But the region's long-term objective has been to strengthen its oil infrastructure and diversify its imports.

The Baltic country of Lithuania started this in the 1990s following a three-month energy blockade by Moscow in 1990. It built a new import terminal at Butinge and a pipeline to its refinery at Mazeikiai, as various parties wrangled over the refinery's ownership.

That culminated in the Lithuanian refinery being bought by PKN Orlen from Mikhail Khodorkovsky's collapsed Yukos oil company in 2006, a move that cemented PKN's status in Central Europe. Immediately afterward, Russia permanently cut supplies via Druzhba to Lithuania.

The episode demonstrated the "determined position of the Polish authorities, who consistently sought to ensure energy-related independence from Russia," Gediminas Vitkus, professor of international



relations at Vilnius University's Institute of International Relations, wrote subsequently.

Poland's assertiveness as regards energy has only increased under its Law and Justice party government, in office since 2015. Poland is the region's largest oil consumer, with demand of some 700,000 b/d, and has continued to strengthen its oil import facilities and to diversify its supply sources.

PKN Orlen says it has cut the use of Russian crude at its 330,000 b/d Plock refinery northwest of Warsaw to 50% of throughput. The country is sourcing crude from a growing list of suppliers including Iraqi Kurdistan, Saudi Arabia and the US. In 2016, PKN signed a deal to take 200,000 mt/month from Saudi Aramco and last year increased that by 50%.

Poland's second refiner, state-owned

Grupa Lotos, has taken similar steps at its 210,000 b/d Gdansk refinery. In January it signed a contract to take at least seven crude cargoes from the US, and it says Russian crude now accounts for around 70% of its throughput.

It has invested in terminal upgrades both to support the Gdansk refinery and deliveries via the Pomeranian pipeline to PKN Orlen's refinery at Plock; the pipeline was originally built to export Russian crude.

Hungary's MOL has been on a similar drive at its Danube refinery near Budapest, and the Bratislava refinery in Slovakia, which it also owns. In 2015 it completed rebuilding a pipeline that extends the Adria pipeline from Croatia's coast into Slovakia, providing an alternative to Russian crude. MOL says Russian oil accounted for 82%

of its crude imports last year, although it notes diversification is not just about security, but meeting demand for higher-quality fuels.

But while regional energy security has improved, unresolved issues remain. Some experts argue it could take months to deal with the tainted Russian crude, probably by blending it with 'clean' crude, creating particular difficulties for Belarus, which reported the problem on April 18 and sustained damage to its Mozyr refinery. Belarus remains locked in a symbiotic relationship with Moscow.

Meanwhile its southern neighbor Ukraine remains in some disarray, as far as refining is concerned, its capacity much depleted. The main surviving refinery, the 240,000 b/d Kremenchuk facility, has not received crude via Druzhba in more than five years. Operating at around 13% of its capacity, it relies on Azerbaijan for crude.

Weakness can also be found among the region's EU members. The Czech Republic's Litvinov refinery, for example, has little alternative to the Druzhba pipeline. And Poland's government shows little inclination to liberalize the sector, retaining control over executive appointments. The country also lags in addressing demand aspects of energy security, particular air quality, being a depository for polluting second-hand cars from elsewhere in Europe.

Nonetheless, Professor Vitkus, of Vilnius University's Institute of International Relations, sees a transformation in his region. "Even though PKN Orlen is a state controlled company, it has to compete on the global market, i.e. to be transparent, efficient and competitive," he told Platts.

(Source: spgglobal.com)

Russian Sokol premium nears 5-year high on medium sweet crude tightness in Asia, wider EFS

The premium for Far East Russian Sokol crude oil has soared to a near five-year high amid a dearth of medium sweet crude in Asia and a wider Brent/Dubai spread, market sources said Wednesday.

"Sokol is really expensive this month, but people are willing to buy as there is supply tightness in the market," S&G Global Platts reported, quoting a Singapore-based trading source.

In comparison, June-loading Sokol cargoes traded at premiums of around \$4.3-\$4.4/b to Dubai, trade sources said.

Volumes of Malaysia's medium sweet Kimanis crude are expected to drop sharply over its July program, as field operator Shell carries out maintenance and upgrade works on the offshore facility, crude traders told S&P Global Platts. Shell could not be immediately reached for comment.

Only three cargoes of the middle distillate-rich crude are expected to load over July, down from a typical monthly program comprising nine to 10 cargoes of 600,000 barrels each.

Traders said they do not expect any spot availability of Kimanis in Southeast Asia for July, as all three cargoes are expected to be taken into refining systems by their respective equity holders.

■ Satiating end-users

Russia's middle distillate rich, sweet crude grade could be viewed as a close alternative to the Malaysian regular, with sufficient supply from a 10-cargo strong monthly loading program to satiate end-users in the region, traders said.



"Kimanis feeds refiners with ultra-low sulfur regional sweet demand and its shortage will surely have an impact on grades like Sokol," another crude trading source said.

Meanwhile, supply of Sokol has been capped at 10 cargoes, or approximately 7 million barrels/month of production since June, providing additional support to price differentials for the grade for Asian end-users, according to trade sources.

The middle distillate-rich grade typically sees around 12-14 cargoes, or between 8.4 million to 9.8 million barrels for loading in a month.

For July loading, India's ONGC and Russia's Rosneft each have been allocated two cargoes. Other equity holders Sodeco and ExxonMobil have three July-loading cargoes each, according to the program seen by Platts.

A widening spread between Brent and Dubai is the third factor contributing to higher premiums for the Dubai-linked grade, traders said.

The second-month Brent/Dubai Exchange of Futures for Swaps pushed past a key price point of \$3/b at the beginning of May -- the first time in seven months as Brent prices rallied on geopolitical tensions.

A wider Brent/Dubai spread makes Dubai-linked crudes relatively cheaper compared to Brent-linked ones. Buyers could potentially pay higher premiums for Sokol against Dubai and still get a cheaper deal overall than for a similar Brent-linked crude.

The front-month July EFS stood at \$3.35/b as of 04:30 P.M. Singapore time (0830 GMT) on Tuesday, the highest since September 27, 2018. Then, it was assessed at \$3.45/b, Platts data showed.

Eni strikes more oil in Angola's deep offshore

Italy's oil and gas major Eni said on Tuesday that it had made a new discovery in Angola's deep offshore estimated to contain up to 250 million barrels of light oil in place, with further upside.

According to oilprice.com, the results of the data collection from the new discovery in Block 15/06 indicates a production capacity of over 10,000 barrels of oil per day, Eni said, adding that the discovery, Ndungu, is the fourth commercially viable discovery since the Block 15/06 Joint Venture re-launched the exploration campaign in the middle of 2018.



Ndungu is some 2 km (1.2 miles) away from the Mpungi field, so the latest discovery can be fast-tracked to production due to the proximity to the Sub Sea production system, according to Eni.

The Ndungu discovery comes two months after Eni made a major oil discovery in Angola's deepwater in a find that could help the African OPEC producer to reverse the recent decline in oil production. In March this year, Eni struck oil in Block 15/06 in the Agogo exploration prospect and estimates that the discovery contains 450-650 million barrels of light oil in place with further upside.

The data acquired from the well indicates a production capacity of more than 20,000 bpd, Eni said back then.

Eni, a key player in Africa and in Angola, currently produces around 155,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day in Angola.

The African country, however, has been struggling in recent years to offset a decline in production as many fields mature.

After the oil price crash of 2014, Angola's economy had suffered from the low oil prices and the country had also been struggling to attract international investments in its deepwater higher-break-even oil resources.

Last year, Angola introduced several new measures to try to boost its oil production and its attractiveness for international investment. President Joao Lourenco signed in the summer of 2018 a decree to create an agency that would sell and manage oil blocks instead of Sonangol. Earlier in 2018, Angola halved the tax rates on the development of oil discoveries with fewer than 300 million barrels of reserves.

Can May and Corbyn find a Brexit compromise?



By James Forsyth

Spectator — Can Theresa May and Jeremy Corbyn reach a satisfactory compromise on Brexit? The two leaders’ positions are not, in fact, that far apart. Neither wants a second referendum. They both think that the referendum result means that Britain has to leave the EU. Yet neither wants a dramatic rupture. They would prefer to inch away from the union.

Gavin Barwell, Theresa May’s chief of staff, has remarked that half of what Labour has asked for in the cross-party Brexit talks has already been requested from the EU but to no avail. Even on customs, the standout issue, the differences between Labour and the Conservatives are more semantic than anything else. The government’s proposed backstop is, in effect, a provisional UK-wide customs union with the EU, which is not that different from the permanent customs union that Labour wants.

The problem for May and Corbyn is the lack of enthusiasm for a cross-party deal in their respective parties. If Corbyn compromised, he would infuriate many on his own side. The most obvious group are those who want a second referendum because they believe that will stop Brexit. This group includes the elected deputy leader Tom Watson, the shadow Brexit secretary Keir Starmer and the Labour whips’ office. I understand that the government is trying to work out whether it is a third of Labour MPs who want a second referendum at all costs, or two thirds. If it is the latter, then the parliamentary arithmetic doesn’t work.

There are others, though, on the Labour benches who are not pro-European, just anti-Tory. They don’t see why Labour should help the government out of this mess unless it is beyond doubt that they’ll split the Tories in doing so.

There is considerable nervousness in Tory circles about what a May-Corbyn deal would mean. One of May’s most likely successors within the cabinet worries that any agreement with Corbyn would boost the Labour leader’s chances of becoming prime minister. How could the Tories accuse Corbyn of not being fit for office if they had to rely on him to deliver their most important policy? Others worry that Labour will only do a deal if it is a bad one for the Tories.

There are, it is worth remembering, three different kinds of compromise. One is more a recognition of reality than anything else. It is reality that parliament determines what kind of Brexit deal can pass into law. So allowing a parliamentary vote to set the government’s mandate for the next round of the negotiations, as the Nandy-Snell amendment suggests, is really just a recognition of this fact. Yes, the government is diluting its power to negotiate treaties by accepting this Labour backbench amendment. But as the current impasse shows, a treaty that parliament won’t ratify is rather pointless.

In any future negotiation, the government will be bound by what parliament would accept. So allowing the Commons a role early in the process is not as much of a concession as it sounds. In truth, the damage was done to the UK’s negotiating position when Theresa May lost the Tory majority in the 2017 general election. Any prime minister who wants to negotiate a more emphatic Brexit would have to have a majority, and that would entail a general election.

The second kind of compromise is showing that some things really can’t be done. The point of Barwell’s remark above is that there are areas where Labour thinks the government is deliberately trying to create distance with the EU, when the actual issue is the EU’s desire to protect its own legal and institutional order.

Some Tories in government think that you could even extend this argument to Labour’s idea of a customs union. Given that trade in goods is an exclusively EU competence, there is no way that Brussels could accept a customs union in which the UK — a non-member — had a veto over trade deals. So why not go and ask Brussels for one, and wait for the EU to say no?

The problem with this approach is that the EU isn’t keen on May’s alternative, the facilitated customs arrangement. This would allow the UK to operate different tariffs from the EU but still preserve many of the benefits of the customs union. Indeed, one of the ironies of the cross-party talks is that the EU doesn’t like what either Labour or the Tories want on customs. As one of those involved in the talks admits, neither what Labour or the Tories are proposing is a ‘simple, turn up on day one’ option.

The third type of concession is the most problematic — it creates new facts on the ground. For instance, there is a significant difference between a standstill on customs policy and an agreement on a new UK/EU customs union. The former would create a presumption that whoever wins the next election could seek to negotiate the kind of deal that they want; the latter would not.

If, and it remains a very big if, Labour and the Tories can come to a Brexit arrangement, it will be less palatable to Brexiteers than the deal that May negotiated with the EU. But considering how determined 10 per cent or so of the Conservative parliamentary party are not to vote for any kind of deal, it is hard to see how Brexit can happen without an understanding between the two main parties.

Given this House of Commons opposition to no deal, the only obvious alternative is to go to the country. But even under a new leader, the Tories wouldn’t be in a good position to fight a general election and couldn’t be confident what the result would be.

I understand that the deadline for the cross-party talks to come up with something is the end of next week. If they do not, then — as senior government figures admit — it is hard to see how Brexit will make any progress before October’s EU Council. At that point, the European Union might try to force a decision by giving the Commons 18 days to decide between approving the deal, leaving without one, and revoking Article 50.

German coalition disagreement over defensive issues

Will the German government fall before 2021?

By Hamid Bayaty

TEHRAN — The German Chancellor and the coalition government are not well placed in public polls. It seems hard to bear Merkel at the head of German political and administrative equations! On the other hand, the Social-Democratic Party has lost its popularity among German citizens. In such a situation, Germany continues its political life with a coalition and inefficient government.

Meanwhile, the differences between the bipartisans of the coalition government of Germany, the Christian Democrat and the Social Democrats, remain on the defensive and military issues. These differences are likely to lead to the collapse of the German state before the year 2021 (the end of the fourth term of Merkel’s power). The article we are aiming to mention is in May this year and is set to be held in Munich on the eve of the Munich Security Conference. This article quite clearly shows to what extent the disagreements between the two Social Democratic and Christian Democrats over military and defense issues are serious:

As Sudha David-Wilp wrote in Foreign Policy, Germany’s coalition government is shaky, and the Social Democratic Party (SPD) may be the first brick to crumble. Unhappy with its relative weakness—the center-left party has been overshadowed as a junior partner to Chancellor Angela Merkel’s conservative bloc during three out of her four terms—SPD politicians are desperately looking for ways to revive their party’s fortunes. To stave off existential losses during the European Union parliamentary and German state elections this year, the party is portraying itself as a crusader for welfare issues at the expense of Germany’s international credibility.

The SPD has tried to make its mark by shunning defense and security in favor of social spending. In an Infratest Dimap poll, only 3 percent of Germans said they believed that any budget increases should go to defense. Three-quarters of those polled chose education, health, or infrastructure. In turn, the SPD’s new strategy has yielded a small uptick in the polls.

At the same time, however, the party is alienating Germany’s allies. At the 2014 NATO summit in Wales, Germany pledged to dedicate 2 percent of GDP toward defense spending



by 2024. But when the current government was sworn in last year, it quickly became clear that Germany was on course to reach only 1.5 percent. This isn’t a matter of low funds; Germany has had budget surpluses for five years running. The reluctance of the EU’s largest economy to invest in its military is thus perplexing. U.S. President Donald Trump has certainly fumed about its free-riding on NATO’s security guarantee.

German Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen of the Christian Democratic Union had said that regardless of the 2 percent goal, her country was on course to expand its defense budget by 80 percent within a decade. (That would have taken spending near to 1.5 percent by 2024.) And now her cabinet colleague, Finance Minister Olaf Scholz of the SPD, has proposed shifting more funds to social spending while siphoning euros from defense and development aid in the next budget. Doing so would give Germany a failing grade on the Strategic Level Report it delivered to NATO earlier this year, which was meant to track Germany’s good faith in living up to its NATO obligations.

Why stoke the ire of Trump and further weaken European solidarity in a time when the Atlantic alliance is being challenged on many fronts? There is a logical explanation: Germany’s Constitution stipulates

that the country run on a near-balanced budget, and the guiding star for German finance ministers of both major parties is to maintain the so-called black zero, never going into the red.

With the threat of U.S. automotive tariffs and a looming Brexit, there is a sense in Germany that recession is around the corner. With the threat of U.S. automotive tariffs and a looming Brexit, there is a sense in Germany that recession is around the corner. Scholz has thus defended cuts, warning that the flush years are over. But in reality, this year’s budget process is turning into an election battleground. Notably, agencies receiving reductions in their requests are headed by conservatives, such as defense and development. Meanwhile, the draft budget allocates approximately 11 percent more funding for the SPD-run labor ministry.

Indeed, the SPD is using the budget planning process to tempt the breakup of the current coalition, and Scholz is positioning himself as a potential chancellor. In this attempt, the SPD is fighting for its life. Current polling numbers would disqualify Germany’s oldest political party as a major party. According to ZDF’s Politbarometer, the SPD is polling at 15 percent if parliamentary elections were held today. The conservatives have double the support, and the once-upstart

Greens have eclipsed the SPD at 19 percent.

The SPD is being squeezed by the Greens on the left and is losing voters to the right-wing Alternative for Germany party. The party is constantly cast as a junior partner to Merkel, who still gets relatively high favorability ratings. All that irks SPD voters. In early March, an Emnid poll found that 73 percent of them would welcome a break-up of the grand coalition.

By betting on the welfare state and not rolling over to Trump, the SPD thinks it can gain some traction and differentiate itself from the conservatives. The SPD recently introduced its “Sozialstaat 2025,” a party platform that aims to end labor measures enacted under SPD Chancellor Gerhard Schröder in 2005, increase the newly created minimum wage, and establish a basic pension to prove its working-class roots. Its party leadership has also not minced words about the Trump administration’s provocations, even as Merkel has shown restraint.

Regardless of the SPD’s stance, voters have yet to be swayed. The supposed catchall party can’t even manage to capture one-fifth of the electorate. Instead of lurching to the left, the SPD should consider seizing the middle. That has been Merkel’s winning strategy, and now there is room to beat her party at it since her anointed successor, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, has been trying show off her conservative credentials.

Reneging on Germany’s defense spending commitments is certainly risky for the country’s international reputation, but the SPD is facing crucial electoral tests next month. In addition to the EU parliamentary elections, the small state of Bremen will hold a state-level vote that will be make or break for the SPD. The party has held the area since 1946, and current polling puts it neck and neck with the conservatives.

Conclusion

German chancellor Passivity to US President Donald Trump could lead to the collapse of the German coalition in the near future and before 2021. Undoubtedly, if Germany’s Social Democrats come along with Merkel in this regard, their political future will also be jeopardized in Germany. A topic that even many Social-Democratic Party leaders are worried about.

U.S. suffers strategic loss in Venezuela

By Bhim Bhurtel

Asia Times - After the recent American foreign-policy farce in Venezuela, a typically Nepal-style mockery of the US has been growing popular in Kathmandu. The witty reproach is all about the recent US attempt to topple Venezuelan President Nicholas Maduro’s regime. The Nepalese foreign-policy elites, foreign-policy and international-affairs journalists, and academia believe that the failed US attempt to overthrow Maduro’s government depicts the diminishing size of American global prominence.

People in Kathmandu think the United States of America can only put pressure on small and weak countries like Nepal but not a country like Venezuela, which has the backing of powerful countries such as Russia and China. As well, they believe that the US sphere of influence now has midget stature not only globally but even in the Western Hemisphere.

Nepalis have good reason to mock the US. After the US recognized Juan Guaidó, head of Venezuela’s National Assembly, as the interim president on January 23, a statement was issued by Pushpa Kamal Dahal, chairman of the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP), that disparaged the recognition of Guaidó by the US and its allies. Dahal strongly condemned the move as foreign meddling in Venezuela’s internal affairs. He said the US had no right to orchestrate a coup against the democratically elected government of President Maduro.

After the statement was issued by Dahal, Washington summoned the Nepalese ambassador to ask him to clarify the government’s official stance on the Venezuela row. Nepal’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a diplomatically crafted statement that did not contradict Dahal. After the clarification of the official position of the Nepalese government, the US ambassador to Nepal, Randy Berry, skipped the briefing session of the Nepal Investment Summit, organized by the government, to express America’s displeasure at Nepal’s stance on the Venezuela row. However, Nepal refused to change its stance, and later on, the US sent Joseph Felter, the deputy assistant secretary of defense for South and Southeast Asia, to Nepal to soothe the strained relations between Washington and Kathmandu. Felter is the most senior US official to visit the Himalayan nation since President Donald Trump was elected in 2016.

Perhaps, having experienced the overthrow of despotic regimes three times with the help of popular uprising in less than 70 years of history, nobody knows better than the Nepalis how difficult it is to change a regime

Perhaps, having experienced the overthrow of despotic regimes three times with the help of popular uprising in less than 70 years of history, nobody knows better than the Nepalis how difficult it is to change a regime. President Trump’s top aides — Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, national security adviser John Bolton and special envoy to Venezuela Elliott Abrams were thinking a regime change in Venezuela had the strong backing of powerful countries and so would be a piece of cake. They believed that a rebellion



in the Venezuelan military would incite a popular uprising and topple a leader they had described as “a reviled despot who must be replaced.”

However, American officials’ claims that their key supporters in Venezuela were about to defect from the Maduro regime were not realized. Bolton had cited three names of top Venezuelan office bearers who supported regime change after Guaidó appealed for a military mutiny. These three people were Vladimir Padrino, the defense minister, Maikel Moreno, the head of the Supreme Court, and Ivan Rafael Hernandez Dala, the head of the presidential guard. According to the plan, the Supreme Court would endorse Guaidó as the legitimate president and declare Maduro’s election illegitimate as cover for the military to defect. Abrams went a step further, saying that a 15-point document had been discussed between Guaidó’s allies and members of Maduro’s inner circle.

However, on April 30, it appeared that the plot had fallen short, with Padrino appearing alongside Maduro in a high-profile show of support and criticizing those behind the attempted military recalcitrance. At the end of the day, President Maduro remained in power.

Pompeo and Abrams have been blaming Russia and Cuba for sabotaging the plot and frustrating their plans. But the entire project made Trump’s aides look like fools.

The failed attempt to overthrow the Maduro regime raises many questions. First is whether the United States had faulty intelligence about the real ability of Guaidó to attract close Maduro aides to his side. It would not be the first time the US had suffered from intelligence failure. For instance, after the US invaded Iraq in 2003 and weapons of mass destruction were not found, the secretary of state at the time, Colin Powell, publicly admitted that he had been misinformed. This Wednesday, The Washington Post reported that Trump was “complaining he was misled about how easy it would be to replace the socialist strongman with a young opposition figure, according to administration of-

ficials and White House advisers.”

The second question is about whether White House aides had misread the objective reality on the ground. However powerful a country is economically, technologically, militarily, and strategically, and whatever weapons are at its disposal, it won’t win a war if it has misread events objectively in the field. The US should know this from its bitter defeat in the Vietnam War some 45 years ago.

The third question is whether Trump’s impulsive behavior was responsible for the failed coup. Regime change is only possible if there is an intense desire or willingness to bring about the change. If there is genuine desire or willingness, regime change demands the ability to bring it to fruition. That ability comes from a rationally informed and objective reading of the situation on the ground in both domestic politics and geopolitics. The United States is not in a position to finance the rebuilding of Venezuela if the Maduro regime is forcefully ousted eventually. The Trump administration wants to see a win in the Western Hemisphere on the foreign-policy front before the US election in 2020; however, it has neither the willingness nor the ability to finance nation-building in Venezuela post-Maduro.

Last, the most crucial question is how the US can reclaim its Monroe Doctrine. Trump says Russia should get out of Venezuela. Bolton says, “The United States will not tolerate hostile foreign meddling with the Western Hemisphere’s shared goals of democracy, security, and the rule of law.” Both the president and his national security adviser mean that the Monroe Doctrine must be restored in Venezuela.

However, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, on the sidelines of the 11th ministerial meeting of the Arctic Council on Tuesday, told his US counterpart Pompeo that “if the US intervened military in Venezuela, it would be catastrophic.”

Russia, Turkey, China, Iran, Bolivia and Mexico have been supporting Maduro. China and Russia have backed Maduro for two reasons. First is that they stand to lose hugely if the Maduro’s leftist government is overthrown. China has invested an estimated \$70 billion in Venezuela since 2008, and Russia too has tens of billions’ worth of investment in the South American country. The second reason is the substantial strategic power game to offset America’s sphere of influence not only in the Western Hemisphere, but also in the East. As Fred Weir opined in the Christian Science Monitor on Wednesday, “Russia wants to counter that the US needs to end its two-decade-old binge of regime-change operations, which includes supporting anti-Moscow revolutions in Russia’s own back yard.”

Whether regime change in Venezuela is peaceful or coercive, the US will have to sit at the table with Russia and China or through the United Nations Security Council. Its missteps in its Venezuelan regime-change agenda are leading to a grave diminishment of its global influence. The US may be able to pressure weak countries like Nepal on the Venezuela row, but not Venezuela itself.

Leading British Nationalists in Electoral Polls

Why is British prime minister worried?

By Saeed Sobhani

TEHRAN — Britain's withdrawal from the EU has become a complex puzzle! It seems that in the European Parliamentary elections, this will have an important role to play in electoral campaigns in the UK. While the two traditional British parties claim that supporters of leaving Europe and other nationalists are no longer in London's political and executive equations, polls in Britain show another reality!

Undoubtedly, if the supporters of the British withdrawal from Europe can win the European parliamentary elections, the joint EU-London project will face a stalemate to hold a referendum on exit from Europe. Recent surveys in the UK are very contemplative!

As Guardian reported, Senior Tory and Labour politicians have issued frantic calls to their voters to back them in next week's European elections after a new poll showed support for Nigel Farage's Brexit party had soared to a level higher than for the two main parties put together. The Opinion survey for the Observer places the Brexit party on 34%, when people were asked how they intended to vote on 23 May, with Labour slipping to 21% and the Conservatives collapsing to just 11%. Ominously for Theresa May, support for the Tories at the European elections is now less than a third of that for Farage's party, and below that for the Liberal Democrats, who are on 12%.

The poll suggests the Brexit party, launched only last month, is now on course for a thumping victory that Farage will, MPs fear, use to back his argument that the UK must leave the EU immediately without a deal.

Recently, Farage was cheered by hundreds of voters at a rally in Houghton-le-Spring, near Sunderland, as he described the prime minister's Brexit deal as "like a surrender document of a nation that has been defeated in war".

There were signs of mounting panic and recriminations in both Tory and Labour ranks as their MPs attempted belatedly to mount "stop Farage" operations. May was accused by senior Conservatives of "fuelling populism" with her indecision over the Brexit issue, while Labour politicians urged their backers to come out and vote despite the party's mixed messages on Europe, which are depressing its support.

Richard Corbett, Labour's leader in the European parliament, said: "Labour voters must turn out and vote to stop a far-right extremist claiming he represents Britain."

Writing for the Observer online, the for-



mer prime minister Tony Blair says it is vital that Labour supporters go to the polls, even if they choose a party more clearly in favour of Remain than Labour. "This is not a vote to choose a prime minister or a government," Blair says. "It is a vote for the Farage Brexit; or against it."

He adds: "I will vote Labour because I believe ultimately Labour will be counted on the anti-Farage side of the ledger. The bulk of the Labour party membership, MPs and voters are against Brexit and certainly against that Brexit advocated by the Brexit party and its fellow travellers in the Conservative party."

The Guardian, in one of its most recent analyses on the Brexit, wrote that the interactions that have taken place over the withdrawal of the UK from the European Union have "the UK a global joke."

What does the recent poll in the UK mean? 3 years has passed since the referendum was held over the Brexit, which ended up in the victory of the proponents of the UK exit from the EU. But the details of this departure remains ambiguous among the British authorities, and this ambiguity seems to be intensified in 2019.

Complicating the process of the British withdrawal from the European Union is a joint measure taken by the British government and European authorities. At the same time,

the British government, with its widespread negative propaganda against the Brexit, is seeking to re-arrange a referendum. In other words, the European authorities are trying to direct the public opinion about the Brexit. Recently, some western news sources are speaking of an issue called "repeating the Brexit referendum", and name it as a possible option!

However, the victories of nationalists in the European Parliamentary elections in England change the plans and equations defined by the European countries. As The Guardian reported, A series of Conservative moderates demanded that the party take on Farage directly, rather than give him a free run in the campaign. The former education secretary Nicky Morgan said it was time to tackle the "politics of division" head on. "It is a dangerous path for any democracy and we know where it ends – a deeply fragmented and weakened country. Those of us who can see the dangers must call this kind of politics out at every opportunity we get."

Another former education secretary, Justine Greening, added: "The cabinet's halfway-house fudged Brexit pleases no one. Failing to realise that and ducking tough decisions is just fuelling populism. In reality the EU election will not break the gridlock in parliament so it solves nothing – the only way to really resolve Brexit is a

straight choice in a second referendum with Remain, the PM's deal and WTO Brexit on the ballot. Only then will we really know what the people's choice is."

Sam Gyimah, the former universities minister, said: "Harnessing grievance is Farage's only card, but we know he's never had a solid plan for our great country. We have vacated the pitch, and voters are flocking to him. Time to call him out."

Farage's rise will, however, inevitably raise new doubts about how long May can survive as Tory leader, as pressure mounts on her from her own backbenchers to step down. Cabinet ministers say the party is haemorrhaging support, with Leavers flocking to Farage's party and Tory Remainers either saying they will refuse to vote or back another party.

Ultimately, the victory of nationalists in the British election means the failure of the two traditional British parties. It should not be forgotten that the two conservative and labour parties in Britain are both the main opponents of the British withdrawal from the European Union. Undoubtedly, European officials are also worried about European parliamentary elections in Britain. They are also worried about the victory of nationalists in the European Parliamentary elections in Britain, and they are not able to conceal this concern.

Is Europe ready to pay the costs of defying nuclear deal?



TEHRAN (FNA) — On Wednesday, May 8, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani gave the Group 4+1 (China, Russia, Britain and France Plus Germany) two months to fully implement the 2015 nuclear deal after Tehran modified two of its undertakings under the JCPOA in return for the US abrogation of the deal and other signatories' inability to provide Tehran with any economic merits under the agreement.

According to President Rouhani, after the US withdrawal from the deal last year, also known as the JCPOA, the European signatories pledged to take actions to neutralize the restrictions caused by the unilateral withdrawal, but to no avail.

Now as a consequence, President Rouhani says Iran is finding it increasingly hard to fight terrorism, establish regional security, prevent the flow of refugees to Europe, and confront illegal drugs traffickers, arguing that these moves require Iran to spend billions of dollars, which because of US sanctions and EU's inaction to provide Iran with the economic merits of the nuclear deal have been undermined.

The Wednesday's message is clear: If the nuclear deal is good for regional and global peace, then, everybody should pay for it, including those in Europe who expect Iran to finance and fight transit of drugs and stand against the flow of millions of refugees who are endeavoring to get to Europe single-handedly.

Indeed, Rouhani's warning is yet another reminder that despite US pressures and sanctions to cash-strapped Iran, Tehran has been playing an important role in countering drugs trafficking from its eastern borders with Afghanistan - the world's largest opium producer. This Iranian devotion, however, is under strike by the western policies and could be undermined to a great degree, if the country cannot have access to international banking systems and transactions because of US sanctions. This includes preventing millions of refugees from the region who are doing everything they can to get themselves and their families to European shores.

It begs to emphasize that according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Iran ranks first in the world in drug seizures. The country seizes around 80 percent of the opium and 40 percent of the heroin and morphine seized in the world. It also continues to pay a heavy price in the campaign against drugs trafficking.

It's a sentiment also shared by the World Drug Report and its annual overviews of the major developments in drug markets for the various drug categories, ranging from production to trafficking, including development of new routes, modalities, and consumption. The annual reports state:

"The flow of heroin along the long-established Balkan route, from Afghanistan to Western and Central Europe via Iran and Turkey, has declined in recent years. Various factors may have contributed to the decline in seizures along this route, including the success of law enforcement authorities in key transit countries like Iran, and a decline in demand in the destination market."

If that is the case, which clearly is, then how come the EU continues to sit on its hands by refusing to offer any help to Iran – diplomatically and logistically – including the implementation of its commitments under the JCPOA?

Just for the record, under the US sanctions regime, Western governments refuse to provide Iran not just with its own money but with high-tech monitoring tools and screening technology as well, which are crucial in effectively financing and guarding its long border with Afghanistan. Surely, they don't expect Iranian volunteers to make all those sacrifices when the US economic, banking and crude sanctions and EU's subordination to Washington cause and change in Iran's budget priorities?

Moreover, at the UN, Iran has always complained about the EU and other international bodies' lack of serious cooperation with Tehran in the campaign against drugs trafficking from Afghanistan. Over the past three decades or so, Iran has spent billions of dollars to seal its borders and prevent the transit of narcotics destined to European, Arab and Central Asian countries. Its war on drugs trade has also claimed the lives of nearly 4,000 Iranian police officers and soldiers. Still, many European countries are refusing to give any credit to Iran - let alone offer any technological, intelligence or financial assistance!

In any case, as maintained by President Rouhani on May 8, Iran's decades-long war against international drug cartels and its rigid and much costly efforts to stop the westward flow of the several-million-strong refugees are under much pressure and could weaken soon as it can no longer afford spending billions of dollars as economic pressures and shortages change and restrict priorities. Because of Washington's economic warfare, Tehran is unable to fight this war alone. Now is the time for other nations, including the EU countries, to join Iran in combating drugs trafficking and plans in line with developing and reconstructing Afghanistan. Tehran believes reconstruction and development could likewise help rein in drug production in Afghanistan. The Europeans who have long enjoyed Iran's benevolence for free should now help Iran continue its efforts against the flow of these refugees. Based on international rules and regulations, they should have contributed to these efforts in different ways, including through financial assistance. Iran has never requested them to pay their share, but they can at least stop their blows to these devoted efforts, since they are now damaging, rather than reinvigorating, Iran's endeavors through their economic compliance with the US sanctions in breach of the JCPOA.

The international community, specially the Europeans, should think it twice before fixing their eyes and minds only on the costs of standing up to the US bullying policies.

Mark Fitzpatrick: Iran's response to U.S.' withdrawal moderate, within N. deal terms

TEHRAN (FNA)— Mark Fitzpatrick, a former Deputy Assistant Secretary for Non-Proliferation at the US State Department, believes that Tehran's decision to abandon the limits on heavy water and low enriched uranium (LEU) stockpiling was the most modest response possible, adding that the move is still within the framework of the nuclear agreement.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with FNA, Mark Fitzpatrick said, "The Trump team does not think the US will bear any costs from the policy of maximum pressure."

Former Deputy Assistant Secretary for Non-Proliferation at the US State Department added, "I think they are short-sighted because there is both an opportunity cost and a real cost down the road if the policy leads to war."

"I admire Iran's patience and wisdom in adhering to the JCPOA even though the US has withdrawn from it," Fitzpatrick told FNA.

Mark Fitzpatrick is former executive director of the Americas office of the International Institute for Strategic Studies and former head of the institute's Non-Proliferation and Nuclear Policy Program. He previously worked for 26 years in the US Department of State. His research focuses on regional proliferation challenges and preventing nuclear danger in the era of "nuclear renaissance".

Washington withdrew from the internationally-endorsed 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, reimposed the toughest-ever sanctions against the country and started a plan to zero down Tehran's oil sales.

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

In 2018, all the other signatories — Russia, China, Germany, France, the UK, and the EU — refused to follow the US example and confirmed their commitment to the accord, trying to save the deal with the Islamic Republic.

Iranian officials then warned that the European Union's failure in providing the needed ground for Tehran to enjoy the economic benefits of the nuclear deal would exhaust the country's patience.

Yet, Iran continued compliance with deal, stressing that the remaining signatories to the agreement had to work to offset the negative impacts of the US pullout for Iran if they want Tehran to remain in compliance.

Following is the full text of the interview, where the issue has been discussed with Fitzpatrick:

■ Given that Iran's needs were not met by the Iran nuclear deal that included a removal of the sanctions, and as the result of the US' withdrawal from that agreement and Europe's passivity, Iran has announced that it is stopping



Given the pressure on Iran's economy, the statement about abandoning the limits on heavy water and low enriched uranium (LEU) stockpiling was the most modest response possible. It would take some months before the limits might be exceeded, and in any case, Iran can decide to reduce production as another way of keeping below the limit. It does not have to export heavy water and LEU, and the deal does not require it to do so.

the sale of enriched uranium and heavy water. This action will be held for 60 days to bring the parties to the negotiation table. How do you assess this issue?

A: Given the pressure on Iran's economy, the statement about abandoning the limits on heavy water and low enriched uranium (LEU) stockpiling was the most modest response possible. It would take some months before the limits might be exceeded, and in any case, Iran can decide to reduce production as another way of keeping below the limit. It does not have to export heavy water and LEU, and the deal does not require it to do so. The more worrisome issue is the threat to abandon other JCPOA limits after 60 days. If Iran were to produce enriched uranium above the

3.67% limit, this would be a clear and egregious violation of the deal and European partners would need to re-impose sanctions. But I expect that enrichment levels would not immediately rise after 60 days, so there is probably some more time for diplomatic engagement to find a path forward.

■ The Iranian nuclear deal is an agreement based on clarity and commitment of both sides. Paying attention to the important role that the US plays on the other side and inaction of the European countries towards the US, Iran remains committed to this agreement. Given the status quo, how do you assess the future?

A: I admire Iran's patience and wisdom in adhering to the JCPOA even though the US has withdrawn from it. It is wise to do so, because a departure from the deal would spark new sanctions by Europe and cast Iran as the guilty party. Exceeding the nuclear limits could also spark US military action. So even though Iran is in a difficult situation, I believe it can have the patience to wait until US policies change, perhaps in 20 months. After all the Iranian people have a 7,000-year history. Compared to this, 20 months is a fleeting moment. And US policy could even change before then. Notice that President Trump is again talking about personally engaging with Iran's leadership.

■ After the failed coup in Venezuela, it seems that John Bolton's role in Trump's decision-making process will be reduced. Is there any possibility that because of the failure of Bolton's aggressive activities, the role of the aggressive party in the Trump administration will be reduced?

A: Despite the news reports about Trump's unhappiness with National Security Adviser John Bolton's role regarding Venezuela, it is premature to judge that Bolton's overall role will be diminished. He is a very powerful and canny bureaucratic player and will probably continue to drive the Iran policy. But if Trump begins to fear that Bolton is driving toward war with Iran, as many analysts suspect, then President Trump may decide he needs somebody else. A key factor is that Trump does not want to lead the United States into another foreign war.

■ President Rouhani called the Iranian nuclear deal a win-win or lose-lose game. What's the point of this message for the other side?

A: I suppose that President Rouhani is cautioning the other major players that if Iran loses, then so will they. The Europeans already know this, because they know the non-proliferation benefits of the deal. But the current US administration does not see things this way. The Trump team does not think the US will bear any costs from the policy of maximum pressure. I think they are short-sighted because there is both an opportunity cost and a real cost down the road if the policy leads to war.

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

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

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NASA: Budget boost ‘good start’ to put astronauts on moon

NASA’s chief said Tuesday that the Trump administration’s proposed \$1.6 billion budget boost is a “good start” for getting astronauts back on the moon within five years.

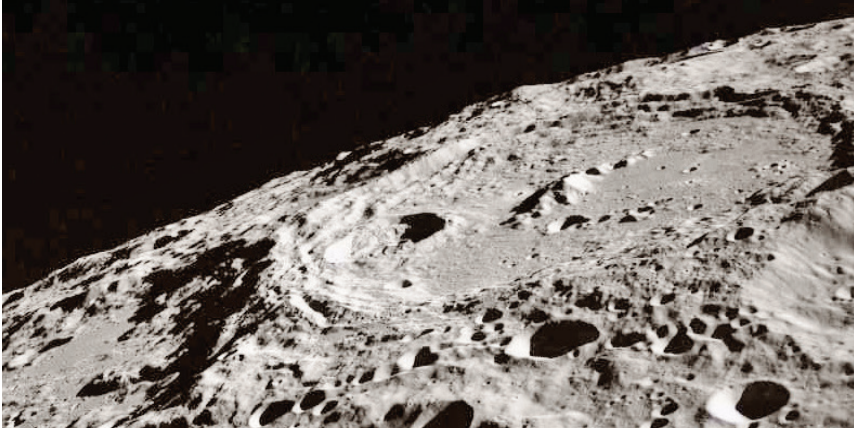
Administrator Jim Bridenstine addressed employees a day after the White House introduced the budget amendment.

During an hourlong town hall from NASA headquarters in Washington, Bridenstine said \$1.6 billion is enough for 2020. But more money will be needed in the years ahead to land “the next man and the first woman” at the south pole of the moon by 2024.

NASA is once again turning to Greek mythology for the name of the project. It’s being called Artemis, after the twin sister of Apollo. Apollo was the name of NASA’s moonshot program that, 50 years ago this summer, achieved the first manned lunar landing.

NASA landed 12 men on the moon over six Apollo missions. For the next go-around, the space agency wants its moonwalkers to reflect today’s more diverse astronaut corps, thus the name of Apollo’s sister. Artemis is goddess of the hunt as well as the moon.

“I have a daughter, she’s 11 years old, and I want her to see herself in the same position that our current, very diverse astronaut corps



currently sees itself, having the opportunity to go to the moon,” Bridenstine said. “In the 1960s, young ladies didn’t have the opportunity to see themselves in that role. Today, they do.”

Bridenstine said he’s heartened by the fact that the extra money, if approved by Congress, will come from outside NASA, rather than being taken from the International Space Station or other departments within the space agency.

The administration seeks to use money from Pell Grants for college education, for NASA’s new spending.

Bridenstine said he’s already heard criticism of how the new spending will be “dead on arrival” in Congress because neither NASA nor the administration worked in advance with Congress on it. As a former congressman from Oklahoma, he said he knows how the process works and assured the space agency’s 17,000 employees that

would not be the case.

“This is a good out-of-the-gate first start, a very honest proposal from the administration that keeps us all together, moving forward,” he said. He also plugged NASA’s ongoing Space Launch System megarocket and Orion spacecraft, both under development, and a proposed outpost in the vicinity of the moon, called Gateway.

A few hours later, Bridenstine found himself before the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, talking up the Artemis moon plan. The space agency envisions that the effort will involve private industry as well as other countries. Just last week, Amazon chief Jeff Bezos introduced a mock-up of his own planned lunar lander for his Blue Origin space company.

In March, Vice President Mike Pence urged NASA to accelerate its moon-landing program, moving it up from 2028 to 2024.

NASA has flip-flopped between the moon and Mars, a victim of changing presidential administrations. More recently, President Barack Obama targeted Mars as astronauts’ next big destination, while President Donald Trump has favored the moon.

(Source: AP)

Spiders can use webs to catapult themselves at prey

Spiders can use webs like bows to catapult themselves at prey, a new study finds. This may be the first documented example of tools used in such a way by an animal other than humans, the researchers say.

A number of creatures accomplish explosive feats that exceed the limits of muscle power and speed by gradually storing energy in anatomical structures and then rapidly releasing it, a strategy researchers call power amplification. For example, mantis shrimp can punch their fistlike clubs with the force of .22 caliber bullets using curved structures on their arms that can bend to store tension like a bow, and fleas accumulate energy in springlike tissues to jump up to roughly 200 times their body length, equivalent to a 2-meter-tall person leaping 400 meters.

Humans also rely on this strategy, using tools such as springs, bows, catapults and slingshots. “With a bow, you can use muscles to store energy in the wood of the bow and shoot an arrow much farther than you can throw a spear,” said study lead author Sarah Han, an entomologist at the University of Akron in Ohio.

Now scientists find the triangle-weaver spider Hyptiotes cavatus can store energy in the silk threads of its web to fling itself at prey, the first instance known of animals using a device they made for power amplification. “I’ve always enjoyed the elegance and function of spider webs, and now we have learned another way in which they use these amazing



structures,” Han said.

The spider is about 5 millimeters long, dwells in woods across North America, lacks venom glands, and does not use adhesive glue in its web, instead creating puffs of feathery silk to entangle prey. It waits in a corner of its triangular web, pulling on a thread to hold the web taut for hours. When prey touches the web, the spider releases this line, and both it and the web are rapidly hurled forward, with silk threads flying around the victim from all directions to further trap it.

Using high-speed video, the scientists found tension in the web could drive the spiders at accelerations of roughly 80

Gs, or 80 times the pull of Earth’s gravity. They calculated the 7-milligram spiders would have needed at least 145 milligrams of muscle to generate as much power as the webs did.

“There’ve been a growing series of advances over the past 10-20 years showing how animals can manipulate their energy to carry out incredibly fast motions, and it’s just awesome how we now see these spiders can use their webs to throw themselves around,” said biomechanics researcher Gregory Sutton at the University of Lincoln in England, who did not take part in this work. “It would be very interesting to see how the properties of the silk from these spiders compares with that of other spiders that do not carry out this same storage and release of energy.”

In the future, the scientists would like to learn more about how Hyptiotes can hold its web taut for so long and how it withstands the forces of catapulting and collision. Furthermore, another research team previously found the ray spider Theridiosoma may also use their circular webs like slingshots. Han and her colleagues hope to collaborate with that group to investigate ray spiders.

“There may be more animals who are capable of power amplification than we know of, and they may be doing it in interesting and novel ways,” Han said.

The scientists detailed their findings online May 13 in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

(Source: Inside Science)

Car-size “sea monster” terrorized Triassic oceans

A crocodile-like beast the length of a Volkswagen Beetle terrorized prey in the late Triassic oceans about 210 million years ago, a new study finds.

Researchers excavated the remains of four of these now-extinct sea monsters from the rocky slopes of the Austrian Alps. But even at 13 feet long (4 meters), these creatures — known as phytosaurs — weren’t fully grown.

The phytosaurs were only about 8 years old when they died, and they were “still actively growing,” according to a bone analysis, said study lead researcher Richard Butler, a professor of paleobiology at the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom.

Given the difficulty of bringing these fossils

to light, it’s remarkable that this new species — dubbed *Mystriosuchus steinbergeri* — is finally being introduced to science. Its species name honors Sepp Steinberger, a member of a local caving club, who discovered the fossils while climbing the “dead mountains,” a remote area of the Austrian Alps, in 1980. A team from the Natural History Museum in Vienna excavated the remains two years later and had to use a helicopter to transport the fossils off the mountain, which was nearly 1.2 miles (2 kilometers) high.

The museum cleaned off the fossils and put them on display. But “because there are very few specialists on phytosaurs — this particular group of fossil reptiles — it took many years

before they were studied,” Butler told Live Science. Finally, in 2013, a team of British, French, Austrian and Swiss researchers began examining the ancient remains.

Phytosaurs look like a mix of the modern crocodile, alligator and gharial, although they lived long before those animals and are not particularly close relatives of them, Butler said. “This is an example of ‘evolutionary convergence,’ where distantly related groups evolve to look alike because they live in similar environments,” he said. The phytosaur is a semiaquatic reptile whose remains are usually found near freshwater lakes and rivers. (Although it lived during the early dinosaur age, the phytosaur is not a dinosaur.) However,

these particular fossils were found in sediments from an ancient ocean environment, tens of miles from the Triassic shoreline.

It’s unlikely that all four of these phytosaurs died on land and then were washed out to sea, Butler said. “Therefore, we think this provides the best evidence to date to support the idea that some phytosaurs lived in marine environments,” he said.

This newly named species, as well as fossils from a few other phytosaur specimens found over the years in marine deposits, suggests that some of these animals could live in, or at least pass through, saltwater environments, the researchers said.

(Source: Live Science)

Science of anger: How gender, age and personality shape this emotion

Anger is the flash of fire that sparks in your brain when you feel you have been shortchanged. Perhaps a stranger has nipped into the parking space that you had been about to occupy, or a lazy work colleague has landed you with a thankless task. Or maybe you have been confronted with a deep, hurtful betrayal by someone you love.

Anger is one of the most primitive emotions we experience — animals are equipped with the same basic neural circuitry. It operates on a spectrum from mild frustration to absolute fury, and the intensity with which we feel anger and how we act on it is very personal. Science is beginning to provide new explanations about the ways that personality, age, gender and life experiences shape the way we feel this emotion.

What is anger?

Scientists believe that the capacity for anger has been hardwired into the brain over millions of years of evolution. It forms part of our instinct to fight off threats, to compete for resources and to enforce social norms. Anger is rooted in the brain’s reward circuit. We are constantly — often subconsciously — weighing up what we expect to happen in any situation. When there is a mismatch between what we’ve learned to expect and the hand we’re dealt, our brain’s reward circuit sounds the alarm and activity is triggered in a small almond-shaped region in the brain called the amygdala.

Anger can trigger the body’s fight or flight response, causing the adrenal glands to flood the body with stress hormones, such as adrenaline, and testosterone, preparing us for physical aggression. But whether we actually end up swearing or scowling or even punching someone depends on a second brain area, the prefrontal cortex, that is responsible for decision-making and reasoning. This puts our anger in context, reminds us to behave in socially acceptable ways and

for most of us, most of the time, keeps our primal instincts in check.

How does anger change the way we think?

Feeling anger can alter the way we view. Studies have shown that it can make us more impulsive and make us underestimate the chances of bad outcomes. In one study, volunteers who were made to feel angry estimated the chances of suffering heart disease as being lower and said they were more likely to receive a pay raise, when compared with volunteers who had been prompted to feel fearful. Depending on the context, anger can make us brave or reckless.

Anger also influences group dynamics. When we feel angry, we tend to think more negatively and in a more prejudiced way about outsiders, becoming more likely to blame negative traits on a person’s nature rather than their circumstances. Angry people tend to seek someone to blame, research shows. This potentially makes an angry person feel even more enraged with the offending person or group, in some cases perpetuating a spiral of irrational rage.

Does anger have benefits?

Anger has been viewed fairly negatively over the course of history. In ancient Rome, Seneca pronounced anger “worthless even for war”, while wrath makes it on to the list of deadly sins. But science suggests there could be some benefits for the angry individual, if not for society at large.

Anger can serve as a powerful motivator. In a 2010 study, Dutch scientists showed volunteers pictures of objects such as pens and mugs on a computer screen interspersed with subliminal images of angry or neutral faces. When an angry face had flashed up first, people rated objects as more desirable and worked harder to win them in a subsequent game. Interestingly, the participants were not consciously aware

of this motivation — they said they just liked the objects more.

Outward expressions of anger can also alter the way you are perceived. Larissa Tiedens, an American psychologist who has conducted extensive research on anger, found that participants were more supportive of President Bill Clinton when they viewed him expressing anger about the Monica Lewinsky scandal than when they saw him expressing sadness — and the effect was replicated with an unknown politician.

Tiedens also found that participants assigned a higher status position and salary to a job candidate who described himself as angry as opposed to sad. And showing anger during a negotiation has also been shown to increase the chances of succeeding in it — people are more likely to yield to someone who is perceived as stubborn, dominant. It’s worth noting that these studies related to how angry men are regarded — there is some evidence that people view angry women less favorably.

Are men more angry than women?

Men are, on average, more outwardly aggressive than women and so it might be assumed that they are also angrier. But this doesn’t appear to be the case. Research has consistently found that women experience anger as frequently and as intensely as men. Men who feel angry are more likely to display aggression, although this does not mean that women are not motivated by rage as frequently. One study, by scientists at Southwest Missouri State University, who surveyed around 200 men and women, suggested that women were as angry and acted on their anger as frequently as men. The main difference they identified was that men felt less effective when forced to contain their anger, while women seemed better able to control immediate impulsive responses to anger.

(Source: The Guardian)

Texas explorer completes deepest ocean dive in history

A Dallas-based explorer has set a record for the deepest dive ever made in a submersible -- in the world’s deepest ocean trench, his organization announced Monday.

Victor Vescovo reached a depth of 35,853 feet on April 28 during a dive to the bottom of Challenger Deep in the Mariana Trench, the deepest known point on earth. The dive was 52 feet deeper than any previous manned dive, Vescovo’s Five Deeps Expedition said.

The last visit to Challenger Deep also set a depth record at 35,787 feet. That journey was made by filmmaker James Cameron in 2012. During the April 28-May 5 expedition to the Mariana Trench, the team also completed a dive to the bottom of Sirena Deep, about 128 miles away from Challenger Deep. The team spent hours at the bottom of the ocean at these locations, collecting samples, including the deepest piece of mantle rock ever collected.

Five Deeps Expedition believes it has identified at least three new species of marine animal, including a long-appendages amphipod.

“It’s almost indescribable how excited all of us are about achieving what we just did,” Vescovo said. “This submarine and its mother ship, along with its extraordinarily talented expedition team, took marine technology to an unprecedented new level by diving -- rapidly and repeatedly -- into the deepest, harshest area of the ocean.

“We feel like we have just created, validated, and opened a powerful door to discover and visit any place, any time, in the ocean -- which is 90 percent unexplored.”

The Pacific Ocean dive is the fourth in Five Deeps Expedition’s plan to dive to the bottom of each of the world’s five oceans. The group is using a submersible called Limiting Factor to complete its challenge. The team next plans to conduct dives in the Tonga Trench in the South Pacific Ocean.

(Source: UPI)

A giant hole in the Martian atmosphere is venting all its water into space

There’s a hole in the Martian atmosphere that opens once every two years, venting the planet’s limited water supply into space — and dumping the rest of the water at the planet’s poles.

That’s the explanation advanced by a team of Russian and German scientists who studied the odd behavior of water on the Red Planet. Earthbound scientists can see that there’s water vapor high in the Martian atmosphere, and that water is migrating to the planet’s poles. But until now, there was no good explanation for how the Martian water cycle works, or why the once-drenched planet is now a dry husk.

The presence of water vapor high above Mars is puzzling because the Red Planet has a middle layer of its atmosphere that seems like it should be shutting down the water cycle altogether.

“The Martian middle atmosphere is too cold to sustain water vapor,” the researchers wrote in the study, which was published April 16 in the journal Geophysical Research Letters.

So how is water crossing that middle-layer barrier?

The answer, according to computer simulations in the current study, has to do with two atmospheric processes unique to the Red Planet.

On Earth, summer in the Northern Hemisphere and summer in the Southern Hemispheres are pretty similar. But that’s not the case on Mars: Because the planet’s orbit is much more eccentric than Earth’s, it’s significantly closer to the sun during its southern hemisphere summer (which happens once every two Earth years). So summers on that part of the planet are much warmer than summers in the Northern Hemisphere.

When that happens, according to the researchers’ simulations, a window opens in Mars’ middle atmosphere between 37 and 56 miles (60 and 90 kilometers) in altitude, allowing water vapor to pass through and escape into the upper atmosphere. At other times, the lack of sunlight shuts down Martian water cycles almost entirely. Mars is also different from Earth in that the Red Planet gets frequently overtaken by giant dust storms. Those storms cool the planet’s surface by blocking light. But the light that doesn’t reach Mars’ surface instead gets stuck in the atmosphere, warming it and creating conditions better suited to moving water around, the scientists’ simulations showed. Under global dust-storm conditions, like the one that enveloped Mars in 2017, tiny particles of water ice form around the dust particles. Those lightweight ice particles float into the upper atmosphere more easily than other forms of water, so during those periods more water move into the upper atmosphere.

Dust storms can move even more water into the upper atmosphere than the southern summers, the researchers showed.

Once the water passes through the middle boundary, the researchers wrote, two things happen: Some of the water drifts north and south, toward the poles, where it’s eventually deposited. But ultraviolet light in the upper atmosphere can also sever the bonds between the oxygen and hydrogen in the molecules, causing the hydrogen to escape into space, leaving the oxygen behind.

This process could be part of the story of how a once-drenched Mars has ended up so dry in its current epoch, the researchers wrote.

(Source: Live Science)

Franklin College exceeds \$10M goal to back science facility

Franklin College says it’s exceeded its \$10 million fundraising goal to support construction and renovation of a new science facility on its suburban Indianapolis campus.

The school said Monday the goal was topped for the Campaign for the Sciences, which is helping to pay for the Franklin College Science Center that fully opened in January.

The school’s President Thomas J. Minar says in a statement that Franklin College is “extremely grateful to the many donors, including trustees, alumni, friends and organizations.”

Minar noted that Dr. Margot Lacy Eccles made a \$2.5 million financial promise and matching challenge before her death in 2012 that helped get the campaign going. The school says the Science Center will be home to the Lacy Labs, which will honor her memory and contributions.

(Source: AP)

Iranian museums to offer free admission on May 18

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — On May 18, which marks the International Museum Day, entry will be free to museums and historical sites affiliated with the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization.



A visitor tours the National Museum of Iran.

“The scheme involves museums and historical sites which are affiliated with the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization in order to mark the International Museum Day and persuade people to visit museums,” Mehr quoted Mohammadreza Kargar, the director of CHHTO museums and historical properties, as saying on Tuesday.

Earlier in April, the official announced that over 8.5 million paid visit to CHHTO-affiliated museums and historical sites across Iran during the New Year (Noruz) holidays, which ended on April 2. According to Kargar, some three million historical objects are being kept in the CHHTO-affiliated museums.

There are 600 museums across Iran, some half of which are running by private collectors or other institutions.

Cannes’ famous hotels have undergone more than \$1 billion in renovations

The Cannes Film Festival is, undoubtedly, one of the most glamorous events of the year.

About 40,000 people will visit the city on the French coast to watch some of the year’s best films, spot celebrities, and bask in the glamour of the French Riviera. And guests at this year’s festival (which began Tuesday) may be treated to an even more glamorous experience than years past.



Historic hotels in Cannes have invested about \$1 billion in renovations for five-star accommodations this year.

“We went to sleep a bit,” Michel Chevillon, head of the Cannes hoteliers union, told Associated Foreign Press. “Bookings didn’t fall but there was a drop in customer satisfaction levels. And then the big international chains arrived. So to keep our share of the market, we had to get it just right.”

Last year, the historic waterfront Martinez Hotel re-opened after a \$168 million renovation, which shut down the hotel for four months. Today, it’s the biggest hotel in town, with 409 rooms. The old hotel was previously decorated in dark tones.

(Source: travelandleisure.com)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Bwindi National Park

Situated in south-western Uganda, at the junction of the plain and mountain forests, Bwindi Park covers 32,000 ha and is known for its exceptional biodiversity, with more than 160 species of trees and over 100 species of ferns.

Inscribed on UNESCO World Heritage list as Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, the property is a biodiversity hotspot with possibly the greatest number of tree species for its altitude in East Africa.



A Gorilla family in Bwindi National Park

It is also host to a rich fauna including a number of endemic butterflies and one of the richest mammalian assemblages in Africa.

Home to almost half of the world’s mountain gorilla population, the property represents a conservation frontline as an isolated forest of outstanding biological richness surrounded by an agricultural landscape supporting one of the highest rural population densities in tropical Africa.

Community benefits arising from the mountain gorilla and other ecotourism may be the only hope for the future conservation of this unique site.

(Source: UNESCO)

Step inside the most “valuable” house in the world

TOURISM d e s k

TEHRAN — Many Iranians believe that Moghadam Museum in downtown Tehran may be the most “expensive” home in the world because the 1960s’ house is chock-full of rare and ancient objects.

Its structure is neither very big nor enjoys special facilities. Professor Arthur Upham Pope called this house in an article devoted to the study of arts in Iran; the most valuable house in the world in the 1960s because of the ancient objects used in architecture of house, Mehr reported.

The house belonged to Tehran University professor Mohsen Moghadam, son of Ehtesab al-Molk, who was a mayor in Qajar era.

Because he was very interested in archeology and historical monuments, he collected the antiquities that were on the verge of destruction or plunder in his house.

Professor Moghadam was a pioneering Iranian archaeologist who worked with other archaeologists in historic sites. He and his wife decided to put their efforts for establishing a museum of priceless objects exposed to destruction. This historical house spans about 2117 square meters and it includes three yards. Colorful tiles, columns and arches are creating a unique authentic atmosphere.

The museum consists of the house itself and a beautiful garden, safely hidden from street noise behind thick walls. The entrance of the museum is not obvious from the street, but ready to open all its beauty for travelers who notice the modest door of the museum.

Moghadam collected many valuable monuments including tiles, stone pieces, cloth, hookahs, pottery, glass, paintings, coins and historical documents in the house. Of the manifest features of this museum is the relative assimilation of its architecture with the historical relics inside.

The house has been called the most beautiful and valuable house in the world in opinion of many writers and visitors. The design and construction of this house



A view of the Moghadam Museum in downtown Tehran.

have enjoyed the principles of Iranian architecture such as Persian pool, glass and the principles of the gardening.

Professor Moghadam died in 1987 and after the death of his wife in 1990; the house has been ceded to the University of Tehran to be supervised. In 2009, it was opened to the public as a museum.

The Moghadam Museum is located on Imam Khomeini St., Hassan Abad Sq. A cozy-manicured garden welcomes visitors with its turquoise ponds, colorful trees such as pomegranates and cedars. Museumgoers can tour gems, textiles, paintings, handicrafts, pieces of furniture and ancient objects.

Tehran exports \$84m of handicrafts

HERITAGE d e s k

TEHRAN — Handicrafts exports from Tehran province reached some \$84.12 million during the previous Iranian calendar year 1397 (ended March 20), Mehr reported.

The figure shows a 36% year-on-year growth in comparison with the year before, when some \$62 million worth of handicrafts were exported from the Iranian capital, said Mohammad Enshaei, the provincial tourism chief.

Italy, Austria, Germany, France, Russia, Armenia, China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, South Korea, Iraq, Kuwait and Qatar were the main importers during the period, the official said.

Traditional glassware, mosaic, woodwork, hand-woven textile and rugs constituted majority of Tehran’s exports of handicrafts, he added.

Iran’s handicrafts exports reached \$190 million in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (started March 21, 2018), showing 11 percent growth year on year.

According to the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, Iran’s exports of handicrafts fetched over \$190 million during the first nine months of the past year, increasing 11 percent year on year.

Over two million artisans are currently working in various fields of handicrafts across the country.

Virgin Galactic’s space flights will take off from the New Mexico desert

Virgin Galactic may be sending the first commercial tourists to space from New Mexico by the end of the year.

Richard Branson’s space tourism company announced last week that it will move headquarters from Mojave California to Spaceport America, New Mexico.

“The first photograph of Earth from space was taken over New Mexico in October of 1946,” George Whitesides, CEO of Virgin Galactic and The Spaceship Company, said in a statement. “How inspiring and appropriate that the state will soon host the first regular commercial spaceflight service, which will enable thousands of people to see Earth from space with their own eyes.”

As part of the move, Virgin Galactic will transplant more than 100 employees and their families, plus the aircraft VMS Eve and spaceship VSS Unity over the summer. Virgin Galactic still must finalize the cabin design for its rocket ships before final test



flights begin.

Spaceport America is the first purpose-built commercial spaceport in the world, located in the middle of the New Mexico desert, near the town of Truth or

Consequences. The launch would make New Mexico one of the few places in the world to host regular human flights to space.

Virgin Galactic is planning a small number of final test flights in New

Mexico but declined to reveal a date when commercial spaceflights will begin. In February, Virgin Galactic completed its first passenger test flight to suborbital space.

Virgin Galactic’s missions to space have been widely publicized and hotly anticipated over the past few years, but the launch dates have kept getting delayed.

Among the first people on board the flights will be celebrities like Justin Bieber and Leonardo DiCaprio, who have already paid for their \$250,000 tickets. Branson himself wants to be on the first commercial flight, which he previously hoped would happen in July, to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 launch.

“Our future success as a species rests on the planetary perspective,” Branson told USA Today. “The perspective that we know comes sharply into focus when that planet is viewed from the black sky of space.”

(Source: Travel Leisure)

1000s of Neolithic engravings reveal Egyptians’ ancient reverence for animals

The Ancient Egyptians had a remarkable relationship with the animals, who they respected and revered. An astonishing discovery in the deserts of north-eastern Egypt is illustrating that this likely dated back to the late Stone Age. Archaeologists have found a vast number of engravings on rocks, mainly of animals, at an important Neolithic site. Many of these creatures had great cultural significance in later periods and the petroglyphs are demonstrating that the Egyptians’ regard for animals was very ancient.

A team of archaeologists, working under the auspices of Egypt’s Ministry of Antiquities, were recording royal inscriptions in the ‘Eastern Desert northeast of Aswan’ according to the Archaeology News network. These are among the earliest royal engravings that have yet been found and they date back to the Neolithic era some 4000 years ago, when the present-day desert would have been a much more hospitable environment. While examining these the mission found a large number of ancient petroglyphs that had been made by chipping away the surface of a rock.

■ Images in the desert

It is reported by Ahramonline that Moustafa Waziri, the Secretary-General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities has stated that, ‘thousands of stone inscriptions from the Neolithic period were uncovered in a semi-enclosed circular valley’.

So the team have found literally thousands of images that had been carved on the rocks. Some of them are indistinct or are crude images and they required a great deal of study before they could be identified.

Many of them depict animals that once lived in the area several millennia ago, including elephants, giraffes, antelope, and crocodile. One of the petroglyphs may be

of a big cat such as a leopard. These animals were once indigenous to this area before climate change turned it into a desert and forced them further south. There are also images of some domesticated animals such as cattle, who appear to be grazing. Some images are apparently of a small urban settlement or even a city.

According to Archaeology News network , some of the rock-art ‘bear Egyptian royal signs, such as the falcon god Horus’. The falcon-god Horus was a symbol of the pharaoh. Another sign represents another Royal symbol, ‘Serekh or the façade of a palace’ reports aljarida.com.

The number of inscriptions apparently stretch over a great period of time indicating the long-standing Egyptian presence in the area.

■ The special status of animals in Egypt

The rock art depicting animals near royal inscriptions indicates the respect that the ancient Egyptians had for the beasts. They did not see them as inferior creatures who could be exploited at will. For the subjects of the pharaohs they ‘had symbolic and spiritual power’ according to aljarida.com. Even the absolute ruler of Egypt used animal symbols to legitimize his rule and demonstrate his power.

As a result, they were typically treated with great deference and even reverence. Animals were manifestations of avatars of the gods of the Egyptian pantheon. It was, therefore, illegal to kill, for example, a cat, who represented the goddess Bastet. The high status of many animals in ancient Egypt can be seen by the fact that they were mummified.

■ The significance of crocodiles in Ancient Egypt

Many of the images that were found in the desert valley near Aswan were of crocodiles. These creatures had immense symbolic significance and according to



many documentary sources they were sacrosanct, and some mummified crocs have been unearthed in Nag Hammadi, Upper Egypt. The crocodile was representative of both the benign god Osiris and also of the demons of the underworld. Rock-art depicting crocodiles would indicate that the symbolic and even religious importance of the world’s biggest reptile was very ancient.

The discovery of so many animal petroglyphs and their location, near royal tombs would indicate that even in the Neolithic, that Egyptians had a particular relationship with animals. This find may show that the later reverence of the subjects of the pharaoh for animals was possibly based on ideas that first emerged in the late Stone Age and the dawn of Egyptian civilization. They may also show the great antiquity of some of the religious beliefs and symbolism of the ancient civilization.

(Source: Ancient Origins)

Abandoned company in Yazd to be turned into innovation factory

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — An abandoned factory in Yazd is to be turned into an innovation factory in the near future, ISNA reported on Tuesday. The vice president for science and technology Sourena Sattari paid a visit to the abandoned factory on Tuesday, which is planned to be turned into a place for startups, innovative production line and innovative services.

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

collective knowledge and it increases employee engagement.

In late April, the head of the Strategic Technologies Center Esmaeil Qaderifar said that innovation factories will be established in five cities of Mashhad, Tabriz, Isfahan, Shiraz and Yazd in the near future.

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

The establishment of innovation factories in Iranian metropolises diversify the national innovation ecosystem. The innovation factories focus on the regional and local priorities and based their activities on them.



The vice presidency for science and technology supports the innovation factories, however they are completely private and will be run by private accelerators.

The municipality, governorship and the Ministry of Transport and Urban Development are responsible for establishment of the innovation factories.

In late February, the vice president for

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

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

Sharif university to host 6th IT Weekend

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — Sharif University of Technology will host the IT Weekend 6 on July 4, Mehr reported Tuesday.

During the event, tech experts will share their experiences and knowledge in the form of short speeches with the attendees.

The event aims to share the experience and create motivation for establishment of innovation startups.

It also creates an opportunity for meeting, negotiation and synergy between innovators, entrepreneurs and



investors in different fields.

The IT Weekend also introduces innovative ideas in order to be used in new businesses and ecosystems.

Iranian university grants patent for innovative product lines to other countries

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — The Sharif University of Technology grants the patents of seven innovative product lines to different countries, IRNA reported on Monday.

A knowledge-based company at the university, which provides raw materials for polymers as well as High-Performance Parallel and Distributed Computing (HPDC) designed by Hossein Asadi and nano products for oil industry signed an agreement with China, an official with the Sharif University Hossein Mokhtari announced.

Pipeline inspection robot is another product, the patent of which is granted to Persian Gulf



countries, he added.

Iraq and Syria are other countries to which, Iran grants patents for production lines, he explained.

How virtual reality can help the global mental health crisis

The World Health Organization has reported that one in four people in the world will be affected by mental or neurological disorders at some point in their lives. Around 450 million people currently have such conditions.

Considering that mental disorders are among the leading causes of ill-health and disability worldwide, VR is a welcome additional treatment. Studies have already shown that VR can ease certain phobias, treat PTSD, help people with psychotic disorders experience less paranoia and anxiety in public settings, and reduce social anxiety.

To date, due to cost and technology limitations, VR has not been widely available as a treatment. However, with the rise of affordable standalone and mobile VR headsets, there is increased opportunity to use VR and decentralize mental health treatment, allowing more people to benefit.

PTSD affects 7.7 million people in the U.S., and one in three people who experience a traumatic event will have PTSD. The symptoms range from insomnia to personality changes. Exposure therapy - repeatedly exposing patients to their traumatic event in a controlled environment until triggers of the event no longer lead to anxiety - has been found to be more effective than treatments like medication and psychotherapy. VR is believed to be a particularly successful method of exposure therapy.

Research clinics have been experimenting with VR as a method since 1997. It is believed that the sensory and immersive nature of VR helps PTSD patients get better, faster than simply describing the trauma, and relapses are less frequent. It also allows clinicians to measure, document and learn from the results in order to better understand the brain and biological factors that serve to inform the prevention, assessment, and treatment of PTSD. The virtual environment means people don't need to imagine their traumatic experience - the work is done for them.

Dr. Albert Rizzo is a research professor at the University of Southern California's Institute for Creative Technology (ICT). The research institute, in partnership with Virtually Better and in collaboration with the U.S. Army, created Bravemind - a PTSD treatment system.

An early project undertaken by Bravemind researchers was intended to aid returning veterans process and deal with wartime trauma. Patients were outfitted with a head-mounted display and virtually sent back to Fallujah or other Middle Eastern areas of conflict. The soldiers physically held a rifle



or other weapon, and were taken through a simulation that included booming explosions, rumbling engines, and even smoke and dust vented into the treatment room.

Bravemind is considered a success and has been helpful as part of psychotherapy plans to help veterans process their experiences, reduce panic attacks, and even be able to sleep without medication, sometimes for the first time in years.

U.S. Army veteran interacts with the Bravemind VR therapy to safely relive his deployment experiences. In addition to the visual stimuli presented in the VR head-mounted display, directional 3D audio, vibrations and smells can also be delivered.

For years, VR therapy has been used in clinics for the treatment of phobias and other anxiety disorders. Anxiety disorders affect at least 40 million people in the U.S. (18.1% of the population) and cost the country \$42 billion per year. Specific phobias affect about 19 million individuals in the U.S.

Despite the vast number of patients afflicted by some form of anxiety disorder, only 36.9% receive treatment. This is where companies like Mimerse could make a real difference. Since 2014, this 'virtual pharmacy' has been developing therapeutic VR apps. Mimerse has been working with clinicians, scientists, healthcare and platform providers to create a scalable future of mental healthcare. The company's products include a relaxation and meditation experience for inducing calm and reducing stress, while apps to tackle phobias like the fear of public speaking and flying are coming soon. Mass-market apps like this could offer huge value for individuals globally.

Samsung and Mimerse created a VR program, called Itsy, to help people overcome their fear of spiders. Itsy lets users play with spiders. At the end of their three-hour sessions, each

of the volunteers were able to approach actual spiders without running away in fear.

Psious is a VR tool for mental health professionals. The platform is "democratizing virtual reality treatments for therapists and patients around the world" by providing mental health professionals with animated and live environments they can use in their clinical practice. The various scenarios provided within the platform comprise over 50 resources (virtual reality and augmented reality environments, 360° videos, etc.) employed for the treatment of anxiety disorders, fears and phobias, as well as for the practice of mindfulness and relaxation techniques.

Psious is one of the pioneering companies in the development of Virtual Reality for therapeutic purposes.

Limbix helps practitioners to treat patients with anxiety or phobias, and helps those who need pain management techniques. Real-world footage is incorporated into 360° videos designed to help patients deal with the challenges they face. Patients can face their fears, practice conversations, visit remote locations, and relax in tranquil settings while in authentic, virtual environments.

Michelle Craske is a psychiatry researcher at The University of California, Los Angeles. Michelle and her colleagues are testing whether virtual reality can curb anhedonia: the inability to feel pleasure in normally pleasurable activities - a common symptom of depression and other serious mental health conditions. The researchers are putting patients into pleasant scenarios - like strolling through a sun-soaked forest while piano music plays - and coaching them to pay close attention to the positive parts by talking through it in immense detail. The idea is to help patients learn to plan positive activities, take part in them, and reap the benefits of the good feelings they bring.

"Most treatments, up until now, have done an OK job at reducing negative [symptoms of depression], but a very poor job at helping patients become more positive," said Craske.

In a paper accepted earlier this year by the Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, Craske's team found that the treatment was more effective than cognitive behavioural therapy at boosting positive feelings. Participants who went through the treatment also reported lower levels of depression, anxiety, and other negative symptoms than their peers in the standard treatment group.

(Source: forbes.com)

ICT Ministry to establish system for media credibility assessment

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Ministry plans to establish a system for media credibility assessment, Mehr reported on Wednesday.

ICT Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi said that cyberspace promotes gossips and the media literacy is a method through which, one can recognize true and false stories and news.

Social networks are not news sources and Iran Telecommunication Research Center is providing a system through which, the reliability of sources for released news can be assessed.



The people should have access to tools and systems in order to assess the news they have faced in social media and cyberspace, he said.

Silence is not the way to deal with gossips but one should accept to explain about the reliability of the news to the people, he explained.

Knowledge-based companies improve sustainable employment: VP

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — Sustainable employment and resistance economy are dependents on today knowledge and development of knowledge-based companies, the vice president for science and technology said.

Sourena Sattari explained knowledge-based economy as the new business according to national demands.

The universities have a great role in knowledge economy and entrepreneurship, he said.

Knowledge cannot be bought by money and the researches which have done by state-run budgets have no result, he said.

Sattari highlighted the importance of private sector in boosting knowledge economy.

The methods for job creation and infrastructures should be corrected to have a successful knowledge economy, he said.

Traditional business cannot meet the demand of job creation for young generation, which is possible through new activities, he said.

He said that oil economy cannot respond to production and job creation for entrepreneurs.

The new entrepreneurship ecosystem provide 140 services based on knowledge-based economy, he said.

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).



Driverless electric truck starts deliveries on Swedish public road

Resembling the helmet of a Star Wars stormtrooper, a driverless electric truck began daily freight deliveries on a public road in Sweden on Wednesday, in what developer Einride and logistics customer DB Schenker described as a world first.

Robert Falck, the CEO of Swedish start-up Einride, said the company was in partnership talks with major suppliers to help scale production and deliver orders, and the firm did not rule out future tie-ups with large truckmakers.

"This public road permit is a major milestone ... and it is a step to commercializing autonomous technology on roads," the former Volvo executive told Reuters.

"Since we're a software and operational first company, a partnership with a manufacturing company is something that we see as a core moving forward," he said, adding he hoped to seal a deal by next year.

Falck said Einride, whose investors include ex-Daimler Asia trucks head Marc Llistosella, is also courting investors for an ongoing Series A fundraising, often a company's first sizable one. It previously raised \$10 million.

Auto alliances are on the rise to share the cost of electric and autonomous technology. Ford has vowed to invest \$500 million in U.S. electric utility truck startup Rivian.

Einride's T-Pod is 26 tonnes when full and does not have a driver cabin, which it estimates reduces road freight operating costs by around 60 percent versus a diesel truck with a driver.

Besides Schenker, Einride has orders from German grocer Lidl, Swedish delivery company Svenska Retursystem and five Fortune 500 retail companies, underpinning its ambition to have 200 vehicles in operation by the end of 2020.

Freight operators are under pressure to reduce delivery times, cut emissions and face a growing shortage of drivers.

Schenker picked Einride over established truckmakers as the T-Pod straddles the two biggest sector transformations: digitization and electrification, CEO Jochen Thewes said.

"We believe that Einride is the best concept out there for now," he said.

(Source: Reuters)

What you need to do about the WhatsApp vulnerability

Political dissidents, human rights defenders, opposition politicians and journalists in 45 countries may have been targeted.

WhatsApp has confirmed that a vulnerability in its app could allow hackers to take control of victims' phones just by sending an unanswered voice call.

Dozens of WhatsApp users including human rights organisations and a UK-based lawyer may have been targeted in the attack.

The attack was only used against «a select number of users» according to WhatsApp, but it could be adopted more widely unless people update their version of the app.

What do you need to do?

Although it is extremely unlikely that you have been targeted by these hackers, you should update your version of WhatsApp.

On an Android device, you can do this by visiting the Play Store app. Tap menu, before entering the apps & games section. If you're not already on the most recent version of WhatsApp you can tap update.

On an iPhone, you can do this by visiting

the App Store. Search for WhatsApp. Again, if you're not already using the most recent version you can tap update.

How can you safeguard against it?

The attack is being considered extraordinary by cyber security professionals.

This is not just because it targeted lawyers, who are not usually national security targets and whose communications with those targets - at least in many common law countries - are privileged.

It has caught their attention because there was no way to safeguard against it - not even by training users to spot the dodgy message.

Often cyber attacks require some kind of user input to succeed, whether the user clicks «allow» or «yes» on a pop-up, or follows a link, or downloads and executes a malicious file in a phishing email under the impression that it is innocent.

However, the WhatsApp attack was what was known as a «no-click» attack, meaning there was no user input needed at all - the hackers could just send the voice call, and even if it was

not answered, gain access to the target's phone.

The only protection is to update the version of WhatsApp.

Is this related to the forwarding limit?

WhatsApp introduced a forwarding limit this year to tackle the spread of fake news.

The current bug has nothing to do with these changes and was caused by a «buffer overflow» vulnerability in the Secure Real-time Transport Protocol (SRTP) used by WhatsApp - essentially a mistake in the way the program handled using computer memory.

It is not known exactly how the exploit worked, but it is believed that malicious code may have been included in the details which are sent to a receiver's phone when a user makes a WhatsApp call, such as the caller's name and number.

Who did this?

WhatsApp stated that «a select number of users» were targeted by an «advanced cyber actor», which the Financial Times has identified as the Israeli technology company NSO Group.

NSO Group claims its technology, known as Pegasus, is only used by intelligence and law

enforcement agencies.

Critics of the firm, including human rights organizations, have claimed that many of the state agencies it works with are repressive and often target their lawyers and activists.

How did it happen?

Organizations involved in the production of hacking tools - known as «dual-use technologies» because they can have both civilian and military uses - often hire security researchers to identify vulnerabilities in popular software and develop tools to exploit them.

Last November, UK intelligence agency GCHQ revealed its process for identifying these vulnerabilities and figuring out whether to inform the company that produces the software to get them fixed or whether to exploit them to hack the computers of national security targets.

The export of these technologies is heavily regulated and Amnesty International is currently taking the Israeli ministry of defence to court to challenge the NSO Group's export licenses.

(Source: news.sky.com)

Welfare Organization collects \$4.5m for flood-hit provinces

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Within the framework of a campaign launched by Iran’s Welfare Organization philanthropists donated a total of 190 billion rials (about \$4.5 million) to the flood survivors, an official with the Welfare Organization has said.

The financial assistance will be spent on rebuilding and re-rofitting the houses damaged by the flood, and providing the household appliances for those under the Organization’s coverage, Mehr news agency quoted Farhad Aqtar as saying on Tuesday.



Repairing and construction of housing units will be completed by the end of the Iranian calendar month of Khordad (June 21), he added.

Mohammad Nasiri, head of the Red Crescent Society volunteer organization said in early May that Iranian philanthropists have contributed some 2.4 trillion rials (nearly \$57 million) to the people residing in flood-ravaged provinces across the country.

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.

China’s third humanitarian package for flood survivors arrives

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — China has airlifted relief supplies to the country for the third time to help those hit by massive floods, Mehr news agency reported on Tuesday.



China sent essential supplies, including diesel generator, sewage pumps, microphone and amplifier, and tents to help thousands of people who have been displaced and suffered great loss as a result of the flooding in many provinces in the country.

The plane carrying the equipment landed at the Imam Khomeini International Airport on Sunday, the report added.

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.

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Turkish Earthquake

(August 19, 1999)
BBC Correspondents Richard Hollingham and Pam O’Toole reported on the reasons for the severity of the recent **earthquake** in Turkey.

The earthquake struck in an area **prone to tremors**. It’s at the junction of the two continents of Europe and Africa where the earth’s **crust** is broken and **fragmented**. One of the world’s major geological faults passes through the region. The **North Anatolian Fault** and its branches cross several **built up areas** and earthquakes aren’t unusual. However, this latest is particularly violent. Its effects are made worse as the ground is made up of **sediment** rather than hard rock and can in effect swallow buildings much like **quicksand**. Scientists from the British Geological Survey who have visited Turkey have expressed concern over the buildings in the area. The number of deaths from similar tremors in areas of the United States and Japan has been lower largely due to the buildings being designed to **withstand** earthquakes. One of the problems is that many construction companies simply **flout** building regulations **laid down** by the Turkish **authorities**. Engineers accuse some Turkish builders of using poor quality reinforcing bars and **skimping** on cement. Such problems are **compounded** by migration from poor rural areas to major cities. The new arrivals often build their own houses or **shacks** from whatever materials they can find.

■ **Words**
earthquake: a shaking of the ground caused by movement of the Earth’s crust
prone to tremors: likely to suffer from earthquakes
earth’s crust: the Earth’s surface
broken and fragmented: split into small parts
North Anatolian Fault: one of several areas, such as the San Andreas Fault in North America, where earthquakes are common
built up areas: usually inner cities with a large number of buildings and therefore a large population
sediment: soft deposits
quicksand: a deep soft sand which people can easily sink into when walking on it
to withstand: to resist
flout: ignore
laid down: issued an official order
authorities: a word commonly used in news reports for official bodies such as the police, the judiciary or a local council
skimping: using less of a quantity than you really need in order to save money
compounded by: made worse by
shacks: small huts or poorly built houses

(Source: BBC)

Animals in captivity: Is there such a thing as a good zoo?

By Faranakh Bakhtiari

TEHRAN — The recent activities of Tehran Zoological Garden have sparked a heated debate between advocates of animal rights and zoo directors, on whether or not zoos endanger wildlife species for their own interests or they have educational and protective objectives.

Do wildlife species find contentment living in standardized zoos or in nature?

During the past years, Tehran Zoological Garden has succeeded in becoming a member of the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA). Moreover under the population management program aiming at endangered species reproduction, the Persian leopard and Asiatic lion have been transferred to the Zoo for captive breeding.

In this regard, a male Persian leopard was sent to Iran from Portugal last year in an attempt to revive the species, who mated naturally at the Zoo with a female leopard and at the moment, the leopard is pregnant.

Subsequently, the Zoo transmitted a male Asiatic lion from Britain’s Bristol Zoo under the supervision of EAZA to implement a revival plan for extinct , while the female one will also be sent to the country from Ireland within the next few days.

■ **No natural habitats, no chances of bringing animals back from extinction**

However, animal rights defenders blame Tehran Zoological Garden for keeping the wildlife species, such as Asiatic lion, who once have been pushed toward extinction in the country under the unfavorable conditions, believing that when their natural habitats have been destroyed and there is no possibility for them to return back to the nature, keeping them is violating their right.

Breeding species in captivity will not definitely ensure a stable population in the country once again, therefore, why not allocate the captive breeding costs to protect those animals in the nature from extinction?

Sepehr Salimi, an animal rights advocate, criticizing the Zoo said that the restoration of Asiatic lion or any other extinct species in captivity is impossible, because the most important issue for the species’ survival is living in the natural habitat, and when it is destructed, then the species eventually will disappear, as well.

He further points out that if we are to breed extinct species in the zoos, we should not use the term revival because the revival of an extinct species occurs when a species is found in its original habitat without human interference for survival, so reviving species in zoos is meaningless.



Over the recent years, Tehran Zoological Garden did not have a good record on wildlife conservation, as 14 African lions have lost their lives due to inappropriate nutrition, and two tigers who were relocated from Russia for captive breeding lost their lives due to an outbreak of glanders (an infectious disease occurs primarily by ingestion of contaminated food or water), which is mainly related to not meeting the standards, he explained.

Given that the Asiatic lion’s original habitat no longer exists, why should it be reproduced? Their revival only serves the zoos’ interests, Salimi stated.

The transfer of endangered species to the country takes place under the supervision of the EAZA; an association that has given Tehran Zoological Garden five years to fully standardize all animal habitats to become a member of the union, although, it does not mean that no violation will happen, he explained.

Time Magazine reported that many European zoos cull animals or violate their rights, and that EAZA keeps records of this, but won’t release them.

In 2012, Copenhagen Zoo in Denmark put down, via lethal injection, two leopard cubs whose genetics were over-represented.

In 2010, the decision by officials at Edinburgh zoo to put down two hog piglets named Sammi and Becca sparked protests.

David Williams Mitchell, communications

and membership manager for EAZA, in this regard said that “as a conservation organization, we realize that there’s a crisis in the natural world, and that we have an obligation to protect species in the wild from human actions,” adding, “one of the ways we do that is through breeding programs. But we have limited space within EAZA to carry out that, and we need to prioritize animals that can contribute to future of the species.”

Keeping animals in an unfavorable condition results in mental illness and depression, he lamented, adding that zoo is a purchase and sale center, because the number of animals are not determined.

Referring to the zoo’s positive attempts, he noted that zoos can be a great habitat for those injured animals not able to live in natural habitats, while they are not permitted to reproduce the species.

From the animal right advocates point of view, zoo is not a proper place for all the wildlife species, and all must be shut down, he concluded.

■ **Zoos improve wildlife conservation**

This is while, Iman Memarian, Tehran Zoological Garden director, said that zoos should be run for cultural and educational purposes as well as wildlife conservation.

Standard zoos are one of the most important bases for wildlife conservation, being used to educate people about wildlife protection, he said, adding that also, many

wildlife-related sciences, such as veterinary are expanding in zoos so that veterinarians can control animal diseases in nature.

On the other hand, people are contemplating how our ancestors destroyed the wildlife, and what we should do today to preserve the remaining species, he also added.

Currently, 80 percent of the animal habitats in the Zoo is living up to the internationally defined standards, and it must be completely in line with the necessary standards during the next 5 years to become a permanent member of EAZA, he explained.

Memarian further noted that some thinks that when an animal is in the cage, it is not feeling well at the moment, however, one should bear in mind that animals have different needs, all of which can be provided at standard zoos.

Today, it is possible to measure the amount of hormones in the body through the urine and faeces of animals, so researches show that the level of wildlife satisfaction in standard zoos is even higher than their level of satisfaction in nature, he added.

“Tehran Zoological Garden has gone far to meet all the standards required to keep Asiatic lion and leopard, he said, the condition is improved, the Zoo is living up to the required standards, and take safety measure strictly,” he further highlighted.

“No habitat is yet determined for the Asiatic lion to live in, and there is no possibility to re-introduce it to the nature,” he lamented, adding, there is no plan for releasing the Persian leopard in nature, but we are ready to work with the EAZA in this regard.

Defending the EAZA operation in response to the recent criticisms, Memarian said that the union has so far succeeded in captive breeding of endangered species in zoos and has reintroduced them to their habitat. Although, there are people who are generally opposed to the zoo, ignoring the positive functions of zoos.

He further called on the role Department of Environment play to help improving the zoos’ condition, as the country’s zoos are far below the global standards.

Zoos’ function is not defined properly; those not aiming at educational and protective plans are violating animal rights, he concluded.

While worldwide animals are being kept in zoos for various purposes it is not easy to decide whether the decision will suit the animals in conserving them or they are rather being tortured cruelly.

Tehran Municipality to convert petrol taxis into hybrid electric

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Tehran taxi organization, affiliated to the municipality, is planning on converting petrol taxis to plug-in hybrids, the organization CEO, Alireza Qannadan, has said.

According to the plan some 80,000 fossil-fuel based taxis will be transformed into hybrid electric, in an attempt to cut emissions, hence air pollution in the capital, Tasnim news agency quoted Qannadan as saying on Wednesday.

In collaboration with MAPNA Group all petrol taxis in Tehran will become hybrid, he said, adding that under a pilot plan some 80,000 taxis will be converted in the first phase and after overcoming setback all taxis will undergo the necessary changes.

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

Qannadan didn’t provide any specific details time span or the necessary budget for implementing the plan.

Not everyone can afford a new hybrid, plug-in hybrid or electric car, but it is possible to take the conversion route.

Tehran is grappling with air pollution and increasing carbon emission and developing an electric vehicle technology that converts in-use fossil-fuel based vehicles into hybrid electric, increasing fuel efficiency and reducing emissions.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → €

Persian leopard to receive artificial insemination next week

For the first time, a Persian leopard will undergo artificial insemination in Tehran Zoological Garden next week.

“The precious female leopard has lost a hand being injured in a hunting trap in Golestan province, who is being kept in the Garden,” Mehr quoted Iman Memarian, Tehran Zoological Garden director, as saying on Monday.

Referring to European Endangered Species Programs (EEP), he noted that EEP is a population management program aiming at endangered species reproduction by the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA).

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“dys-”

■ **Meaning:** bad

■ **For example:** All the siblings in their extremely **dysfunctional** family lost contact as adults.

PHRASAL VERB

Leave somebody/ something behind

■ **Meaning:** if a person, country, or organization is left behind, they do not develop as quickly or make as much progress as other people, countries, etc.

■ **For example:** In class, a child with poor eyesight can soon get left behind.

IDIOM

Your guess is as good as mine

■ **Explanation:** I do not know either; I have no idea. Typically said in response to a question

■ **For example:** A: “Where’s Hank?” B: “Your guess is as good as mine. He didn’t say anything to me.”

نخستین لقاح مصنوعی پلنگ ایرانی هفته آینده در تهران

لقاح مصنوعی پلنگ ایرانی برای نخستین بار در کشور طی هفته آینده در باغ وحش تهران انجام می‌شود.

دامپزشک و مدیر باغ وحش تهران در گفتگو با خبرنگار مهر ایمان معماریان یادآور شد: ما یک پلنگ ایرانی ماده داریم که متأسفانه یک دستش را در تله شکارچیان در استان گلستان از دست داده است و باغ وحش تهران آن را نگهداری کرده است.

وی توضیح داد: برنامه اروپایی تکثیر و حفاظت EEP برنامه‌ای است که تحت نظر اتحادیه باغ‌وحش‌های اروپا تکثیر گونه‌های در حال انقراض را نظارت می‌کند.

Israel rushed to seek truce as Gaza upped rocket range: Haniyeh

Nearly 50 Palestinians wounded in Nakba Day anniversary protests

I→ Palestinians have begun marking the occasion — when the Israeli regime proclaimed existence and drove hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homeland in 1948 — with protest rallies in the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

According to Press TV, the Israeli military has deployed the so-called Iron Dome missile system across the occupied territories and closed some of the Gaza streets.

In southern Gaza, Israeli forces have used skunk water cannon to disperse Palestinian protesters.

In a recent communiqué, the National and Islamic Forces, the supreme coordinating body of major Palestinian factions, called for widespread participation in Wednesday's demonstrations to mark the forcible eviction of Palestinians from their motherland by the Tel Aviv regime in 1948.

Similarly, the organizing committee of the weekly anti-occupation Great March of Return protests in Gaza urged Palestinians to join the Nakba Day rallies in the coastal sliver and stage a general strike at schools, universities and colleges.

The Hamas resistance movement, which runs Gaza, has also called on Palestinian people to attend all the rallies and events marking the occasion.

Speaking in Ramallah on the eve of Nakba Day, Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad



Shtayyeh said Israel has targeted Palestine's geography and demography, while the U.S. has imposed a financial war on the Palestinian nation in support of the occupying regime.

"Israel is waging a war of geography on us by confiscating our land on a daily basis," he said. "We are also facing a war of demography to expel our people from Jerusalem [al-Quds]."

This U.S. administration and its ally, Israel, believe that it would be possible "to

defeat us with a financial siege and other measures, including the closure of the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) diplomatic mission in Washington, and cutting aid to UNRWA, in order to force us to accept 'the deal of shame,'" he noted, referring to U.S. President Donald Trump's controversial yet-to-be-unveiled proposal on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Nakba Day is marked annually on May 15. It refers to the forcible expulsion

of some 700,000 Palestinians from their lands in 1948 and their scattering across refugee camps in the West Bank, Gaza, and neighboring countries.

Hanan Ashrawi, a member of the PLO Executive Committee, said in a statement marking the Nakba Day that the Trump administration's unilateral measures against the Palestinians are a new "Nakba."

She also called for a "multilateral international gathering to confront the U.S.-Israeli alliance and schemes," including the so-called "deal of the century."

"We count on peace lovers all over the world to support our just cause and human rights in the face of the fascist forces led by the Trump administration and [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu," she added.

The Palestinian Authority's ruling Fatah party said that as they commemorate Nakba Day, the Palestinians are more determined to "uphold their principles and legitimate rights, including the right of return, self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with east Jerusalem as its capital."

On Tuesday, thousands of Palestinians took part in a rally marking the Nakba Day in front of the offices of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) in Gaza.

Sudan army and protesters agree on three-year transition period

TEHRAN— Sudan's military leaders who seized power last month by overthrowing longtime ruler Omar al-Bashir have agreed with opposition groups to a three-year transition period to transfer power to a fully civilian administration, a general has announced.

Speaking to reporters in the early hours of Wednesday, Lieutenant General Yasser al-Atta said a final agreement on the sharing of power, including the formation of the next ruling body - the sovereign council - would be signed with the protest movement the Alliance for Freedom and Change within 24 hours, Al Jazeera reported.

"We agreed on a transitional period of three years," Atta said.

"We vow to our people that the agreement will be completed fully within 24 hours in a way that it meets the people's aspirations," he added.

Thousands of protesters have been holding a sit-in outside the army headquarters in the capital, Khartoum, for weeks, demanding that the army generals, who took power after toppling al-Bashir on April 11, step down.

The army generals had initially insisted on a two-year transition period, while the protest leaders wanted four years.

Atta also said that, during the transition period, the Parliament would be composed of 300 members, of which 67 percent would be from the Alliance for Freedom and Change and the rest would be from other political groups.

The first six months of the transitional period would be allocated to signing peace accords with rebels in the country's war-zones, he added.

U.S. officer shoots dead black woman heard saying 'I'm pregnant'

TEHRAN— A Texas police officer fatally shot a black woman who grabbed his Taser and used it against him, moments after the woman appears to say "I'm pregnant" in an altercation captured on video.

Pamela Turner was shot late on Monday at an apartment complex in Baytown, about 25 miles (40 kilometers) east of Houston, and pronounced dead at the scene, said Lieutenant Steve Dorris.

Baytown Police Lieutenant Dorris said the officer was patrolling the complex and tried to arrest the 44-year-old African American woman because he knew she had outstanding warrants. The officer, who is Hispanic and an 11-year veteran of the Police Department, had previous dealings with Turner, but Dorris did not provide further details about the interactions or Turner's warrants.

Dorris says the officer opened fire after the woman grabbed the officer's Taser and used it against him.

According to Al Jazeera, in the video posted on Snapchat, a woman is heard saying "You're actually harassing me" and "I'm actually walking to my house" before falling to the ground.

She is also heard screaming, "I'm pregnant". The woman, who is on the ground, appeared to reach towards the officer, and then he fired five shots.

Dorris said they could not confirm whether she was pregnant and that an autopsy will determine that. He said the officer was not seriously hurt.

"It was a sad situation. Tragic. The lady ... she did live here. We would often see her, see her walk her dog around," resident Raquelle Cuellar told local television news channel KTRK-TV Houston.

U.S. plots in Middle East will not succeed: Qassem

TEHRAN — A high-ranking member of the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement says U.S. President Donald Trump's administration is in a state of confusion concerning the developments unfolding in Middle East, stating that Washington's schemes in the region will not thrive.

"(The United States of) America knows that its ability to change equations in the region is weak because there are resistance fighters and a resistance front. Therefore, it cannot dictate what it wants and impose its Israeli and non-Israeli plans," Hezbollah Deputy Secretary General Sheikh Naim Qassem said.

He then advised leaders of the Persian Gulf kingdoms to review their foreign policy, emphasizing that U.S. plots in

the Middle East will fail as the anti-Israel resistance front is confronting them with all available means.

On March 8, the Hezbollah secretary general said the anti-Israel resistance front, thanks to solid and unwavering support from Iran and Syria, has well managed to frustrate the Tel Aviv regime's plots in the Middle East.

"All Lebanese and Palestinian resistance groups, supported by Iran and Syria, thwarted the project to pull the plug on the front. The steadfastness and resilience demonstrated by Hezbollah in Lebanon, Gazans, Syria as well as Iran foiled the fiendish plot against the region back in 2006," Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah said as he addressed his supporters via a televised speech broadcast live from the Lebanese capital, Beirut.



Turkey says discussing S-400 working group with U.S.

TEHRAN — Turkey is discussing with the United States setting up a working group to assess the impact of its purchase of Russian missile defenses systems, but will not delay their delivery, Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said Wednesday.

Tensions between Turkey and the United States are running high over Ankara's decision to buy the S-400 missile defenses, which are not compatible with NATO systems, Reuters reported.

U.S. officials say Turkey's planned purchase would jeopardize its role in building F-35 fighter jets as well as its purchase of the aircraft, which Washington says would be compromised by the presence of the S-400s.

The United States and other NATO allies that own F-35s fear the radar on the system will learn how to spot and track the jet, making it less able to evade Russian weapons.

Ankara says U.S. concerns are overstated and has been pushing Washington to establish a working group to assess the risks the system would be posing to the F-35 jet.

"We are exchanging opinions on how this could work, we will continue to share our views. Once we agree on that, we will decide if there will be a working group or not," Cavusoglu told reporters in Ankara. "The discussions are ongoing, there is nothing certain yet," he added.

On Monday, a source familiar with the matter said the United States had asked Tur-



key to delay taking delivery of the S-400 system, currently scheduled for July, in return

for potentially approving the formation of the working group.

"There is no such thing as postponing or cancelling at this stage," Cavusoglu said. "It's not on the agenda either."

The disagreement is the latest in a series of diplomatic disputes between the United States and Turkey. They include Turkish demands that Washington extradite cleric Fethullah Gulen, differences over Middle East policy and the war in Syria, and sanctions on Iran.

A Turkish court on Wednesday remanded in jail U.S. consulate employee Metin Topuz and set the next session of his trial on espionage charges for June 28, a lawyer for Topuz said.

Yemen drone capabilities turn the tide in the war

I→ The American newspaper further refers to the Yemen drone attack on Aramco oil stations in Saudi Arabia as well as the Abu Dhabi airport attack and concludes: "The Houthis, who have been derided by enemies as backward and tribal, have now launched what Saudi officials estimate to be more than 140 attempted drone flights."

Anyway, it seems that Yemen drone capabilities in addition to their missile work is now changing the power balance in Yemen war in favor of the resistance movement.

Yemen highly-developed, powerful drone and missile technology now sends a message to Saudis and its allies that if they continue their invasion to Yemen, they will face much graver consequences.

Undoubtedly, Yemen drone attacks on vital installments at the very heart of Saudi Arabia can be a way to prevent further intrusions, especially because Saudis are unlikely to have any intention to end this war, on their own.

Trump considering replacing John Bolton: Report

I→ But then he said he would not rule out the possibility of military action in Iran amid escalating tensions before slamming former secretary of state John Kerry for his involvement in the issue.

His remarks came after Bolton said on Sunday that the United States was sending an aircraft carrier strike group and a bomber task force to the Middle East in a "clear and unmistakable" message to Iran.

The Pentagon announced on Friday that the U.S. was deploying an amphibious assault ship and a Patriot missile battery to bolster an aircraft carrier and B-52 bombers already sent to the Persian Gulf.

Yemeni drones target 10 vital Saudi facilities: Al Mayadeen

I→ An unnamed Yemeni military source told Arabic-language al-Masirah television network that Yemeni air defense forces and their allies shot down the US-built MQ-1 Predator combat drone with a surface-to-air missile late on Tuesday.

According to Press TV, the source added that the unmanned aerial vehicle was brought down as it was on a mission in the skies over Dian area in the Bani Matar district of the province.

On April 19, the media bureau of Yemen's Houthi Ansarullah movement announced in a statement that Yemeni air defense forces and their allies had shot down a Chinese-built medium-altitude and long-endurance Wing Loong drone with a surface-to-air missile.

The statement issued on April 19 added that the drone was struck as it was on a surveillance mission over Bani Muadh area in the Sahar district of Yemen's northwestern province of Sa'ada. It was armed with air-to-surface weapons.

Erdogan, Putin agree to convene working group on Syria soon

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin have agreed that a working group on Syria's northwest should convene as soon as possible, Turkey's foreign minister said Wednesday.



A recent offensive targeting Syria's Idlib and surrounding areas by the Syrian army and its allies, backed by Russia, has uprooted more than 150,000 people, the United Nations says, while rescue workers and civil defense officials say more than 120 civilians have been killed.

Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said that attacks by Syrian government forces were damaging prospects of forming a UN-sponsored committee to draft a new Syrian constitution.

(Source: Reuters)

Brexit-supporting Conservative faction will vote against PM May's deal

TEHRAN — A majority of members of the European Research Group, a large euroskeptic faction in Britain's ruling Conservative Party, will vote against Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit deal when it is brought back before Parliament next month, a lawmaker said.

Owen Paterson, a former minister, said he was concerned that her deal would leave Britain following EU laws. He said the Democratic Unionist Party, which props up May's party, is concerned it will align Northern Ireland more closely with the EU than the rest of the United Kingdom, Reuters reported.

"Sadly, we will vote against it again, as the DUP put out a statement, because it doesn't change the essential nature of the withdrawal agreement, which is unacceptable we will have laws imposed on us by 27 different countries where we are not involved," Paterson told the BBC.

"And very importantly for the DUP and us it potentially breaks up the United Kingdom by creating a new entity called U.K. and I and that means you could end with Scotland wanting to follow and that is really dangerous for the union."

Polish ambassador spat at in Israel amid rising tensions

TEHRAN — Poland's ambassador to Israel was spat at while sitting in his car in Tel Aviv, Israeli police said, and the Polish government condemned the incident, which coincided with rising tensions between the two countries.

"I am very worried to hear of a racist attack on @PLin-Israel ambassador @mmmagierowski. Poland strongly condemns this xenophobic act of aggression. Violence against diplomats or any other citizens should never be tolerated," Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki wrote in a tweet on Wednesday.

According to Reuters, an Israeli police spokesman said on Wednesday a 65-year-old Israeli architect was arrest-

ed over Tuesday's spitting incident. At a court hearing on Wednesday, he was put under house arrest until police complete their investigation, his lawyer said.

The Polish Foreign Ministry summoned Israel's ambassador to Warsaw, Anna Azari, over the matter, a ministry spokeswoman told the state-run news agency PAP.

"The event is under police investigation. We express our fullest sympathy to the ambassador and our shock at the attack," Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman Emmanuel Nahshon said.

Polish-Israeli relations have deteriorated in recent months over accusations that Warsaw's nationalist PiS government has tolerated a revival of anti-Semitic behavior, a charge

it denies.

Hundreds of far-right supporters marched in Warsaw on Saturday in protest against a U.S. law on the restitution of Jewish property seized during or after World War Two, an increasingly prominent issue in Polish election campaigns.

David Johan, the suspect's lawyer, told reporters his client had been turned away from the Polish Embassy on Tuesday after trying to inquire about restitution.

Later, outside the embassy, the alleged assailant "approached the vehicle of the Polish ambassador to Israel, opened the door and then spat (at him)," police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said.

Johan said the attack had not been premeditated.

Pau Gasol, No. 3 scorer in Olympic history, to miss FIBA World Cup

Pau Gasol will miss September's FIBA World Cup after left foot surgery, but Spain's head coach hopes to have the Milwaukee Bucks center at a fifth Olympics next year.

"We will try to do the best and get one of the spots for Tokyo 2020 so he can come with us to the Olympics," Spain coach Sergio Scariolo said, according to an Olympic Channel translation of an AS report.

Gasol, 38 and already older than every previous Olympic basketball medalist, owns silver medals from 2008 and 2012 and a bronze from Rio. This will be Gasol's first time missing a global championship since the 2010 World Championship, when he cited a need to rest from two major muscle injuries, and Spain struggled to a sixth-place finish without him.

He led the 2004 and 2008 tournaments in scoring. Gasol's 623 career Olympic points rank third behind Brazilian Oscar Schmidt (1,008) and Australian Andrew Gaze (789), according to reports from the Rio Games. Gasol would likely have to play at least two more Olympics to pass Gaze.

It was unknown whether Gasol would continue with the national team after Rio, but in 2017 he played at EuroBasket and became that tournament's career points leader, passing Dirk Nowitzki and Tony Parker.

Others from Spain's golden generation have retired from the national team, including José Calderón and Juan Carlos Navarro. The active pool still includes NBA veterans Marc Gasol and Ricky Rubio.

The top two European nations at the World Cup will qualify for Tokyo, but it's not Spain's only chance. Four more nations overall will qualify for the Games at a global tournament next year.

(Source: NBC Sports)

Manchester City 'extremely concerned' over reports of Champions League ban

Manchester City say they are "co-operating in good faith" with an ongoing UEFA investigation into alleged financial fair play (FFP) breaches but are "extremely concerned" over an apparent leak from European football's governing body.

UEFA launched an investigation into a potential breach of FFP rules in March but the Premier League champions have denied any financial irregularity. According to a report in the New York Times, citing "people familiar with the case" UEFA will push for the club to be given at least a one-season ban from the competition, after a meeting at its Swiss headquarters two weeks ago.

City issued a strongly-worded statement on Tuesday with concerns that someone said to be close to the investigation, conducted by the investigatory committee (IC) of the Club Financial Control Body (CFCB), has released information.

"Manchester City FC is fully cooperating in good faith with the CFCB IC's ongoing investigation," a club statement to ESPN reads. "In doing so the club is reliant on both the CFCB IC's independence and commitment to due process; and on UEFA's commitment of the 7th of March that it '... will make no further comment on the matter while the investigation is ongoing.'

"The New York Times report citing 'people familiar with the case' is therefore extremely concerning. The implications are that either Manchester City's good faith in the CFCB IC is misplaced or the CFCB IC process is being misrepresented by individuals intent on damaging the club's reputation and its commercial interests. Or both.

"Manchester City's published accounts are full and complete and a matter of legal and regulatory record. The accusation of financial irregularities are entirely false, and comprehensive proof of this fact has been provided to the CFCB IC."

Allegations were made in German publication Der Spiegel, purportedly obtained by whistleblowers Football Leaks, that City circumvented FFP rules by inflating sponsorship deals.

The club have already been punished for violating FFP, striking an agreement in 2014 that saw them fined rather than banned from the Champions League for inflated sponsorship deals with companies linked to the club or their ownership.

A final conclusion over the current investigations is not likely to be reached before the start of next season's Champions League. City could also appeal any decision, via the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

(Source: ESPN)

Klopp plans 'preseason' ahead of run-up to Madrid

Jurgen Klopp says he will fill the three-week gap before the Champions League final against Tottenham Hotspur by putting his Liverpool players through a two-week "preseason."

The two Premier League clubs played their final domestic games of the season on Sunday and are in the unusual position of having a lengthy wait for the June 1 clash in Madrid.

Klopp has given his team a few days off to recover from a grueling Premier League campaign in which they pushed Manchester City to the final day in the title race, eventually losing out by one point.

They will reconvene next week to prepare for the showpiece meeting at Atletico Madrid's Wanda Metropolitano Stadium.

"We have to do a couple of things in preparation for the Champions League, media stuff," Klopp told the club's website.

"We have to do that, then the boys will have a couple of days off and then we have two proper weeks as a preseason for the Champions League final.

"We will do that, we will play that, [hopefully] win it, come home and then the people get what they deserve."

Liverpool, who defeated Barcelona to reach their second consecutive Champions League final, are bidding for their sixth European Cup, which would be their first piece of silverware under Klopp.

Tottenham, who produced a superb comeback to beat Ajax Amsterdam in the semifinal and reach their first Champions League final, will hope to use the gap to their advantage with top striker Harry Kane recovering from an ankle injury.

(Source: Soccernet)

Doping: Poland's Banka poised to become new WADA president

Poland's Sport and Tourism Minister Witold Banka is set to become the next president of the troubled World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) after a vote on Tuesday left him as the only remaining candidate.

Banka, an elite athlete who helped Poland win a bronze medal in the 4x400 meters relay at the 2007 world championships, beat Dominican Republic Vice-Minister of Sport and Tourism Marcos Diaz in a vote to replace the outgoing Craig Reedie.

Banka will take over an agency in turmoil as WADA emerges from a Russian scandal that fractured the anti-doping movement.

"This is an important moment for Poland. Being chosen is a great honor, but also a great responsibility," Banka told Polish news channel TVP Info.

The vote was taken by the representatives of the Public Authorities — the 21 government members who sit on the WADA Executive Committee and Foundation board — in Montreal.

The 34-year-old will be formally confirmed as the fourth WADA president during the World Conference on Doping in Sport in Katowice, Poland from Nov. 5-7.

If anyone else is to challenge Banka they must have the support of at least one Foundation Board member and submit their can-



didacy to WADA before a May 31 deadline.

Outspoken WADA Vice-President Linda Helleland was once viewed as a leading contender for the top job at WADA but Banka was chosen by the Council of Europe as its candidate.

The former Norwegian minister, who

was critical of the Executive Committee's controversial decision last September to reinstate the Russian Anti-Doping Agency (RUSADA), has not given any indication she will challenge the Pole a second time.

RUSSIAN CRISIS

RUSADA was suspended in 2015 after

a WADA-commissioned report by Canadian lawyer Dick Pound outlined evidence of state-backed, systematic doping in Russian athletics.

The Russian agency's reinstatement last year angered a string of sports bodies and athletes around the world.

But the long-running saga appears headed for a conclusion with WADA having forced Russia, as part of the conditions for reinstatement, to turn over data and samples from the tainted Moscow lab which are now being analyzed.

Restoring confidence and trust will be Banka's first job.

Travis Tygart, the United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) chief who had been critical of Reedie and WADA's handling of the Russian affair, offered his congratulations to Banka in a statement, adding he hoped the two men might work together.

"We are excited and ready to get to work with him and those committed to protecting clean sport to achieve the mutual goals of restoring trust to the organization with athletes and the public, most importantly giving all athletes a true voice in the fight against doping," said the USADA president.

(Source: Reuters)

'I have taken the decision to leave Atletico' - Griezmann



French striker Antoine Griezmann has told Atletico Madrid he will leave them in the close season, the Spanish club said on Twitter on Tuesday.

The 28-year-old Griezmann has a contract until 2023 with Atletico, but has a buy out clause of 120million euros (\$134million) and has been the target of several approaches from La Liga rivals Barcelona.

"Antoine Griezmann has told the club he will not continue as a Rojiblanco (red and white, the club's colors) next season," the club said on Twitter.

Within a few moments the player then posted a video explaining himself.

"After speaking with Cholo (club coach Diego Simeone), then with Miguel Angel and the people in the hierarchy of the club I wanted to speak with you, the fans, who have always given me a lot of love," said Griezmann, wearing a plain black t-shirt in front of a simple white background behind him.

"I wanted to tell you I have taken the decision to leave," said the French 2018

World Cup winner.

"I have had five wonderful seasons here and you will always be in my heart," said the affable forward known for doing dances from the video game Fortnite, when celebrating his goals.

"The truth is it has been difficult to take this route but it is what I feel I need and I would like to thank all of you for the love you have shown me during these five years."

With 133 goals in 252 games at Atletico the attacker has been ever-present and has rarely been unfit or injured.

He was a Champions League runner up in 2016, losing to arch-rivals Real Madrid. In 2018 however Atletico beat Marseille in the Europa League final.

Griezmann finished third for the Ballon d'Or in 2016, after France lost in the final to Portugal at the European Championships and was a huge presence as Les Bleus romped to a memorable World Cup win at Russia 2018 after which he also finished third for the Ballon d'Or.

(Source: AFP)

Former Wales boss Coleman sacked by China's Hebei



Former Wales manager Chris Coleman was sacked as coach of struggling Hebei China Fortune on Wednesday after the club's fans demanded his removal.

The 48-year-old's side have won only once in nine Chinese Super League (CSL) games this season and languish one place off the bottom of the table.

A Hebei team containing former Barcelona star Javier Mascherano lost 3-2 at home to mid-table Henan Jianye at the weekend and had a player sent off for the fourth time in all competitions this year.

Angry fans held aloft a banner during Saturday's defeat that said in English: "Hello Mr Coleman, please go home! You're fired!!!" Above that in Chinese it read: "Coleman, your mum wants you home for dinner."

Coleman, who took Sunderland down into England's third tier in his previous job, was appointed as a replacement for West Ham United-bound Manuel Pellegrini in June last year.

But after a decent start, he won only seven of his 28 games.

"After friendly negotiation and agree-

ment reached between the two parties, with immediate effect, Mr Chris Coleman will no longer serve as head coach of Hebei China Fortune Football Club," the club said in a statement on the Twitter-like Weibo.

"We sincerely thank Coleman for his hard work and contribution to the team and wish him all the best in his future work and life."

Coleman was a defender for Crystal Palace, Swansea City, Blackburn Rovers and Fulham during his playing days, and later became the manager of then-Premier League side Fulham.

He spent four years in the hot seat at Craven Cottage and then had a spell with Real Sociedad in Spain.

But he enjoyed his most successful time in charge of his native Wales, taking them to a shock semi-final place at Euro 2016.

His sacking at Hebei comes as little surprise.

"We let you down and we can't make any excuses for the recent performances," said a statement.

"We have to say to you: sorry."

(Source: AFP)

Woods sets sights on Olympic gold in Tokyo

FARMINGDALE, N.Y. (Reuters) — Tiger Woods has collected plenty of Green Jackets and Claret Jugs during his decorated career, but there is one shiny thing missing from his collection -- an Olympic gold medal.

That is about the only big thing worth winning that Woods does not have, and something he would like to take care of at next year's Tokyo Games.

"Would I like to play in the Olympics? Yes," Woods said on Tuesday during a news conference at Bethpage Black ahead of this week's PGA Championship.

"I'm sure I won't get many more opportunities going forward at 43 years old to play in many Olympics.

"That would be a first for me and something I would certainly welcome if I was part of the team."

Golf returned to the Olympics at Rio in 2016 after a century-long absence, but many players who qualified stayed away due to concerns about contracting the mosquito-borne Zika virus.

Woods was battling a career-threatening back injury at the time and did not qualify for the United States team. He



is healthy again now after a 2017 spinal fusion.

Justin Rose won the men's gold medal for Britain in

Rio and while South Korean Park In-bee triumphed in the women's event.

The 2020 Olympic golf will be played at the Kasumigaseki course in suburban Tokyo.

Each country is restricted to a maximum of four players, and there is no guarantee Woods will qualify, though based on current form he has an excellent chance.

"Getting there and making the team is going to be the tough part," he said.

"I just know that if I play well in the big events like I did this year, things will take care of itself."

Woods collected his fifth Green Jacket when he won the Masters in April, his 15th major title and first in more than a decade.

He also has won three Claret Jugs awarded to the British Open winner.

Woods will go for a fifth Wanamaker Trophy at this week's PGA Championship and next month he will bid for a fourth U.S. Open trophy at Pebble Beach.

Bulgarian boxer suspended in California

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — A Bulgarian boxer who grabbed a female broadcaster's face and kissed her on the lips during a post-fight interview was suspended until July by the California State Athletic Commission on Tuesday following tearful testimony by the interviewer.

Kubrat Pulev, a heavyweight contender known as "The Cobra," was also ordered during a commission hearing to attend sexual

harassment prevention classes and pay a \$2,500 fine before he can fight again in the state of California.

Pulev, who has only one loss in 27 fights, grabbed Jennifer Ravalo's face and kissed her in the middle of a live interview moments after knocking out Romania's Bogdan Dinu in the seventh round of a March fight in Costa Mesa, California.

One of Bulgaria's most popular sports-

men, Pulev apologized for his actions during the hearing as his girlfriend, the Bulgarian pop star Andrea, sat behind him, wearing dark glasses.

Attorneys for Pulev said that the fighter had got caught up in the moment following his big win and "didn't have his wits about him" when he kissed the reporter.

Pulev and his lawyers argued in the hearing

that Ravalo did not appear to be very upset about the incident because she joined the boxer and his team at a post-match celebration later that night.

But Ravalo said in tearful testimony that Pulev also grabbed her buttocks off-camera following the interview, leaving her feeling humiliated, and has not apologized in the two months since.

"I did not want him to kiss me," Ravalo said.

Marc Wilmots named Iran football coach

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Belgian coach Marc Wilmots has been named as new head coach of Iran national football team, Mehdi Taj, the president of the Football Federation of Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI), said.

The 50-year-old coach will take charge of Team Melli until the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

Wilmots is reportedly asking for an annual salary of US\$ 1.5 million along with two assistant coaches of his choice. However, FFIRI is interested in adding former Iran international and Osasuna midfielder Javed Nekounam to the national team coaching staff.

The Belgian led his homeland to the 2014 World Cup and Euro 2016, but was sacked after that tournament in France.

Former Spain and Real Madrid coach Julen Lopetegui, Morocco national team coach Herve Renard and former Netherlands coach Dick Advocaat were also nominated for this position.

Wilmots, who has replaced Carlos Queiroz who left Iran to take over as Colombia coach, was without a team after leaving the Ivory Coast coaching position in November 2017.

Wilmots will start his work as Iran coach in two friendly matches against Syria and South Korea.

He was one of the best players in Belgium and Europe in his time. He wore the Belgian national jersey 70 times and scored 28 goals for his team. He was also team captain.

Iran, who are top AFC team in the FIFA rankings at No. 21, will host Syria in Tehran on June 6.

Team Melli will also face South Korea five days later at World Cup Stadium in Seoul.

Iran are preparing for the 2022 World Cup qualifiers that begin in the second half of this year.



Iran's Vahid Nouri claims gold at IBSA Judo Grand Prix

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Vahid Nouri from Iran won a gold medal at the International Blind Sports Federation Judo Grand Prix in Baku n Tuesday.

The world bronze medalist and Asian Para Games champion topped the podium in the men's up to 90kg, overcoming Azerbaijan's Rovshan Safarov.

Russia's Vladimir Fedin and Ukraine's world title holder Oleksandr Nazarenko won the bronze medals.

Mohammadreza Kheirollahzadeh of Iran also claimed a silver at the men's over 100kg after losing to Uzbekistan's Shirin Sharipov.

Georgia's Revaz Chikoidze and Japanese Kento Masaki secured bronze medals.

Uzbekistan secured first place in the medal table, followed by host Azerbaijan and Ukraine.

Around 280 judokas from 36 countries participated in Baku in an event that is also supported by the International Judo Federation. Athletes had the chance to secure qualification points for the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics.



Paralympics.

A further Grand Prix in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, will take place this year from 7-8 October. In between there will be the IBSA Goalball and Judo International Qualifier in Fort Wayne, USA, from 2-5 July.

Persepolis, Sepahan vying for title in IPL's final weekend

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Both Persepolis and Sepahan are trying to be winners of this season's Iran Professional League (IPL) title but only one team will be lifting the trophy on Thursday.

Branko Ivankovic's team can win the title for the third time in a row with even a draw against Pars Jonoubi in Abadan.

Sepahan must defeat already-relegated Esteghlal Khuzestan if they want to keep their hopes alive to win the IPL title for the sixth time.

Persepolis lead the table with 58 points, three points ahead of Sepahan.

Another Iranian popular football team Esteghlal, who are third in the table, will also try to book a place at the AFC Champions League's next season. The Blues will host Sepidrood, who need a win to avoid relegation.

Padideh, as one of the best teams in the current season, will face Machine Sazi in Tabriz. Yayha Golmohammadi's



team have a chance of winning a place at the AFC Champions League.

Furthermore, Saipa will play Sanat Naft in Abadan, Nassaji host Paykan, Naft Masjed Soleyman meet Zob Ahan and Foolad face Tractor Sazi.

Female referees create AFC history

Asian football history will be made when Japanese referee Yoshimi Yamashita alongside assistant referees Makoto Bozono and Naomi Teshirogi become the first all-female cast to officiate an AFC Cup match between Myanmar's Yangon United FC and Naga World of Cambodia at the Thuwunna Stadium.

This will be the first time three female referees officiate in the Asian Football Confederation's (AFC) club competitions, marking a new milestone in Asian refereeing.

The trio had to pass a demanding fitness test, matching the requirements for men officials before being selected and their appointment is a timely boost, as they are also part of 12 Asian match officials representing the AFC at the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup France in June.

The experienced Yamashita was delighted to add another milestone in her career after officiating in the 2016 and 2018 FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup and AFC Women's Asian Cup Jordan 2018.

"This is one of my dreams," said a proud Yamashita. "We've worked very hard and this is the result. I have to thank the AFC for giving us this opportunity to join the history books in women's refereeing in Asia."

"It is an important achievement for us because it is the first time three women will officiate in an AFC club competition and it comes before the FIFA Women's World Cup so we will do our best in every match."

Assistant referee Teshirogi believes their appointment will inspire female referees in Asia to follow in their footsteps.

She said: "I'm excited and happy for the team but we know it will be a tough match because the players have different personalities and temperament. I worked really hard with my personal trainer and I'm glad I passed the fitness test."

"In the future, we hope to set the example for more female referees to take the leap to officiate in men's football matches. More women passed the men's fitness test so that shows how motivated the women referees are."

Bozono said the experience of being an assistant referee at the AFC Cup will help in her preparations for the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup.

She explained: "I'm very honored to be selected for the AFC Cup and sure it is a good warm-up for the FIFA Women's World Cup. It is exciting to work with Yoshimi and Naomi. They are very experienced and have been very supportive. I will learn a lot from them."

Female assistant referees Kim Kyoung-min and Lee Seul-gi will also officiate in the AFC Cup match between Ceres Negros FC and Becamex Binh Duong alongside male referee Kim Dae-yong.

Their selection showcases AFC's commitment to celebrate women's contribution to Asian football and it fittingly marks the continuation of the AFC's #ItsMyGame campaign in 2019 where a series of videos will be launched in the coming months.

(Source: the-afc)

Son relishing a return to 'fire mode' against Liverpool

Tottenham Hotspur's Korea Republic superstar Son Heung-min is hoping the long layoff will see him return to his goal-scoring best against Liverpool in the UEFA Champions League final at Wanda Metropolitano Stadium on June 1.

Son, the darling of Korea Republic football, has netted 18 times in all competitions which saw him sweep the board with Tottenham's end-of-season awards following Sunday's 2-2 draw with Everton in the English Premier League.

But the 26-year-old, who did not feature against Everton due to suspension, has suffered a recent dip in form after failing to find the back of the net in his last five games for Spurs.

"I think everyone needs this time to rest. We're trying to get as fit as possible, to make sure we give everything in this game," Son told British media.

"I am a really, really positive guy and it is one of the best feelings to be playing in the Champions League Final, so I just want to make sure that I am ready for every single ball and every single second."

Son is confident that a three-week break will see him return to 'fire mode' against a Liverpool side who fell short of winning their first domestic title in 29 years.

"It is in three weeks, so everything is in



our hands. I hope that I am in fire mode. I don't want to talk about winning or losing. There's a long time to prepare for this important game."

"Winning the Champions League means a lot, but losing would be painful for a long, long time. We just want to be ready and then we will see what happens. Liverpool are a strong team, so how we play will be important."

Tottenham return to training on Wednesday as they began their preparation for their first European Cup final.

Son is then expected to join his Korea Republic teammates for international friendlies against Australia and Islamic Republic of Iran ahead of the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar Qualifiers.

(Source: AFP)

New A-League team Macarthur FC confirm name and club colors

The A-League's new club for the 2020-21 season will be called Macarthur FC.

The announcement was made on Wednesday, with the name decided on after extensive community consultation.

The third Sydney-based team's colors will be black, white and ochre, and their logo will include a bull.

"Like the club, [the colors] are authentically fun, tribal, proud, hardworking and inclusive," Macarthur FC announced in a statement.

"Ochre is included to represent one of the traditional colors for the local Dharawal Aboriginal people on whose land the Macarthur region sits."

"The logo includes a bull which is demonstrative of the club's physical power as well as a tilt to history when a runaway herd of cattle was discovered in the region in 1795."

"[The] three stars of the Southern Cross symbolize football's links with the grassroots football community, the National Premier League and the A-League."

Matildas coach Ante Milicic will take up the reins of the third Sydney-based club after guiding the Australian women's team through this year's World Cup and next year's Tokyo 2020 Olympics, when his national contract expires.



"The timing was right for me," said Milicic, who relished to challenge posed with a start-up club.

Previously a Socceroos assistant coach, 45-year-old Milicic believed his international experience, including World Cups, would stand him in good stead at the helm of an A-League team.

The Macarthur region has also been the childhood home of at least 20 Socceroos and 10 Matildas players with a combined games total of 600 for the Socceroos and 433 for the Matildas.

Five men and five women from the area have played in at least one World Cup, with Brett Emerton and Heather Garriock each having reached a century of national team appearances.

(Source: Soccer.net)

Igor Stimac appointed new India coach

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) has appointed Igor Stimac as the Head Coach of the senior men's team on a two-year contract.

Stimac comes with an experience of over 18 years in coaching, structuring, and developing football and players in Croatia and internationally.

As a Coach, Stimac helmed Croatia's qualification to the 2014 World Cup in Brazil. During his tenure as the national coach of Croatia, he handed debuts to the likes of Mateo Kovacic, Ante Rebic, Alen Halilovic, and Ivan Perisic. He also played a pivotal role in developing the likes of Dario Srna, Daniel Subasic, Ivan Strinic, Kovacic, Perisic, and other players.

His last assignment was with the Al-Shahania Club in Qatar. As a player, he was part of the Croatia team which finished third at the 1998 World Cup in France. He was also a member of the team which qualified for the quarterfinals of 1996 European Championship in England. Besides, he was also a part of the Yugoslavia U-19 team which won the U-20 World Cup in Chile in 1987.

After Stimac's appointment, Kushal Das, General Secretary, AIFF said "Indian Football would benefit immensely under Igor Stimac." "His credentials as a coach, and experience as a player are sure to add immense value to the players, and the Indian Football ecosystem. The momentum gained needs to be sustained."

Former India player Shyam Thapa, who was also a member of the bronze-medal winning squad in the 1970 Asian Games, and currently the Chairman of the Technical Committee mentioned that "Stimac's recommendation was unanimous." "All the members of the Technical Committee including the AIFF Technical Director Mr. Isac Doru were immensely impressed, and convinced about him being best suited for the job. He is a World Cupper, and has guided Croatia to World Cup as a coach. Who else could have been a better candidate?" he said. "He also impressed us with his extensive research on Indian Football."

Stimac's first assignment will be the Kings Cup in Buriram, Thailand where India play Curacao in their first match on June 5.

(Source: ESPN)



Manchester City: 'Battered' Liverpool fans song draws criticism

Manchester City have been criticized over a video that appears to show players and staff joining in a song that celebrates Liverpool fans being "battered in the street".

The video is thought to have been captured on an aircraft as the club's travelling party returned from a 4-1 Premier League win at Brighton.

That victory saw the Blues beat Liverpool to the title by one point.

It is unclear which players and staff - if any - are joining in the singing.

The song - which City described in a statement as a "regular chant during the 2018-19 season" - recalls Liverpool's defeat in last year's Champions League final in Kiev.

It cites fans being "battered in the streets" and "crying in the stands" and includes a line on Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah being injured - but with the original culprit, Real Madrid's Sergio Ramos, changed to City defender Vincent Kompany.

However, many of the party only join in at the "Allez, Allez, Allez" chorus.

"It's honestly embarrassing that some Man City fans think it's OK for their players to sing about fans being beat up," one Liverpool fan tweeted, while many more responded saying the video was "classless", "unprofessional" or "naive".

City also said in their statement that "any suggestion that the lyrics relate to Sean Cox or the Hillsborough tragedy is entirely without foundation".

Sean Cox was left with brain injuries after being attacked before Liverpool played Roma at Anfield in the Champions League in April 2018.

(Source: BBC)

Cagliari escape sanction for their fans' racist

Serie A has decided not to sanction Cagliari for their fans' racist abuse of Moise Kean despite admitting their actions were "reprehensible".

The Juventus forward, 19, suffered racist abuse from the stands during his side's 2-0 win at Cagliari on 2 April.

"It emerged the chants in question, although certainly reprehensible, had an objectively limited relevance to race," the body said.

Juventus sealed their eighth consecutive Serie A title last month. Kean held his arms aloft after scoring Juve's second goal of the match, seemingly in response to the chants, and was subjected to further abuse.

After the match the Italy international wrote on Instagram: "The best way to respond to racism."

But Juve manager Massimiliano Allegri and defender Leonardo Bonucci both said Kean should take some of the blame for the way he celebrated.

"He shouldn't have celebrated in that manner," said Allegri. "He is a young man and he has to learn, but certain things from the crowd also shouldn't be heard."

Italy international Bonucci - who scored the opening goal - told Sky Sport Italia: "I think the blame is 50-50. Moise should not have done that and the Curva [fans] should not have reacted in that way."

However, Allegri later said Bonucci "expressed himself badly" in reacting to the racist abuse suffered by his team-mate and said: "Racism must always be fought and is never justifiable."

Following the incident, Italy manager Roberto Mancini called the racist abuse "intolerable".

(Source: BBC)

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

If a mistake is made in any affairs, their beginning and end must be compared.

Imam Ali (AS)

“Forest of Silence” offered at Cannes Film Market

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian director and producer Soheil Abdollahi is at the Cannes Film Market – Marché du Film to promote his debut film, “Forest of Silence”.



A poster for “Forest of Silence” and has been held annually since by Iranian director Soheil Abdollahi.

Starring Mahya Dehqani, Shapur Suri and Alireza Qazvini, the horror film is about Kimia, a young psychologist who is doing research on Japan’s Suicide Forest.

Another Iranian film “Cinema Donkey”, a dark comedy by Shahed Ahmadlu, is also on display at the Cannes Film Market, which will run until May 23.

The Marché du Film is the business counterpart of the Cannes Film Festival, and is the largest film market in the world. It was created in 1959 then, simultaneously with the major international film event.

NEWS IN BRIEF



“Cross without Love” appears in Iranian bookstores

A R T **TEHRAN** — Prominent German writer Heinrich Boll’s novel “Cross without Love” has recently been published in Persian by Negah Publications in Tehran.

Translated by Sarang Malakuti, the book is about two German brothers, Hans and Christophe, who are sent to the West and Eastern Fronts separately during the World War II.

The book was Boll’s debut novel, which was written in 1947 but published posthumously in 2002.



Film Museum of Iran to offer free admission on Intl. Museum Day

C U L T U R E **TEHRAN** — The Film Museum of Iran in Tehran along with other museums in the country will offer free admission on Saturday to observe International Museum Day.

International Museum Day has been celebrated worldwide since 1977 on or about May 18 to highlight the importance of museums and the challenges they face.

The Film Museum of Iran is located on Vali-e Asr Avenue in the Bagh Ferdowsi neighborhood.

Stan Lee’s ex-manager charged with elder abuse against comic book co-creator

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — The former manager of Stan Lee has been charged with elder abuse against the late comic book legend, a Los Angeles court official said on Monday.

Keya Morgan was charged on Friday with five counts of elder abuse, including false imprisonment, fraud and forgery stemming from an incident last summer when Lee was 95 years old, a spokeswoman for the Los Angeles Superior Court public information office told Los Angeles City News Service.

The spokeswoman added that a warrant for Morgan’s arrest had been issued.

Morgan, a New York-based memorabilia collector who became involved with Lee in 2017, was served with a restraining order last year after Lee’s family accused him of elder abuse.

The Los Angeles District Attorney’s office on Monday said it was unable to provide any information. An attorney for Morgan could not be located but last year Morgan denied allegations of abuse.

Lee, the co-creator of “Spider-Man,” “Iron Man,” “The Hulk” and dozens of other Marvel superheroes, died in November 2018 at the age of 95.

Artists, experts receive Ferdowsi Medals

1 → Mojtabai has so far written and published over 200 books and articles in Persian and English in Iran and out of Iran.

Aidanlu has also published books and articles on the Shahnameh.

Saeidi is a naqqal or a performer of naqqali, a style of storytelling dedicated to Shahnameh epic stories. He performs at teahouses across Lorestan Province.

In his brief speech, Entezami said that disregard of the Shahnameh might imperil the identity of the Persian language.

“If there was no Ferdowsi, Iranians would not have any myths, and returning to this epic spirit manifested in the Shahnameh is necessary indeed,” he remarked.

“We need to pay due attention to the Shahnameh while producing our cultural products, to help them remain eternal,” he added.

The honoring ceremony was part of an international conference, which opened in Mashhad on Monday to discuss connections between the Shahnameh and the Silk Road. The conference came to end on Wednesday with a celebration of Ferdowsi Day at the tomb of Ferdowsi in the northeastern Iranian town of Tus.



Persian language scholar Seyyed Fat'hollah Mojtabai (2nd L) accepts a Ferdowsi Medal at the University of Ferdowsi in Mashhad on May 14, 2019. (Photoshahr/Hossein Shariat)

Painter Parviz Kalantari’s daughter to remember father in new exhibit

A R T **TEHRAN** — Negar, a daughter of the prominent Iranian artist Parviz Kalantari who was famous for his paintings of desert architectural structures, plans to commemorate her father in her new exhibition, which will open at Tehran’s Four Gallery on Friday.

Speaking to the Persian service of Honaronline on Wednesday, Negar said that her new collection represents the grief she felt over her father’s death.

“The collection entitled ‘Your Essence in Colors’ also represents the influence of dad on my palette,” she added.

“The paintings reflect the feelings he has bestowed upon me. I have taken several elements from my father’s artworks and have mixed them with my own flowers,” she mentioned.

“The works are very simple, and the colorful flowers show the grief of losing dad while they also portray life,” she added.

“In the book ‘Death Is Not the End of Pigeon’, my father said, ‘My dear one, believe that death is not the end of life. Life continues,’” she remarked.

Parviz Kalantari is the author of “Death Is Not the End of Pigeon”, a book of stories and pictures, which he has

dedicated to his daughters.

“I think he has meant that he is remembered by others through the paintings he has created over the years. The good works he has done will always be remembered by people and this way life continues,” she explained.

She added that her dad always asked her when she is going to hold an exhibit.

“Now after three years, my works are ready and my family and I decided to hold the exhibit now, which mostly coincides with my father’s death anniversary,” she concluded.

The exhibit will be running until May 27 at the gallery located at 4 Eshraqi Alley off Shariati Ave. near Seyyed Khandan Bridge.

Kalantari died on May 21, 2016. He was most famous for his paintings of Iranian indigenous nomadic life and desert architectural structures, making urban dwellers more familiar with those that move to and fro with the change of seasons.

He was from a generation whose main concern was making a bridge between modern paintings and the venerable cultural heritage, which is a tradition.



A poster for Negar Kalantari’s collection “Your Essence in Colors”.

Photographers bring “Hope” to University of Gottingen

A R T **TEHRAN** — The Germany-based Iranian photographers Shirin Abedi and Arasch Zandieh are displaying a collection of works featuring portraits of people in a number of Asian countries, including Iran, in an exhibition titled “Hope” at the University of Gottingen.

The exhibition, which opened on May 9, is being organized in collaboration with the Gottinger Kommunikations- und Aktionszentrum (KAZ) and the Centre for Global Migration Studies (CeMig), the organizers have announced.

The exhibition is organized to make a contribution to revising the often one-sided media coverage of migration. The two photographers themselves have a history of migration and whose portraits deal with



Germany-based Iranian photographer Arasch Zandieh poses with some of his works on display in the exhibition “Hope” at the University of Gottingen, Germany. (Zandieh.de)

people in different countries.

Zandieh came to Germany from Iran as a child with his parents. The portraits selected for the exhibition were created during a six-month journey through Asia.

His pictures are intended to draw attention to “the fact that all people - no matter where they come from in the world - have the same basic needs and that everyone has the right to a safe life.”

Born in Iran, the photojournalist and documentary photographer Shirin Abedi now lives in Hannover. In her collection, she puts her spotlight on the stories and emotions of all those who do not live where they were born.

The exhibit, which will run until June 27, is being curated by Ammar Hatem, who works at KAZ.

Tearful Felicity Huffman admits role in U.S. college admissions scandal

BOSTON (Reuters) — Actress Felicity Huffman tearfully pleaded guilty on Monday to paying to rig a college entrance exam for her daughter, part of a wide-ranging scandal in which wealthy parents used fraud to secure their children spots at prominent U.S. universities.

The onetime star of the television series “Desperate Housewives” pleaded guilty in federal court in Boston to a conspiracy charge related to her payment of \$15,000 to have someone secretly correct her daughter’s answers on the SAT exam.

Huffman is among 50 people accused of taking part in a scheme that involved cheating or bribery. Wealthy parents paid a total of \$25 million to bribe coaches to help their children gain spots at universities like Yale, Georgetown and the University of Southern California (USC).

William “Rick” Singer, a California college admissions consultant, pleaded guilty in March to charges that he facilitated the cheating and helped bribe university sports coaches to present clients’ children as fake athletic recruits.

Prosecutors have charged 33 parents with participating in the scheme with Singer, including Huffman, who was nominated for an Oscar for best actress for her role in 2005’s “Transamerica,” and Lori Loughlin, who starred in the TV series “Full House.”

Assistant U.S. Attorney Eric Rosen said Huffman, 56, arranged through Singer to have an associate acting as



Actress Felicity Huffman leaves the federal courthouse after facing charges in a nationwide college admissions cheating scheme in Boston, Massachusetts, U.S., May 13, 2019. (Reuters/ Katherine Taylor)

an SAT proctor for her daughter’s exam correct her daughter’s answers at a test center he controlled through bribery.

Crying, Huffman, who is married to the actor William H. Macy, stressed that her daughter did not know about the crime. “Everything else Mr. Rosen said I did, I did,” she said.

She exited the courthouse holding her brother’s hand while taking no questions from reporters.

Twenty people so far have agreed to plead guilty since officials carried out a wave of arrests under the code name “Operation Varsity Blues” on March 12. Prosecutors have said the investigation is ongoing.

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg gets “best fight” MTV Movie award nod

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg scored nominations on Tuesday for the 2019 MTV Movie and TV awards, where she will compete for top honors with blockbuster offerings “Game of Thrones” and “Avengers: Endgame.”

The diminutive liberal justice, 86, got four nods at the youth-oriented awards show, including “best fight” and “best real-life hero” courtesy of the 2018 documentary “RBG” that chronicled her legal legacy and rise to become an unexpected pop culture icon, especially among women.

The MTV Movie and TV awards usually focus on crowd-pleasing movies and TV shows and have become an irreverent antidote to the winter Hollywood awards season, which honors more serious fare. Winners are chosen by fans voting online and will be announced at a ceremony airing on June 17.

“RBG”, which also was Oscar-nominated earlier this year, got nods for best documentary as well as in the new MTV category, “most-meme-able moment.”

Ginsburg became the first public figure to be nominated in the popular best fight category, in which she was cited for battling “inequality.” Her rivals include fictional characters in clashes from “Captain Marvel” and medieval fantasy television series “Game of Thrones.”

Ginsburg also featured in the new MTV category of best real-life hero alongside



U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg is seen during a group portrait session for the new full court at the Supreme Court in Washington, U.S., November 30, 2018. (Reuters/Jim Young)

tennis star Serena Williams and Australian comedian Hannah Gadsby.

“Game of Thrones” and Marvel superhero film “Avengers: Endgame” - already the all-time second-biggest movie after 2009’s “Avatar” - got four nominations each. They included nods for stars Robert Downey Jr, Josh Brolin, Emilia Clarke and Maisie Williams.

MTV again dispensed with gender classifications, placing men and women together in performance categories in a move to embrace equality and gender fluidity.

The June awards ceremony from the California beach city of Santa Monica will be hosted by “Shazam!” star Zachary Levi.