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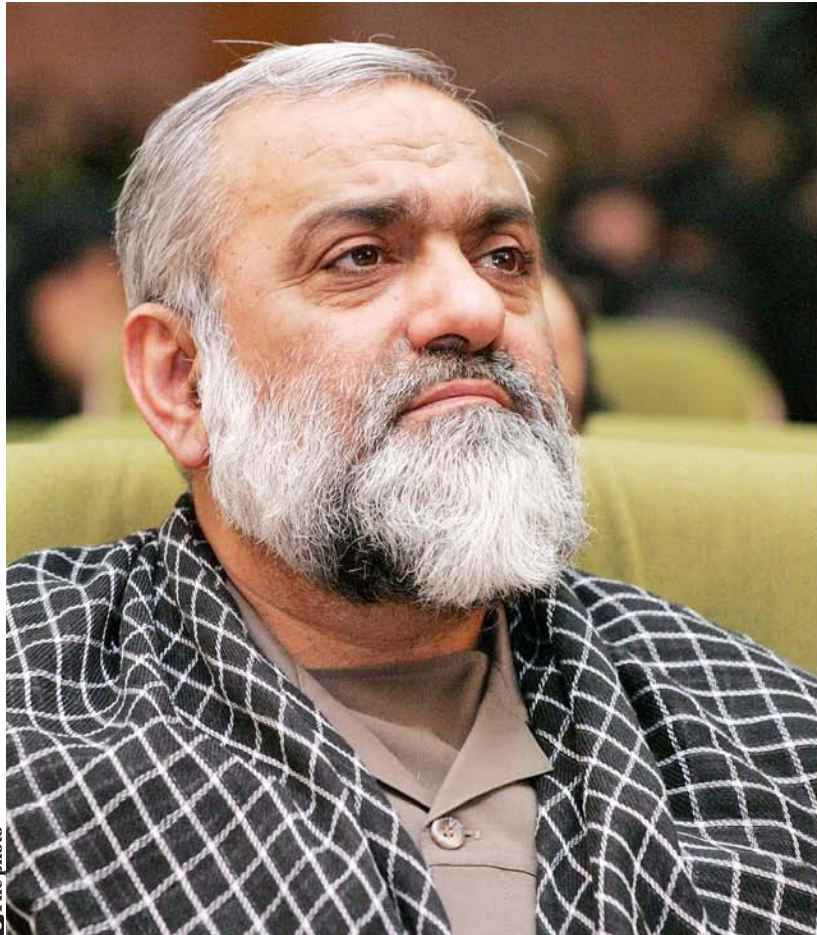


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Leader names two new deputy commanders for IRGC



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Tehran, Damascus discuss expansion of economic ties

TEHRAN — Hassan Danaeifar, the advisor to Iran's first vice president and also the chairman of the Iranian committee on development of economic relations with Syria and Iraq, and Atef Nadaf, the Syrian minister of interior trade and consumer protection, met in Damascus to explore the ways for expanding and strengthening economic

ties between Iran and Syria.

During the meeting, Nadaf stressed the significance of current cooperation between his country and Iran in the reconstruction projects in Syria, IRNA reported on Thursday.

Danaeifar for his part announced Iran's readiness for more cooperation with Syria in these projects. **→4**

Russia, China should take practical measures to save JCPOA: Zarif

TEHRAN — Russia and China must take practical measures if they want to protect the achievements of the nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad said on Friday.

Zarif made the remarks upon arriving in Beijing on Friday, according to ISNA.

"China is an important partner of the Islamic Republic of Iran," he said. "China is one of the remaining members to Barjam (JCPOA) and it is important to hold consultations with the Chinese side, especially with regard to the recent developments and Iran's decision to pursue its rights under Barjam." **→2**

6 civilians killed in Saudi strikes on Yemen's capital

TEHRAN — At least six civilians, including children, have been killed and dozens of others wounded in multiple airstrikes by a Saudi Arabian-led coalition on various neighborhoods of Yemen's capital, Sana'a.

According to Yemen's Arabic-language al-Masirah television network, Saudi-led fighter jets pounded various parts of the

capital on Thursday, killing at least six civilians, four of whom were children from one family, and wounding dozens more.

Medical officials said the death toll could rise due to the intensity of the strikes and the number of those who have been seriously injured. They added that there could be other civilians, dead or wounded, under the rubble. **→13**

Future of the JCPOA does not look good: Paul Pillar

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Professor Paul Pillar, who was CIA intelligence analyst for 28 years, tells that the future of the JCPOA does not look good.

Pillar says "The Europeans so far have simply not given much indication of implementing an economically significant arrangement that would be sufficient for Iranians to say that the deal is meeting their expectations."

He also adds that "The economic clout of the United States is such that the U.S. administration can still scare and intimidate businesses and governments from having much to do with Iran."

Following is the text of the interview:

■ Given that Iran's needs were not met by

the Iran nuclear deal, by which I mean removing the sanctions, and as the result of the U.S. withdrawal from that agreement and Europe's passivity, Iran has announced that it is stopping 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: Iran is saying its patience is not unlimited. It has complied with its obligations under the JCPOA for an entire year, despite the U.S. reneging on its own obligations. President Rouhani is saying that must change. Iranian leaders have given up on the Trump administration. They still are hoping for a change in U.S. policy as of January 2021, but it has become politically and economically untenable for Iranian leaders simply to keep waiting for

U.S. policy to change. Rouhani is challenging the Europeans in particular to do more to make up for the economic shortfall from the U.S. reneging.

■ The Iranian nuclear deal is an agreement based on the clarity and commitment of both sides. Paying attention to the important role that the U.S. plays on the other side and the passivity of European countries towards the U.S., Iran remains committed to this agreement. Bringing into consideration the current situation, how do you assess its future?

A: The future of the JCPOA does not look good. The Europeans so far have simply not given much indication of implementing an economically significant arrangement that would be sufficient for Iranians to say that the deal is meeting their expectations. **→6**

Iran has world's most transparent nuclear program: Putin

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — Russian President Vladimir Putin said Iran's nuclear program is the most transparent one in the world and Moscow "regrets" to see the 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers is "falling apart".

Speaking to reporters after talks with Austrian President Alexander van der Bellen on Wednesday, Putin aired his frustration with expectations from Moscow to save the landmark agreement, saying Russia was not "a fire brigade" to "rescue everything."

"We regret that the deal is falling apart," Putin said, according to Russian media.

"After the signing of the agreement Iran was and still is the world's most verifiable and transparent country in this sense."

"Iran is fulfilling all of its obligations," said Putin, citing the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

"We cannot rescue everything that does not fully depend on us. We've played our part," adding that Europe could do "nothing" to salvage the deal without the U.S.

Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) issued a statement on Wednesday, saying the country is no longer fulfilling some of its obligations under the JCPOA, and setting a two-month deadline for the remaining parties to fulfill their undertakings.

The statement came a few days after the U.S. administration renewed five of seven sanctions waivers that allow Russia and European nations

to conduct civilian nuclear cooperation with Iran but revoked the other two as part of its pressure campaign against Tehran.

Washington also stopped issuing waivers to buy Iranian crude oil on May 2.

On May 8, 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump pulled his country out of the JCPOA.

Following the U.S. withdrawal, Iran and the remaining parties launched talks to save the accord.

The European Union has vowed to counter Trump's renewed sanctions on Iran, including by means of a new law to shield European companies from punitive measures, but it has so far failed to do anything beyond making statements.



PERSPECTIVE

Hanif Ghaffari
Head of the Politics Desk of the TehranTimes

May has no choice but to resign!

The prime minister will have difficult days. Perhaps if Theresa May had resigned after having won poor results in the previous parliamentary elections, she was in a better position today! What's happening today in England and Downing Street, No. 10, has been the British prime minister's choice! The fact is that Theresa today has no choice but to resign. She is becoming the second victim of the British withdrawal from the European Union. Of course, Theresa does not have much in common with her former counterpart, David Cameron!

David Cameron resigned after the referendum on leaving Europe and the result of the referendum. However, Theresa, from 2017, has resisted the appeal of some of its party members to resign. The British prime minister thought that the result of such a resistance would be survival of London's political and executive equations! This false impression turned Theresa May into an unsuccessful politician.

European media have recently reported breaking domestic negotiations in the UK over how to exit the European Union. The news shows that Theresa May is approaching the end of her political life. Undoubtedly, few will know British Prime Minister as a successful politician!

Talks between Labour and the government aimed at breaking the Brexit impasse have ended without an agreement. Jeremy Corbyn said the discussions had "gone as far as they can", blaming what he called the government's "increasing weakness and instability".

Theresa May said the lack of a "common position" within Labour over a further referendum had made talks "difficult".

The failure of the Labor and Conservative parties to negotiate a way out of the European Union is the most possible news for the British Prime Minister and his little supporters. This could turn into another obstacle on the way to Britain's exit from the European Union. On the other hand, re-referendum on exit from Europe will not be easy in the UK, and there will be controversy.



ARTICLE

Martin Love
Political analyst from North Carolina

Whether more U.S. sparked chaos or real accord is the question that haunts the world

Iran's leaders, Iran's many friends and the people of Iran well know what is afoot right now with the Trump Administration, with John Bolton and Mike Pompeo, and with at least some members of the U.S. Congress and with other Neocons in D.C. "think tanks" and their various institutions. Iran also knows the Israeli role in drumming up potential war in the Mideast, just as the Zionists did in the lead up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003. It is quite obvious that Trump and colleagues are searching for a pretext to attack Iran, saying that virtually anything Iran does or might do to defend itself or to ward off an attack may constitute a pretext for war.

Mike Pompeo on May 13 landed in Brussels to discuss Iran with EU leaders, skipping a day when he earlier intended to visit Russia and Putin and Lavrov. Pompeo did not talk to the media. European leaders urged "restraint" on the U.S. But as imminent journalist Pepe Escobar reported, it is "naïve" to think the Europeans "will grow a backbone" and definitely condemn Pompeo and Trump.

At the same time some prominent European military brass countered the U.S. and said there had been no particular "threat" from Iranian-backed forces in Syria and Iraq, but they were rebuked by the U.S. It may be a futile hope that wiser people in the Pentagon and military will decline to take orders from Pompeo now and from National Security Advisor John Bolton. But what about Russia and China in particular?

Neocon Paul Wolfowitz, one of the primary pushers of the war on Iraq, said back in 2003 that the Russians would not stop the U.S. He was correct then, but now? It was Putin who stood up before the U.N in New York several years ago and posed the rhetorical question to the General Assembly in reference to the U.S.: "Do you realize what (the U.S.) has done?" in Iraq, Libya and so many other places in the Middle East. **→6**



© IRNA/ Reza Ghaderi

Smile festival for Afghan children

TEHRAN — A smile festival called Grass-roots Unity was held in Shiraz on Thursday for Afghan children, including those whose fathers were martyred fighting for the Fatemiyoun Brigade.

Back in March, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei praised the Fatemiyoun corps, an all-Afghan unit involved in the fight against Takfiri terrorist groups, for their determination and steadfastness in confronting terrorism in the region.

UN calls for restraint amid regional tension

By staff and agency

Stephane Dujarric, the spokesman for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, has called for “maximum restraint” from all parties amid heightened tensions between Iran and the U.S. and in the Middle East region.

“We are very concerned about the volatility of the situation. We call on everyone to exercise maximum restraint, prevent any



escalation of and heightening of tensions,” Xinhua quoted him as saying on Thursday. “The situation ... is already fairly volatile and we are concerned by the rhetoric that we have been hearing,” he told a regular press briefing.

He added, “We are following the situation. Our message, and the secretary-general’s general message, is one of restraint, both in terms of actions and in terms of rhetoric. These are situations where actions and rhetoric can be misinterpreted and

can lead to catastrophic actions. It’s very, very important that we see restraint both in terms of the rhetoric and in terms of the action.”

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.

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”.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has ruled out the possibility of war between the U.S. and Iran despite heightened tensions between the two sides.

He said on Tuesday that Washington knows engaging in such a conflict would not be in its interest.

Brian Hook, the U.S. special representative for Iran, told BBC on Tuesday that the U.S. is not looking for war with Iran.

Trump orders aides to avoid open conflict with Iran: Report

POLITICAL **TEHRAN (Press TV)** – U.S. President Donald Trump has ordered his administration to avoid a military confrontation with Iran, the New York Times and Reuters have reported.



U.S. President Donald Trump addresses a cabinet meeting at the White House on January 2, 2019.

The Times reported Friday that Trump, during a Wednesday morning meeting in the Situation Room, sent a message to his hawkish aides that he does not want the U.S. pressure campaign against Iran to explode into an open conflict.

“Trump was firm in saying he did not want a military clash with the Iranians,” read the paper citing five senior officials who described the administration’s internal debate over Iran.

The account was echoed by Reuters news agency which said Trump had communicated to his national security team and other aides to avoid an armed conflict.

“He doesn’t want to go to war. It’s not who he is,” said one official speaking on condition of anonymity.

The report cited anonymous officials informed on the matter as saying that Trump had privately expressed concern that some of his advisers, such as John Bolton, were pushing for war.

Trump’s order comes a week after Bolton announced that the U.S. was sending an aircraft carrier strike group and a bomber task force to the Middle East to counter a “threat” from Tehran.

Hawks in Trump’s team have reportedly gone as far as drawing up plans for a possible military strike that could involve sending 120,000 soldiers to the Middle East.

American lawmakers from both parties have expressed frustration about the administration’s increasing war rhetoric and lacking consultation with Congress.

In a move to quell lawmakers’ frustration, administration officials held a briefing for the Senate and House leaders from both parties later on Thursday.

Following the session, Democrat Senator Richard Durbin said, “It’s a situation where this president has surrounded himself with people, Pompeo and Bolton in particular, who believe that getting tough on a military basis with Iran is in our best interest.”

Various reports in the past two weeks have said that Trump has been specifically at odds with Bolton and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo over their push for military confrontation with Iran.

Earlier this week, U.S. media reported that Trump was considering replacing Bolton.

Russia, China should take practical measures to save JCPOA: Zarif

TEHRAN — He further emphasized that the international community has not taken practical measures in order to salvage the JCPOA.

The top Iranian diplomat travelled to China for political negotiations on Tehran-Beijing ties and the latest regional and international developments, including the U.S. government’s destabilizing activities.

The Iranian foreign minister paid visits to Russia, Turkmenistan, India, and Japan before travelling to Beijing.

■ ‘Washington is bullying others to act illegally’

In remarks to the Japanese media on Thursday, Zarif ruled out any prospect of talks with the United States, calling the Washington regime a “bully” trying to force all others into acting illegally.

“This is the first time in history that a bully is telling everybody else, important countries, that ‘I’m going to punish you if you observe something that I do not like’,” he stated, according to the Kyodo News agency.

“Let us assume that a bully is standing in a cross section on the street and telling everybody, ‘If you don’t pass the red light, I’m going to beat you.’ This is exactly what the U.S. is telling them,” he exemplified.

The U.S. has been deploying a policy of “maximum pressure” against Iran under President Donald Trump.

Employing the policy, Washington left a multilateral nuclear deal, reached between Iran and the six major powers – the U.S., UK, France, Russia, China, and Germany, last year.

It then reinstated the sanctions that had been lifted under the accord, and began



threatening the countries not abiding by the bans with “secondary sanctions.”

On May 8, exactly one year after U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA, Iran said it would stop implementing some parts of its commitments under the 2015 accord, giving 60 days to other parties to the deal to fulfil their obligations in oil and banking areas.

Meanwhile, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei downplayed the Washington’s anti-Iran rhetoric earlier this week, stressing that “there is not going to be any war.”

The Leader also ruled out any negotiation with the U.S. as long as Washington sticks with its hostile approach against the Islamic Republic.

■ PM Abe says Japan wants to develop ties with Iran

Japan would like to maintain, and develop, its traditionally friendly ties with Iran, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told Zarif during a meeting on Thursday.

At the start of the meeting in the Japanese capital, Abe also told Zarif that he was concerned about growing tension in the Middle East.

Trump has ratcheted up sanctions on Iran since the United States withdrew a year ago from a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and global powers by which Tehran curbed uranium enrichment capacity in return for sanctions relief.

■ Zarif calls U.S. anti-Iran sanctions ‘unacceptable’

Zarif said Tehran is showing “maximum restraint” despite U.S. pullout from the 2015 nuclear deal, calling the reimposition of sanctions by Washington “unacceptable”.

Iran is exercising “maximum restraint in spite of the fact the United States withdrew from (the) JCPOA last May,” Zarif said on Wednesday at the start of his meeting with his Japanese counterpart Taro Kono in Tokyo.

“We believe that escalation (of sanctions) by the United States is unacceptable and uncalled for,” he said, according to Reuters.

Kono, for his part, said it was essential to maintain the nuclear agreement and urged Iran to keep implementing it, echoing other countries.

He also expressed deep concerns over the situation in the Middle East and said, “I will spare no effort to ease tensions and try to resolve outstanding issues.”

Last week, the US deployed warships and warplanes to the Middle East.

Tensions escalated even further after an incident with four tankers off the United Arab Emirates on Sunday, with U.S. investigators reportedly blaming Iran.

No evidence of Iran’s role has emerged and Tehran has called for an investigation.

Iran has condemned the attack as “dreadful” and a lawmaker said Iranian suspicions fell on Israel.

Iranian official: USS Lincoln in Arabian Sea

POLITICS **TEHRAN**—An Iranian official has said that the USS Abraham Lincoln is stationed in the Arabian Sea and not moving towards the Persian Gulf.

Earlier this week, the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) said its forces in the region had been placed on “high alert,” but no evidence was presented to justify the elevated security posture.

Among the warships in the Lincoln Strike group are the guided-missile destroyers USS Bainbridge (DDG-96), USS Mason (DDG-87), and USS Nitze (DDG-94) and the guided-missile cruiser USS Leyte Gulf (CG-55).

Mehr news agency on Wednesday reported an unnamed, “informed” official in the information office of the General Staff of Armed Forces of Iran as saying the recent U.S. moves in the region are concerned with the safety of U.S. forces themselves.

The official dismissed as psychological warfare Washington claims that the U.S. forces were moving to the area because of high alert regarding Iran.

In addition to the dozens of F-18 Super Hornet jets aboard the aircraft carrier, the strike group’s other warships hold hundreds of Tomahawk cruise missiles



The USS Abraham Lincoln sails south in the Suez canal near Ismailia, Thursday, May 9, 2019. (Suez Canal Authority via AP)

ready to strike if any U.S. forces are attacked, FoxNews on Thursday reported U.S. officials as saying.

On Wednesday, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., called for Patrick Shanahan, acting defense secretary, and the U.S. military’s top officer, Marine Gen. Joe Dunford, to testify publicly before the Senate Armed Services Committee on Iran by the end of the week to explain the sudden military build-up and what intelligence assessment led this escalation.

Officials told Fox News on Thursday both Pentagon leaders are resisting calls to brief lawmakers this week and will do so next week as originally planned.

UN calls for restraint amid regional tension

TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Seyyed Abbas Mousavi has urged the international community to fulfil its duty and prevent crimes against the Yemenis.

His comments came as the Saudi-led coalition carried out airstrike on residential areas in Sanaa, Yemen and killed at least 6 people.

Mousavi strongly condemned the attack and said those who provide the Saudi-led coalition with arms and weapon should be held accountable.

Saudi-led fighter jets pounded various parts of the capital on Thursday, killing at least six civilians, four of whom were children from one family, and wounding dozens more, Press TV reported.

Medical officials said the death toll could rise due to the intensity of the strikes and the number of those who have been seriously injured. They added that there could be other civilians, dead or wounded, under the rubble.

The Saudi-led coalition, backed by the U.S., started the war on Yemen in March 2015 with the aim of reinstating ousted president Mansour Hadi. The war has led to famine and spread of cholera in the poor country. The UN is calling it “the world’s worst humanitarian crisis.”



In April 2015, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif submitted a letter to then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon outlining a four-point peace plan for Yemen.

The plan called for an immediate ceasefire and end of all foreign military attacks, humanitarian assistance, a resumption of broad national dialogue and “establishment of an inclusive national unity government.”

“It is imperative for the international community to get more effectively involved in ending the senseless aerial attacks and establishing a ceasefire, ensuring delivery of humanitarian and medical assistance to the people of Yemen and restoring peace and stability to this country through dialogue and national reconciliation without pre-conditions,” said Zarif’s letter.

Iran says ‘fake intelligence’ is root cause of regional problems

By staff and agency

Majid Takht Ravanchi, Iran’s permanent representative to the United Nations, has said that “fake intelligence” is the root cause of problems in the Middle East region.

“The fake intelligence which has been the root cause in all these events should be tackled, should be taken care of and we believe that as soon as we get rid of these fake intelligence all of us will be in a much better situation,” he told CBS TV network in an interview aired on Thursday.

He added, “The fake intelligence which says that Iran is culprit for the problems in the region. The fake intelligence which says that Iran creates instability in Iraq. The important issue is that even these intelligence reports are not being accepted by American allies. So these are the root causes of problems in

our region.”

He noted that “nobody knows what is going to happen as long as there are armada in our region”.

“There are fleets in our region, there are bombers in our region and the question that should be asked is why these armada are in the region? What has been going on?” 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.

Iran, Pakistan working on barter trade mechanism

TEHRAN (IRNA) – Pakistan Prime Minister’s Advisor on Commerce, Textile, Industries and Production says Iran and Pakistan are working on a barter trade deal mechanism to enhance bilateral trade, local media reported.

Abdul Razak Dawood, who recently accompanied Prime Minister Imran Khan during his visit to Iran, informed National Assembly Standing Committee on Commerce and Textile that he held a meeting with the Iranian Trade Minister and discussed the ways and means of a barter trade deal between the two neighbours.

He said both countries have decided to select two or three items each which can be traded through barter, adding that Iran has identified electricity and Liquefied Natural Gas

(LPG) whereas Pakistan will export agricultural products.

Additional Secretary, Commerce Division, Capt. Javed Akbar (retired) further explained that both countries are working together to improve the barter trade mechanism and State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) is extending help in this regard.

He further stated that Federation of Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) and Iranian Chamber are actually taking the lead in this deal.

The report said there has always been demand for medical/surgical instruments and Pakistani rice and fruits in Iran.

Additional Secretary further stated that Pakistan’s kinnow is already being exported to Iran.



Iran and Pakistan have decided to select two or three items each which can be traded through barter.

Leader names two new deputy commanders for IRGC

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in separate decrees on Thursday, appointed two senior commanders of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) as the deputy chief and deputy coordinator of the Guards.

Ayatollah Khamenei named Rear Admiral Ali Fadavi as the deputy chief of the IRGC and Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Naqdi as its deputy coordinator, Mehr reported.

In his decrees, the Leader noted that the appointments were made in view of the commanders' commitment and invaluable experience in different posts in the IRGC.

The appointments are part of the reshuffling following the recent change of IRGC's

chief in order to fill in vacant positions.

Fadavi has previously served as deputy coordinator and Naqdi was the deputy commander for cultural affairs. Prior to that he was commander of the Basij.

Ayatollah Khamenei, who is the commander-in-chief of the Iranian armed forces under Iran's constitution, has mandated the two officers with promoting efficiency and operational readiness of the Guards.

Last month, the United States designated the IRGC as a foreign terrorist organization. The measure elicited some angry reactions in Iran, where the parliament passed a bill designating U.S. forces in the region, including CENTCOM, the U.S. central commands in the Persian Gulf region, as a terrorist group.



U.S. House speaker: Congress has not approved war against Iran

By staff & agencies

U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said on Thursday that the Trump administration does not have congressional authorization to go to war against Iran.

She told reporters that she backed what appeared to be U.S. President Donald Trump's aversion to actual military conflict with Tehran, Reuters reported.

"I like what I hear from the president — that he has no appetite on this," she said.

She noted, "This is part of a pattern that is not right because we have responsibilities — the responsibility in the Constitution is for the Congress to declare war, so I hope the president's advisers recognize that they have no authorization to go forward in any way."

The Washington Post, citing several unnamed U.S. officials, reported late Wednesday that Trump was frustrated that his advisers may be rushing into war and that he preferred

a more diplomatic approach and direct talks with Iran.

Tension has been increasing in the Persian Gulf and the wider Middle East region since the U.S. has made military threats against Iran and dispatched aircraft carrier to the regional waters and deployed Patriot missiles in certain regional countries.

Iranian officials and analysts have said the dispatch of carriers to the region are just a "psychological warfare" against Iran.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has ruled out the possibility of war between the U.S. and Iran despite heightened tensions between the two sides.

He said on Tuesday that Washington knows engaging in such a conflict would not be in its interest.

Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Hossein Salami said on Sunday that vulnerability of U.S. aircraft carriers would prevent Washington from starting a war against Iran.



General warns of Iran's crushing response to any threat



POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Deputy Chief of the Iranian Army Ground Force has said Iran's armed forces are fully prepared to give a crushing response to any threat and aggression.

Brigadier General Nozar Nemati underlined Iran's high defense capabilities, warning of the country's crushing response in case of any hostile move by the American forces, Fars reported on Thursday.

He pointed to the recent remarks by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who ruled out the possibility of war or any negotiation between Iran and the United States, and said, "There will never be a war."

I assure you that if they were able to adopt any military measure, they would not have sought the help of others."

Ayatollah Khamenei had told a gathering of senior Iranian officials on Tuesday that he saw no possibility of war between Tehran and Washington, adding that the recent U.S. military buildup in the region only aimed at frightening Iran to yield to their demands.

The Leader further said any confrontation between the U.S. and Iran would not be "a military one."

"The Iranian nation's definite option will be resistance in the face of the U.S., and in this confrontation, the U.S. would be forced into a retreat," Ayatollah Khamenei said. "Neither we nor they, who know war will not be in their interest, are after war."

Ayatollah Khamenei further explained that the confrontation between the two sides is "a clash of wills," asserting that Iran would be the ultimate victor of this battle.

Building kilo-class submarines, destroyer high on agenda: admiral



TEHRAN (MNA) — Chief of the Iranian Defense Ministry's Marine Industries Organization has highlighted Iran's progress in the field of marine equipment, saying that the Defense Ministry is planning to expand its homegrown destroyer and submarine flotilla.

"The design and development of a new destroyer and a kilo-class submarine have been put on the agenda in line with the plans to boost the country's marine defense power," Rear Admiral Rastegari told Mehr News Agency on Thursday.

Highlighting the vital role the marine industries and the naval forces play in defending the country, which is linked to the free waters, the military chief note that the Defense Ministry has geared up to become self-sufficient in this field by developing different strategic marine equipment, such as new propulsion systems, gasoline and diesel engines, power transmission systems,

and monitoring systems.

"Destroyers and giant submarines will become a big part of the Iranian Navy's flotilla in the near future," Rastegari said.

According to earlier reports, Iran is planning to design and manufacture a supergiant submarine weighing 3,200 tons, in a bid to enhance the country's marine defense power. The country has made considerable progress in the field of marine vessels, especially in the design and manufacture of submarines and destroyers. According to Commander of Iranian Navy Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi, Iran ranks first among Persian Gulf littoral states in producing marine equipment.

Iran started producing submarines in 2003, and now has achieved the know-how to build modern vessels. The fully-domestic Ghadir-class and Fateh submarines, among several other vessels, have been manufactured by domestic experts.

'U.S. after stripping Iranians of their right to live peacefully'

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — A member of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee has warned that the United States is seeking to deprive the Iranian people of their right to live in peace.

"The U.S. wants to negotiate over our defense power and wants us not to be able to defend ourselves so that they could attack us whenever they want," ISNA on Friday quoted Shahrouz Barzegar as saying.

"Such negotiation is definitely unacceptable. America aims to deprive the Iranian people of their right to live and wants the 80-million people of Iran not to live in peace," he added. Another member of the national security and foreign policy committee, Morteza Safari, has also said the U.S. government is scared of the current circumstances and that's why the Americans are traveling to the region and Europe.



"The Americans are pursuing a maximum pressure campaign against the Islamic Republic in order to force Iran back to the ne-

gotiating table," Safari said.

"In spite of all the efforts, pressures and small and large-scale sanctions, no one has

returned to the negotiating table," he said, adding, "They even gave their phone number but no one contacted them."

The comments come while tensions between Tehran and Washington is escalating over the latter's insistence on putting increasing pressure on Iran and forcing other countries to comply with such policy.

Speaking with ISNA, a member of the Majlis Legal and Judicial Committee has criticized European countries for failing to protect Iran's interests under the 2015 nuclear agreement after Washington withdrew from it.

"The Europeans have not fulfilled their obligations since the U.S. withdrew from Barjam (nuclear deal)," Jalil Rahimi said. "In such circumstances, imposing obligations on Iran is an unwise and irrational demand."

Rahimi also said the U.S. withdrawal was not just a violation of the Iran deal, but an act of bringing discredit to Europe.

Younger generations must be trusted, cleric says



POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Mohammad-Hassan Aboutorabi Fard, the interim Friday prayer leader of Tehran, says the younger generations must be trusted in order to boost development and achieve a stronger economy.

Addressing worshippers on Friday, Aboutorabi Fard pointed to remarks by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on trusting the "talented, innovative and motivated youth and individuals" in different sectors, saying this is the key in order to achieve sustainable development, Mehr reported.

"Should we follow such instructions, soon we will overcome our economic, social and cultural issues," he stressed.

Back in February, Ayatollah Khamenei issued a statement entitled the Second Phase of Islamic Revolution on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the victory of the 1979 revolution.

Ayatollah Aboutorabi-Fard referred to the Leader's statement, saying it is a roadmap for solidifying the Islamic Revolution to reach an Islamic civilization.

Iraqi cleric urges Sunni Muslims to defend Iran against U.S.



POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Sheikh Abdul-Latif al-Hamim, head of the Sunni Endowment of Iraq, has issued a fatwa, calling on Sunni Muslims to defend the Islamic Republic of Iran in the face of U.S. threats.

"Everyone should be ready to defend Iran. This act is a religious duty and everyone should obey it," he said, Khabar Online reported on Wednesday.

In the face of the United States' aggressive policies, all of the Islamic ummah are expected to stand up to Washington's acts of aggression against Iran and all Arab and Islamic countries, he stated.

The U.S. is following the anti-Iran policies of the Zionist regime, he added.

Al-Hamim also said that the U.S. is targeting the religion, civilization and identity of the Islamic ummah.

Leader's remarks clarified many things: ex-official

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — A former presidential chief of staff says Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's recent declaration that there won't be a war nor dialogue between Iran and the United States can clarify many things for a lot of people both inside and outside Iran.

Mohammad Ali Abtahi, who is a reformist, made the remarks in a post on his Instagram account on Wednesday.

He also described as "very important" Ayatollah Khamenei's Tuesday meeting with the heads of the country's executive, judiciary, and legislative branches as well as other senior officials, parliamentarians, and important figures in the country's political, social, and cultural spheres.

"I was especially thrilled to have been invited to this year's meeting, so that it becomes clear that I am behind my country's Leader in the face of the enemies' dire threats and that I am appalled by the frenzy of violence and war against Iran by the U.S. and Trump and their regional allies," Abtahi added.

Iran's envoy submits credentials to OPCW chief

TEHRAN (IRNA) — Iran's ambassador and permanent representative to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Ali Reza Kazemi-Abadi submitted his credentials to the OPCW Director General Fernando Arias in The Hague on Thursday.

During the meeting, both sides highlighted the significance of prohibition of chemical weapons and maintaining the achievements of the organization in the field.

Kazemi said that Iran, with over 70,000 victims of the chemical weapons, attaches a special significance to the organization and its ultimate goal, which is banning chemical weapons, as any use of any type of them is crime against all humans, not the victims alone.

He also stressed the need for maintaining the specialized nature of the organization and avoiding politicization of atmosphere dominating it.

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	211017.8
IFX	2583.46

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,073 rials
GBP	53,963 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$73.00/b
WTI	\$63.40/b
OPEC Basket	\$71.26/b
Gold	\$1,287.85/oz
Silver	\$14.53/oz
Platinum	\$827.35/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Tehran, Damascus discuss expansion of economic ties

1 → During an Iranian-Syrian business forum, held in Tehran on May 1, the Iranian and Syrian officials, entrepreneurs and businessmen came together to explore ways for enhancing trade ties.

The business forum which marked the two sides' sixth gathering in the past six months was hosted by Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA).

The event was attended by a Syrian trade delegation headed by the Chairman of Chamber of Industry of Damascus and its Countryside, Samer al-Debes, the Chairman of Iran-Syria Joint Economic Committee Keyvan Kashafi, Hassan Danaiefar, and the Syrian Ambassador to Tehran Adnan Mahmoud as well as representatives of Iranian private companies.

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

5 new freeways to be inaugurated by next March

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran's Deputy Transport Minister Kheirollah Khademi announced that five new freeways will be inaugurated in the country by the end of current Iranian calendar year (March 19, 2020).



In an interview conducted by IRIB, Khademi, who is also the managing director of Iran's Construction and Development of Transportation Infrastructures Company (CDTIC), said 1,160 kilometers of freeways are currently under construction throughout the country.

Singapore non-oil exports extend slide with 10% drop in April, more than expected

Singapore's non-oil domestic exports (Nodx) fell 10 percent year on year in April, continuing a downtrend that saw shipments slump 11.8 percent in March.

As per straitstimes.com, enterprise Singapore noted the high base from a year ago as it released the export data on Friday.

The March figure was the biggest year-on-year monthly fall in Nodx since the 12 percent fall in October 2016, and came on the back of the biggest year-on-year drop in electronics exports since 2013.

April's showing was worse than the 4.6 percent drop expected by analysts polled by Bloomberg, with both electronic and non-electronic exports shrinking.

The electronics exports sector extended a year of contraction, with a 16.3 percent fall, following March's 26.7 percent plunge.

Integrated circuits (-21.2 percent), disk media products (-31.3 percent) and parts of integrated circuits (-51.7 percent) contributed the most to the electronics slump.

Non-electronic exports declined 7.9 percent, after a 7.1 percent drop seen in March. This was mainly due to a 46.6 percent plunge in pharmaceutical shipments, a volatile export segment which shrank 36.5 percent in April.

■ Manufacturing contraction

"Singapore is among the front-line Asian economies to face the brunt of the recent escalation of trade tensions between the U.S. and China," he said, explaining that the impact of a deteriorating external environment has been seen in steeper manufacturing contraction driving a gross domestic product (GDP) slowdown in the first quarter of this year.

He added that the data foreshadows a continued slowdown in manufacturing and GDP growth. As a result of weak activity, he expects the Singapore central bank to ease monetary policy.

"Escalating U.S.-China trade tensions are dashing hopes for a trade recovery in the second half of the year," he said, pointing in particular to the global electronics sector, where he expects U.S. export controls against Chinese tech company Huawei to disrupt the tech supply chain.

Singapore's non-oil exports to the majority of the top markets shrank in April, except for Hong Kong and the United States, said Enterprise Singapore on Friday.

‘Exporters re-inject 60% of their foreign currency earnings into economy’

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) said so far the country's exporters have re-injected 60 percent of their total exports revenues in the form of foreign currency into the country's financial system, IRNA reported on Friday.

In an Instagram post, the official emphasized the importance of non-oil exports, saying "Non-oil exports play an important role in improving production, employment and, in particular, the stability of the foreign currency exchange market and the strengthening of the value of the national currency."

Hemmati noted that last year some \$18.7 billion of foreign currency was returned into the country's financial system by the exporters.

Iran provides foreign currency for the country's exporters with significantly low exchange rates and the exporters are obliged



to return the equivalent of the supplied fund in the form of foreign currency.

In early May, Hemmati had said that CBI plans for neutralizing or relieving the impact of U.S. sanctions on the country's economy by monitoring and controlling the foreign currency market.

Maintaining and strengthening the relative stability of the foreign currency exchange market by strengthening and improvement of the performance of Iran's domestic Forex Management Integrated System (locally known as NIMA), setting foreign currency exchange policies to support non-oil and oil exports and providing liquidity and working capital to maintain and boost domestic production and finally establishing a financial mechanism with neighboring countries were some of the plans which Hemmati said the CBI is going to follow.

238 production units to back online in Tehran Province by Mar. 2020

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The head of Tehran Province Management and Planning Organization said that some 238 production units in the province will come back to the production cycle by the end of current Iranian calendar year (March 19, 2020).

Nematollah Torki said these units will restart their activity through receiving required working capital, IRNA reported on Thursday.

Also as previously announced by Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani, some 2,200 industrial units will come back to the production cycle by the end of current Iranian year.

The minister said that last year, 1,900 inactive units were planned to restart activity, but the planning came true for 1,700 units and led to creation of 28,000 jobs.

He further said, "We have some plans for removing the prob-

lems of the units which are facing serious challenges."

There are some units that enjoy high potential and capacities, but due to some problems such as inadequate working capital they cannot work with full capacity, the minister noted, adding, "Our priority in the current year is to facilitate the condition for such units."

As previously announced by Deputy Industry Minister Mohsen Salehinia, during the current year the government plans to provide facilities under the framework of subsidies for projects with more than 60 percent of physical development, to supply working capital of firms, to renovate production units and etc.

He said that 360 trillion rials (about \$857.1 million) of facilities will be granted to the industrial units in this year in the framework of production flourishing plan.



European companies can't compete against global giants

By Stéphane Lauer

It boasts the world's second biggest economy, a huge consumer market of about 500 million people and prodigious pools of talent and capital, not to mention two of the world's most important financial centers.

But Europe is struggling to match its great rivals, the U.S. and China, in creating the kind of global firms that increasingly dominate the 21st-century marketplace.

The worry is that this lack of global "champions" will leave Europe without the scale to face up to competitors in the U.S. and China – and withstand hostile takeover bids in strategic technologies.

The German chancellor, Angela Merkel, hinted at the insecurity that Europe now feels as its historic rivals present unprecedented challenges. In an interview this week for this Europa series on the imminent European elections, she said it was time for Europe to reposition itself.

"They (China, Russia and the U.S.) are forcing us, time and again, to find common positions. That is often difficult, given our different interests."

And so whatever the composition of the new European commission that emerges from the European elections later this month, the overhaul of European industrial policy will be one of the priorities of the new Brussels executive. After putting the consumer at the heart of European policymaking, the EU now appears poised to make economic sovereignty a strategic focus.

■ European competition authority

The failure of the merger of Siemens and Alstom in the rail sector, which was opposed by the European competition authority, sent



shockwaves through France and Germany.

Under the pretext of protecting the European consumer from the creation of a potential monopoly, Brussels prevented the French and German companies from becoming a world leader in rail, even though their main competitor, the Chinese CRRC, is already twice as big as Alstom and Siemens combined.

"We will have Chinese trains in Europe," said the French finance minister, Bruno Le Maire. The "European solar panel industry has already been deliberately destroyed by letting in Chinese panels that are heavily subsidized," he added in an interview with Le Monde. The "competition is not fair and we have no chance of winning."

EU officials have looked on helplessly as digital giants emerged in the U.S. and China while Europeans failed to produce competitors. Once dominant in mobile technology through the likes of Nokia and Ericsson, Europe has seen its big rivals catch up and overtake.

On the eve of the deployment of 5G, domestic providers are no longer able to compete

with the Chinese company Huawei, which has successfully positioned itself in several European markets, including the UK and Germany.

The fear of falling behind, coupled with slowing growth, is pushing Germany to lift one of its taboos. Peter Altmaier, Germany's minister of economic affairs and energy, has said he is ready to support an industrial policy at European level.

Though Germany's Mittelstand – the small- and medium-sized businesses that constitute the heart of German industrial power – are not keen on such interventionism, France is, and already there is speculation about the areas where Europe could compete.

The first concrete initiative concerns batteries for electric vehicles. Chinese, Japanese and South Korean manufacturers dominate the scene, but Europe has accelerated its own dependence by imposing standards on the automotive industry that will only be achieved through the electrification of future models.

"If a European sector is not quickly set up,

we will miss out on the very strong growth of the market," warns Patrick Pélat, the president of Meta Consulting and co-author of a report for President Emmanuel Macron on how to build French automotive capacity.

■ Penalizing German economy

"It seems certain that electrification will permanently penalize the German economy over the next few years," said Dirk Schumacher, an economist at Natixis, who believes that if nothing is done, Germany's car sector could lose half a million jobs by 2030.

Aware of the stakes, the German and French governments recently launched an industrial consortium led by France's Saft (a subsidiary of Total) and PSA, owner of the German carmaker Opel. The partnership, which is ready to invest €5b (£3.9b) to €6b, including €1.2b in European public aid, aims to start battery production at a first plant in France, then a second in Germany.

Italy, Belgium, Poland, Austria and Finland have expressed interest in the project, which could lead to the creation of two or three consortiums, ranging from mining to making the final product.

Another topic of cooperation could be artificial intelligence. In the field of autonomous cars, the head start gained by firms like Waymo, a subsidiary of Google, is colossal and worrying.

"This is the first time that Germany has not been at the forefront of a major automotive technology and is starting to realize that it will not be a match for Waymo," says Pélat.

But whether this insecurity is enough to prompt Germany to build a properly European response to Google remains to be seen.

(Source: theguardian.com)

Climate change threatens ‘both the economy and the financial system,’ says Bank of Canada

By Karina Roman

For the first time ever, the Bank of Canada has released a report examining the threat climate change poses to the country's financial system.

The central bank's annual financial system review (FSR), released on Thursday, analyzes the resilience of the country's financial system, cataloguing the main vulnerabilities and risks facing it. Critics have been urging the bank to examine the impact of climate change on financial stability for years now.

"Climate change continues to pose risks to both the economy and the financial system," the bank said in Thursday's review.

"These include physical risks from disruptive weather events and transition risks from adapting to a lower-carbon global economy. Economic activity and the environment are intertwined."

The Bank of Canada recently announced it is joining the Network for Greening the Financial System, a worldwide forum of central banks and financial system supervisors looking to better manage the financial risks of climate change. The network launched in 2017.

"And so for two years, Canada has been absent from that international discussion," said Kevin Quinlan, a consultant who focuses on climate change and responsible investment and an ex-chief of staff to former Vancouver mayor Gregor Robertson.

"Countries that have very different economies than Canada's are really setting the agenda ... and that's a real disadvantage for Canada."

In late March, as it was joining the Network for Greening the Financial System, the central bank publicly committed to building climate-related risks into its FSR process and



developing a multi-year research plan focused on climate change.

The "importance of climate-related issues for financial stability and monetary policy (has) become increasingly clear," said Bank of Canada Governor Stephen Poloz at the time. "This is particularly true for Canada, where resources play a vital role in our economy and where the natural environment is a defining feature of our national identity."

Experts argue the Bank of Canada is ideally placed to research and model the potential threats climate change poses to Canada's economy and financial systems – not only to meet its own mandate of predicting economic growth and setting monetary policy, but also to help guide corporate Canada.

■ Climate impact on economy

"We're still at the very beginnings of modelling the impact of climate change on the economy ... the Bank should obviously have a leading role in that," said Céline Bak, president of Analytica Advisors and a senior associate with the International Institute for Sustainable Development.

Canada made a commitment under the Paris Accord to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and limit the rise of

global temperatures to less than 2 degrees Celsius. Meeting that target requires a greener economy – and getting there will affect corporations and businesses tied to the fossil fuel industry.

The impact on Canadian firms could come though shifts in where Canadians place their investments and pension portfolios, and from government regulatory changes that constrict companies.

Even if Canadians continue to invest as they do now, they can't make informed decisions about the security of those investments if they don't know the degree to which their investments are exposed to the costs of climate change.

"Just getting the discipline within mainstream financial statements (on) what the impact of climate change is going to be on the company, and what the company's impact on climate change is, should be a minimum standard," said Bak, adding that transparency is the cornerstone of well-functioning capital markets.

But while some members of corporate Canada have started disclosing climate change risks to their shareholders, they're not required by law to do so and there are no agreed-upon standards on how and what to report.

"Any financial reporting that a company does has to be audited. None of that exists with climate disclosures," said Hugh Smith, an expert in environmental and social governance at Refinitiv, a financial market data provider.

"Companies highlight what they're doing well. It tends to be very overly optimistic."

Smith called for mandatory reporting and national standards, arguing that even ordinary investors can play a role in bringing that about.

(Source: cbc.ca)

S. Korea April oil imports from Iran rise 17% on year

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — South Korea's April oil shipments from Iran increased 17 percent compared to the same period last year, Reuters reported citing the country's customs data.

The Asian country imported 1.45 million tons or 353,223 barrels per day (bpd) of crude oil from Iran in the mentioned month compared to 1.24 million tons a year earlier, according to customs data.

According to the data, South Korea's total imports for the January-April period dropped by 17.4 percent to 3.87 million tons, or 235,533 bpd, versus nearly 4.7 million tons in the same period last year.

South Korea was among the eight countries which were granted six-month waivers from the United States in November to buy oil from Iran. The country mostly ships in condensate, which is an ultra-light form of crude oil.



However, Washington said in April that it would not renew any exemptions for sanctions on Iran, stepping up pressure on Tehran.

The surges in Iran's oil exports came after the country's Asian buyers rushed to use the

opportunity that the waivers on U.S. sanctions has provided.

South Korea, one of Iran's biggest Asian customers resumed imports of Iranian oil in January after a four-month hiatus.

Iran delivers 130,000t of fuel oil to China

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — A tanker carrying Iranian fuel oil unloaded the nearly 130,000-ton cargo into storage tanks near the Chinese city of Zhoushan, Reuters reported on Thursday citing ship tracking data on Refinitiv Eikon.

Reuters reported on March 20 that some Iranian fuel oil had managed to evade the United States' sanctions on petroleum exports by using ship-to-ship transfers involving four different ships, including the Marshal Z.

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.

The unloading of the fuel oil comes less than two weeks after U.S. President Donald Trump's administration announced that Washington has decided not to extend



waivers allowing major importers to continue buying oil from Iran. The waivers ended on May 2.

Earlier this month, Iranian Deputy Oil Minister Amir-Hossein Zamaninia said Iran is mobilizing all its resources to sell its oil in a gray market, countering unjust and illegitimate U.S. sanctions.

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

'Electricity consumption down 4% in 2 months on year'

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — Iran's year-to-date electricity consumption has decreased by four percent compared to the last year, Mehr news agency reported quoting an energy official.

According to the Managing Director of Iran Grid Management Company (IGMC) Davoud Farokhzad, although the total electricity consumption since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year has decreased but "we are experiencing an early surge in consumption due to the concurrency of hot season with Ramadan."

Iran's electricity consumption rises significantly during the summer season and the energy ministry is following new strategies to manage and balance the demand and supply patterns.

According to Iranian Energy Ministry's spokesman Mahmoud Haqifam, three policies of "modifying tariffs", "issuing energy cards" and "changing consumption levels" are to be applied to amend electricity con-



sumption pattern in the country.

Earlier in March, Homayoun Haeri, the deputy minister of energy for electricity affairs, said Iranian power plants will produce at least 51 gigawatts (GW) of electricity during the peak hours of consumption in summer.

"The generation record high of 47,000 megawatts (47GW) which was achieved in last summer should not only be maintained this year but we need to increase the number to at least 51,000 megawatts (51GW)," Haeri said.

Too early to assess impact of U.S. Iran sanctions on market: Novak

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak Said the impact which the U.S. sanctions on Iranian oil industry will have on the global markets is still unclear, IRNA reported

"The situation could change in a month," Novak said without further explaining.

The official noted that the OPEC+ members still do not have a clear idea about the impact of the U.S. tightening Iran sanctions on the oil markets.

"Every day, new tariffs are set and the trade war is expanding in new directions. These factors affect global oil demand projections," he said.

Novak further noted that the situation in Iran, Venezuela and Libya is not entirely clear. Despite the imposition of sanctions, we do not know, at the moment, what impact this measure will have on cooperation between the OPEC+

nations.

A panel of OPEC and non-OPEC partners is meeting in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, this weekend, to discuss the state of the oil market and OPEC and non-OPEC will also gather in Vienna on June 25 and 26 for a final decision on the production cuts deal.

Asked about the meeting in Jeddah this weekend, Novak said on Wednesday that the OPEC+ alliance feels that it's still too early to assess how the end of the U.S. waivers for Iranian buyers will impact the oil market as of this month.

There are too many uncertainties in the market and it's too early to talk about possible recommendations to the full OPEC+ meeting at end-June. The Jeddah meeting will assess the current market situation and estimates for future demand and supply, and exchange views, Novak said.



Canadian Oil Tanker Moratorium Act struck down in win for oil industry

Canada's Senate Standing Committee on Transportation has voted to defeat the controversial Oil Tanker Moratorium Act that opponents of the bill view as damaging to Canada's oil industry, according to a statement by the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP) released on Thursday.

As per oilprice.com, the senate committee is recommending that the federal government discard the bill entirely.

CAPP's statement reads in part, "This almost exclusively targets Canada's energy sector and would block the

possibility of export of Canadian petroleum production to international markets."

Canada's oil industry has been hit particularly hard since the 2014 oil price crash by and large due to the insufficient export capacity, recently receiving yet another blow when production cuts were enforced to shore up the expanding discount of WCS relative to WTI.

While the recent uptick in oil prices has softened the blow to Canada's oil industry, the lack of export capacity

has stifled growth as fewer industry players are willing to sink money into adding oil production capacity when it may have difficulty transporting it.

According to CAPP, the total capital investment in Canada's oil and natural gas sector is forecast to drop to \$37 billion in 2019 compared to \$81 billion in 2014.

The Oil Tanker Moratorium Act sought to ban tankers carrying more than 12,500 metric tons of oil from stopping or unloading along B.C.'s northern coast.

Sustainable Energy program to increase the global rate of energy efficiency by 2030

Energy efficiency is a measure of how much of the available energy is put to use in a given project. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has started the Sustainable Energy program, with an aim to increase the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency by 2030.

According to technologymarket.com, efficient buildings are important for achieving sustainable development as they align social, economic and environmental objectives.

However, the scale and pace of ongoing actions around the world is insufficient to convert buildings into an engine of the sustainable energy and efficient economy. Government policies can propel the adoption of energy efficiency measures in buildings.

The energy efficient building market can be segmented on the basis of residential, commercial and industrial sector.

Energy efficiency sector represents more than D 30 billion in potential energy savings in the commercial building sector alone. Building consumes nearly 40 percent of global energy and it has a significant burden on household and business budgets.

Increasing energy productivity

Increasing energy productivity through measures like building efficiency has the capability to decrease the growth of energy demand in developing countries by more than half by 2020.

By 2020, global energy demand is forecasted to rise by 2.2% every year and majority of the share occupied by developing economies. Investments in building efficiency can free up scarce resources for other purposes.

Buildings require large quantities of



raw materials such as water, energy and construction materials that compete with various other sectors of the economy for these scarce resources.

The environmental impact can be minimized with energy efficient buildings that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and are environmentally sound while selection of the materials and waste management. In addition these energy efficient buildings contribute to a better indoor and outdoor air quality leading to healthy environment.

Further, efficient buildings can improve the quality of life of millions of people because they of improved comfort and proper ventilation.

Energy efficiency can stretch existing electricity resources further by providing better energy access, reliability and security in remote areas.

Sustainable development offers us today and the generations to come the triple benefits of social equity, environmental protection and economic progress.

Building efficiency is vital for sustainable development as it aligns economic, social and environmental objectives by increasing energy productivity, greening urbanization, water and materials efficiency, mitigating greenhouse gas emissions, and improving the quality of the building.

Energy efficient buildings help in achieving sustainable development goals through the cooperation of industries and governments. By making policies, prioritizing life-cycle and performance metrics and engaging in more integrated planning processes, design and construction of buildings can contribute to national and urban sustainability goals.

The need to focus on the sustainability of the environment exists in both developed and developing countries. In developed economies, achieving sustainable development requires renovation of the existing building stock.

Energy efficient building market

Some of the key drivers of the energy efficient buildings market are government policies, support by industries and design, construction and renovation of the buildings. However, high operational cost to renovate the buildings can hamper the growth of the market. Modernization in technologies and government rules and regulations brings new opportunities in the energy efficient building market.

Transparency Market Research (TMR) is a global market intelligence company providing business information reports and services. The company's exclusive blend of quantitative forecasting and trend analysis provides forward-looking insight for thousands of decision makers. TMR's experienced team of analysts, researchers, and consultants use proprietary data sources and various tools and techniques to gather and analyze information.

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Oil extends gains into fourth straight day on Middle East tensions

Oil prices edged higher on Friday, extending gains into a fourth session as rising tensions in the Middle East stoked fears of potential supply disruptions.

According to af.reuters.com, Brent crude futures were at \$72.82 a barrel at 0024 GMT, up 20 cents, or 0.3%, from their last close. Brent closed up 1.2% on Thursday when prices hit a high of \$73.36 a barrel - the highest since April 26.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were at \$63.18 per barrel, up 31 cents, or 0.5%, from their previous settlement. WTI closed up 1.4% in the previous session.

"Crude prices continue to rally as Persian Gulf tensions remain elevated and as uncertainty clouds this weekend's OPEC and its allies meeting on how to adjust production due to the Iranian sanctions," said Edward Moya, senior market analyst, OANDA.

A Saudi-led military coalition in Yemen carried out several air strikes on the Houthi-held capital Sanaa on Thursday.

U.S. President Donald Trump has told his top advisers he does not want to get the United States involved in a war with Iran, three U.S. officials said on Thursday.

The market is also awaiting the decision of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and other producers on whether to continue with supply cuts that have boosted prices more than 30% so far this year.

A meeting of OPEC's ministerial monitoring committee in Saudi Arabia this weekend will assess member states' commitment to a deal reducing oil production, Iraq's oil minister said on Thursday.

This fast growing LNG market is scrambling for new supply

By Tim Dais

A senior Pakistani official said a few weeks ago that Qatar had emerged as the front runner for a long term liquefied natural gas (LNG) supply deal with the country. Qatar already has a 15-year LNG supply agreement in place with Pakistan to export up to 3.75 million tons per annum (mtpa) to the South Asian country of some 200 million people. That 2016 deal supplied Pakistan's first LNG terminal.

However, after the deal was reached, growing criticism mounted from Pakistani politicians that claim the country received unfavorable contractual terms from Qatar. A Pakistani governmental audit in 2018 reached a similar conclusion, claiming that the price - 13.37 percent of the average price of Brent oil futures for the preceding three months negotiated with Qatar was at a higher rate than trading companies were offering in the open market.

On January 21, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan traveled to Doha to seek a possible price renegotiation, including a one-year credit facility to defer payments to help ease the country's balance of payments crisis. Khan did not, though, press for a reduction in contractual prices, but only requested an early review of LNG prices after a period of five to seven years, instead of the contract's 10 years.

Pakistan is one of the world's fastest growing LNG markets and is still looking to secure long-term supply contracts for its second LNG terminal, which can receive 600 million cubic feet per day (mmcf) of natural gas. The country recently signed a five-year import deal with commodity trader Gunvor and a 15-year agreement with Italian energy company Eni but is also seeking long-term agreements for about 400 mmcf.

For LNG supply

Pakistan has been negotiating with eight countries with whom it has signed inter-governmental agreements in recent years, including Qatar, Russia, Turkey, Italy, Oman, Azerbaijan, Malaysia, and Indonesia. A Saudi Arabian delegation representing state-owned oil major Saudi Aramco has also shown interest in a gas deal with Pakistan. A Pakistani official told Reuters recently that state-run Qatargas put forward the lowest bid for a long-term LNG supply contract that would have a price review after five or 10 years.



Pakistan must secure energy in order to reduce blackouts and chronic power outages that have hindered economic growth, and LNG imports provide an appealing opportunity. That said, the move is politically charged, with complaints about high prices and corruption.

Procuring LNG and headwinds

As such, the country's ambitions to procure LNG is encountering headwinds. Pakistan is facing a mounting debt problem, and dwindling foreign reserves, all making it harder to pay for necessary imports. As a result, the Pakistani government received a \$6 billion bail-out from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) last week and has also stepped up efforts to raise funds from several Arab nations - and China.

The new Pakistani deal with Qatar, moreover, shows that Doha is still pressing ahead to maintain its lead as the top global LNG exporter, even as Australia temporarily bypassed the kingdom in LNG exports last year. In November, Australia shipped 6.7936 million tons of LNG, while Qatar exported 6.2025 million tons.

However, going forward, Qatar will solidify its hold as the world's top LNG exporter as it develops more gas in its prolific North Field and builds more infrastructure to increase its current liquefaction capacity from 77 mtpa to an impressive 110 mtpa within five years, likely far outpacing its closest rival Australia, the U.S., and Russia. The U.S., for its part, will see its so-called second wave of LNG development largely thwarted if Washington and Beijing prolong existing trade tensions since a considerable number of smaller greenfield LNG projects in the country need both Chinese financing as well as signing long term off-take agreements with Chinese firms.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Clueless in Venezuela



TEHRAN (FNA) — Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaidó says his supporters are seeking to open a direct line of communication with the US military, and would use them for “coordination” of possible military action to impose regime change.

The clueless politician says having direct lines of communication between him and the Pentagon regime would put more pressure on President Nicolas Maduro to resign. US Admiral Craif Faller, the head of South Command, also says he “looks forward” to supporting the members of Venezuela’s military “who make the right decision,” which is to say backing the US-supported regime change in the South American country.

This is while crowds supporting Guaidó at regular opposition rallies demanding he be made president are getting smaller since the recent failed coup. With Guaidó seemingly losing momentum, the Trump administration further claims that ultimately they may need to get more directly involved in invading Venezuela and ensuring his rule.

However, when it comes to the way Washington regime changers think about war and the US military intervention in Venezuela, their past so-called “humanitarian” interventions and bombs come to mind. By threatening Venezuela yet again, it is clear that nothing has changed since 2003 when George W. Bush so confidently inaugurated “Operation Iraqi Freedom”.

Today, few members of the foreign policy establishment on Capitol Hill subscribe to the US claims about spreading “democracy” in Latin America at gunpoint under the rubric of overtaking Venezuela and supporting Guaidó, thanks to the enlightening statements and policies of Donald Trump who has been displaying Washington’s foreign policy naked, in addition to the US scandals in Middle-East wars. Even among most neoconservatives, the phrase regime change has lost whatever allure it once possessed. And apart perhaps from the current national security advisor John Bolton, few advocate regime change war whenever Washington takes a dislike to Maduro.

Even so, the underlying premises of US policy and the forever war that goes with it remain very much intact - the massive military budget, the military-industrial complex, the empire of bases, the preference for coercion rather than diplomacy, with “all options” always “on the table.” Apparently, the regime changers have learned nothing since turning Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen into rubble. They continue to define America’s interventionist role to keep their hegemonic presence in the world alive.

Apparently, when it comes to a possible war with Venezuela or any other country, they are still unaware of their fait accompli. Just like in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen, US forces will fail to eliminate the leadership of elected President Maduro. Intended as a possible brief campaign, the Venezuela war will become a protracted one as well, with no end in sight and only God knows how many body bags will come back home under the US flag.

The events followed after the failed coup had a similar pattern, with the appearance of easy success belied by subsequent developments and failures. The US-backed coup proved illusory, although President Donald Trump keeps telling us the US still possesses military power such as the world has never seen. If anything, Guaidó’s opposition base has gained no strength and the campaign remains much in doubt, too.

All of this turned out to be hot air – just as it happened in the Middle East. If the American intervention in Venezuela or the war on terror in the Middle East has produced one undeniable conclusion, it is this:

Estimates of US military capabilities have turned out to be wildly overstated. The Trump administration’s misplaced confidence in the efficacy of American arms and new military build-ups in South America or the Middle East represents a strategic misjudgment that has already cost the country dearly. Even in a volatile country like Venezuela, American military power will be quite limited.

With that combination, the War Party cannot sustain American global preeminence any longer. Henceforth, US forces cannot sustain their reputation for a powerful army either. Trump keeps telling us no one can stop the unstoppable American soldiers. The truth is their reputation has already been called into question in places like Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.

To anyone with eyes to see, the events of the past few decades have demolished the so-called invincibility of the American military. With the Afghanistan war well into its 18th year, the US-hurried pullout from Iraq few years after the 2003 scandalous invasion and Trump’s decision to retreat from Syria, just about no mission has been possible. The clueless War Party cannot make history in Venezuela or anywhere else.

The clueless politician says having direct lines of communication between him and the Pentagon regime would put more pressure on President Nicolas Maduro to resign. US Admiral Craif Faller, the head of South Command, also says he “looks forward” to supporting the members of Venezuela’s military “who make the right decision,” which is to say backing the US-supported regime change in the South American country.

Whether more U.S. sparked chaos or real accord is the question that haunts the world

1 → One must wonder that Putin has to be further appalled by what the U.S. has been doing since, in particular supporting the Saudis in their genocidal war on Yemen, in the support of terrorists in the war on Syria, and with the U.S. abrogation of the JCPOA a year ago and draconian sanctions on Iran and sanctions on other countries around the world. But does Putin have enough of a backbone to come to Iran’s defense should it be attacked militarily?

Does China and do other countries? This must be a major question should the U.S. err so grievously again. Some bright observers like Britain’s former MP George Galloway have said that an attack on Iran by the U.S. could prove to be the greatest mistake in all of history. And he’s not wrong when one considers that World War 3 could result from U.S. missteps. China and Russia have both said at least they will not permit Iran to be destroyed.

Perhaps the biggest obstacle to sanity in any final analysis is that, as many know, neither Trump, Pompeo nor Bolton are rational humans, each irrational in their different ways, and neither is the Israeli government nor “Bibi” Netanyahu. All are dangers to humanity, with perhaps the worst being Pompeo who has given indications that he believes in the so-called



“Rapture” promoted by like-minded Christian evangelicals, who constitute Trump’s primary political base in the U.S. Pompeo (and Bolton) marks the ultimate degenerative evolution of creators of U.S. foreign policies that began decades ago with the Vietnam War when the U.S. went to war based on the fake, false flag pretext of the

Gulf of Tonkin incident.

One potential positive is that Trump campaigned for the Presidency with talk of reducing if not eliminating U.S. military engagements overseas, although he has done and threatened anything but this, particularly over the past year when he seems to have been captured fully by the

Zionists. And Trump has also lately said he wants to talk with Iran’s leaders, but at the same time he absurdly expects Iran to pick up the phone and call him. Such a move by Iran might well have been possible if Trump had not canned the JCPOA and backed himself into a corner.

And apparently from Iran’s point of view – a justifiable one – it behooves the U.S. to resurgent its participation in the nuclear accord and reduce economic sanctions as first steps before negotiations towards any modification of the deal and other potentially positive de-escalation moves. Iran seems to be open to this, contingent on the JCPOA re-endorsement.

The most worrying factor is the possibility that Trump and others in the U.S. government have never had any intention towards anything but full-spectrum dominance worldwide and the submission of other countries, not caring at all about the chaos it has unleashed in the past and would further unleash in the future, particularly in West Asia. This chaos may well be what, at bottom, the Israelis most fervently desire without saying so as a means to maintain its cruel, expansionary apartheid state, and what the U.S. won’t admit it also most desires in the erroneous presumption such chaos will in the long run do anything but destroy the U.S.

Future of the JCPOA does not look good: Paul Pillar

1 → The economic clout of the United States is such that the U.S. administration can still scare and intimidate businesses and governments from having much to do with Iran. If the agreement collapses, it would be difficult to piece it back together even after a change of administration in the United States.

■ 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 in the result of Bolton’s aggressive activities which were not successful, the role of the aggressive party in the Trump administration will be reduced?

A: The aggressive nature of U.S. policy, specially toward Iran, does indeed depend heavily on Bolton’s future. That in turn depends on impulsive and hard-to-predict decisions by Donald Trump. Bolton may have lost some favor with Trump because of differences on both Venezuela and North



Korea. Bolton’s job might be in jeopardy if Trump, who right now probably does not want a war with Iran, sees Bolton as leading him into one. But Trump might not see things that way, or Trump himself, faced with more domestic political problems, might himself come to welcome a military clash with Iran as a distraction.

■ 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: Rouhani is saying that if everyone observes the JCPOA, everyone benefits. And if the agreement breaks down, that will benefit no one. Iran clearly would lose economically, but the United States and others also would lose by having an avoidable nuclear crisis on their hands. Rouhani’s perspective is far different from that of Donald Trump, who seems to see every agreement as a matter of one side winning and the other side losing.

Robert Fantina: Nation state law leaves no question that Israel is a Racist, Apartheid Regime

TEHRAN (FNA) — Author and activist Robert Fantina believes that the Nation State Law leaves no doubt about the true nature of the racist, apartheid regime in Tel Aviv.

Robert Fantina told FNA in an exclusive interview that defending the “obviously racist, apartheid regime” of Israel shows the endemic “hypocrisy and moral void” of the governments which support Tel Aviv.

Commenting on the Arab states’ relations with Israel the activist said that “the Arab nations that ally in any way with Israel will find that their betrayal of Palestine will eventually result in Israel’s betrayal of them.”

Robert Fantina is an author, journalist and activist for peace and social justice. While living in the US, he actively supported gun control, and opposed the war in Iraq, prior to and following the US invasion of that country. Shortly after the 2004 presidential election he moved to Canada. He is currently active in supporting the human rights struggles of the Palestinian people. FNA has conducted an interview with Robert Fantina about Israel’s brutal crackdown on Palestinian protesters, the Israeli legislation known as the Nation State Law and also Trump’s so-called deal of the century.

Below you will find the full text of the interview.

■ It seems that killing scores of people and maiming thousands more over the past several months are no indication of what Israel thinks is enough to keep Gaza in check. Do you think Israel’s deadly clamp down on Palestinian protesters is going to end anytime soon?

A: Sadly, I don’t think it will end anytime soon. It has been occurring, in one form or another, for decades, with little condemnation from the international community. The current protests are demanding the internationally-guaranteed right of return; they occur not on Israeli land (according to the 1947 unjust United Nations partition plan), but on Palestinian land. The protests are unarmed. Yet hundreds have been killed, and many thousands injured, and the world’s governments hardly say a word of protest.

■ It’s been a year since the start of the protests known as the ‘Great March of Return.’ What do you think the march has accomplished so far?

A: There have been some positive signs. For example, recently there was a video posted in the New York Times, which is a strongly pro-Israel publication, exposing the Israeli



The so-called ‘new deal’ will have nothing beneficial to the Palestinians. US President Donald Trump has shown that he sides completely with Israel; his son-in-law and close advisor, the corrupt Jared Kushner, is a close personal friend of Netanyahu.

government’s lie that IDF soldiers are very careful in shooting Palestinians, and only target those causing an ‘imminent threat’. While the idea that Palestine, with no army, navy or air force can somehow threaten the existence of Israel is ludicrous, the New York Times study showed and clearly stated that Israeli soldiers target unarmed medics and others who do not, by any stretch of the imagination, pose any threat to Israel or Israelis.

■ How do you think the US and some Arab states are complicit in crimes against the Palestinians specially in light of the discreet links between Israel and Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf states?

A: US complicity in Israel’s crimes against humanity has been well-documented and is nothing new. The US government gives Israel billions of dollars in aid annually, including weaponry used to kill Palestinians. It protects Israel from its many war crimes and crimes against humanity by using its veto power in the United Nations Security Council.

Arab states, such as Saudi Arabia, and any

other nation on earth that has any kind of ties with Israel, are also complicit, because Israel should be ostracized as South Africa was a generation ago. Arab nations that ally in any way with Israel will find that their betrayal of Palestine will eventually result in Israel’s betrayal of them.

■ In July 2018, the so-called nation state law was adopted by Israeli Knesset. What do you think the legislation shows about the nature of the regime in Tel Aviv?

A: If there was ever any question that Israel is a racist, apartheid state, the Nation State law dispels it completely. Recently, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, said this: “Israel is not the state of all of its citizens. According to the nation-state basic law that we passed, Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish people – and of it alone.” This is a clear pronouncement, leaving no doubt that Israel is an apartheid state, and how other nations, such as the United States, can continue to support such an obviously racist, apartheid regime demonstrates the

hypocrisy and moral void that is endemic to those governments.

■ Many believe that the continuing illegal Israeli settlement activities have hammered nail after nail into the coffin of a diplomatic solution. What do you think about that?

A: A diplomatic solution is not required. All that is needed is for the United Nations and the world community to simply demand that Israel adhere to international law. This means vacating the settlements; they are illegal, and the people living in them must be evicted. It means ending the occupation of the West Bank, which is also illegal. It means ending the illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip. It means recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine.

Negotiations, which the United States is forever encouraging, are not only unnecessary, but also completely counter-productive. Negotiations can only occur successfully when each party has something the other wants, that it can only obtain by surrendering something it has. Israel takes whatever it wants from Palestine with complete impunity. Israel has stolen large parts of Palestine as time has been wasted in futile and useless ‘negotiations’.

■ The current administration in the US has been boasting about its new plan for Palestine and even calling it the deal of the century. What do you think would be in the new deal for Palestinians?

A: The so-called ‘new deal’ will have nothing beneficial to the Palestinians. US President Donald Trump has shown that he sides completely with Israel; his son-in-law and close advisor, the corrupt Jared Kushner, is a close personal friend of Netanyahu. Trump, even more than his predecessors, has given Israel whatever it wants. The possibility that he will do anything positive for Palestine simply doesn’t exist.

The ‘deal’ will probably include giving Israel authority to police all of Palestine; it will probably demand that Hamas completely disarm, and will offer no hope whatsoever to Palestinians for anything more than continued brutal oppression. As Dr. Paul Craig Roberts, Former Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Economic Policy said: “The obstacle to peace is the United States government, which has consistently opposed the entire world’s decades long effort to stop the Zionist genocide of a land called Palestine.” This obstacle, the US government, remains the main barrier preventing freedom and dignity for the Palestinians.

What are the latest polls in EU?

By Saeed Sobhani

TEHRAN — European parliamentary elections will be held shortly. This election has an important role in determining the future of the European Union and the Eurozone. The dissatisfaction of European citizens from the traditional parties is a matter of concern to European officials such as the German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the French President Emmanuel Macron. Here are some news and polls about the European Parliamentary elections:

News worrying for the French president As Reuters reported, The party of far-right leader Marine Le Pen will top the upcoming European Parliament elections with 22 percent of the vote, just ahead of President Emmanuel Macron's REM party, an Ipsos poll released on Sunday. It was the first time Le Pen's Rassemblement National (RN) - formerly the National Front - overtook Macron's REM in an Ipsos survey ahead of the EU election this year, although other, daily polls have shown the RN in pole position before EU elections will be held on May 26 in France.

The poll of 1,500 people was conducted on May 2-3, after Macron announced a series of proposals, including tax cuts worth 5 billion euros (\$5.6 billion), in a bid to appease the "yellow vests" anti-government protest movement.

Macron's REM party would obtain 21.5 percent of the vote, the Ipsos poll for France Television and Radio France showed. On April 18-22, 23 percent of the people polled said they would vote for REM, against 22 percent for RN.

Macron is facing the biggest challenge of his presidency yet in the "yellow vest" protests, which started nearly six months ago over the high cost of living but spread into a broader movement against the former investment banker's pro-business reform drive. Dissatisfaction over slow economic growth, security threats posed by Islamist militants and a backlash against migration across open EU borders have boosted support for nationalists in many member states. The RN and other eurosceptic anti-immigration parties in other EU states are planning to join forces after the EU parliamentary election.

EPP still the biggest group after EU elections

The center-right is set to remain the biggest group in the EU legislature after elections in May that should also show a surge in seats for the far-right, a survey by the European Parliament showed on Monday (18 February).

The German Christian Democrat CDU/CSU alliance led by Chancellor Angela Merkel would remain the biggest single party with 29



seats, but only just ahead of Italy's League, the far-right group now in government in Rome.

Its 27 seats are a mark of how the elections will reflect a strengthening of nationalist sentiment against established pro-EU movements across Europe.

While traditional parties are set to retain a dominance that would allow a continuation of the broad centrist majority coalition that has tended to support legislation from the EU executive, gains of about 40% for radicals on the right, to 14% of seats, may introduce more policy uncertainty.

The European People's Party (EPP), to which Merkel belongs, would take 183 of the 705 seats, or 26%, in the new chamber. That is down from 29 percent at present, according to the compilation of national polling data from the 27 member states. It was published by the assembly's staff on Monday.

That would outstrip the 135 seats for the center-left Socialists and Democrats, whose share would drop six points to 19%, partly due to the loss of British seats after Brexit as the parliament slims down from a total of 751 seats.

Britain's ruling Conservative party does not sit with the EPP. Their departure would hit the European Conservatives and Reformists, dropping that group from third place to fifth — although parliamentary officials also expect the voting to usher in a major reshuffle of alliances on the floor, making it difficult to forecast group alignments in

the new chamber.

The two far-right eurosceptic groups among the eight in the current parliament would see their share rise to 14% from 10%, despite the loss of Brexit campaigners the UK Independence Party. That reflects gains for Italy's League, adding 21 seats, Germany's AfD, gaining 11, and Marine Le Pen's French National Rally, which would add six seats if polls hold.

However, realignments of existing groups are likely after voting ends on 26 May and before the new parliament sits on 2 July as national parties seek allies that fit their policies and can leverage their strength with funding and committee posts. Italy's 5-Star movement, in government with the League, sits now with UKIP but has looked at joining groups further left in the chamber. The polls suggest it could gain eight seats to 22 in May, but those may not, in fact, bolster the far-right. There are also question marks over the alignment of some 24 seats for Poland's ruling Law and Justice party, often hostile to Brussels, as its ECR allies the British Conservatives depart.

also unclear are the 18 French seats which polls suggest President Emmanuel Macron's En Marche movement may win. Adding them to the centrist ALDE, home to some Macron allies and which shares Macron's strongly pro-EU line, would give ALDE 93 seats, making it easily the third biggest bloc. But Macron has been wary of confirming which

alliances he will make as he looks to use the May elections to resist eurosceptic forces.

One consequence of uncertainty over the make-up of the new parliament — which might also be upset by a delay to Brexit — could be delay in forming the new executive.

National leaders should nominate a successor to European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker in late June. Lawmakers should then confirm the nominee in July so that a new Commission of nominees from all 27 member states is in place on 1 November. Given the summer break, that is a fairly tight timetable. A demand by Parliament that leaders nominate a lead candidate from one of the winning parties could also cause more wrangling. Juncker and his team would stay on if there were such a delay.

Also Reuters stated that A new Danish far-right party that wants Islam banned and hundreds of thousands of Muslims deported could win seats in Denmark's parliament in an upcoming election, an opinion poll showed on Monday. The party 'Stram Kurs', which means Hard Line, was founded in 2017 by lawyer Rasmus Paludan who first came to public attention by posting anti-Islam YouTube videos. His stunts have included publicly burning the Koran, sometimes wrapped in bacon, in what he calls a tribute to free speech.

A Voxmeter poll published on Monday showed that Hard Line would win 2.4 percent of the vote, thereby clearing the 2 percent barrier required to enter the Danish parliament. It gave its margin of error as a maximum of 2.7 percentage points.

Two other polls released over the past week have also shown the new party entering parliament, giving it between 2.7 percent and 3.9 percent of the vote. Such an outcome would be a blow to Denmark's biggest populist party, the Danish People's Party (DF), which has been part of the political establishment in Denmark for decades and used to be the toughest on immigration. Hard Line gathered the roughly 20,000 voter signatures needed to contest the parliamentary election, which must be held by June 17 at the latest.

In April Danish police arrested 23 people after unrest caused by a demonstration held by the Hard Line leader. Danish Prime Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen, leader of the center-right Liberal Party, condemned the far-right demonstration. It is unclear whether mainstream parties would cooperate with Hard Line if it does win parliamentary seats.

Earlier this year a court handed Paludan a 14-day conditional jail sentence for racism toward a spokeswoman for the Black Lives Matter movement. He has appealed the sentence and denies any wrongdoing.

U.S. seeking to force Sudan to return to western camp: American analyst



TEHRAN (Tasnim) — A political analyst in Detroit highlighted the US government's role in recent developments in Sudan, saying Washington is trying to control events so that the North African country is firmly returned to the Western camp.

US Seeking to Force Sudan to Return to Western Camp: American Analyst

"In all likelihood, the US is playing a role within the opposition and government," Abayomi Azikiwe, editor at the Pan-African News Wire, said in an interview with the Tasnim News Agency.

"Washington and Wall Street want to control events so that Sudan is firmly returned to the Western camp and sheds any semblance of anti-imperialism or independent domestic and foreign policy, as it exemplified in the past," the analyst added.

Abayomi Azikiwe is the editor of the Pan-African News Wire and a co-founder of the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War & Injustice (MECAWI) and the Moratorium NOW! Coalition, both based in Detroit. Azikiwe has published numerous articles, pamphlets, and books on African affairs along with working as a consultant for various satellite television news networks throughout the world. He has traveled extensively in Africa conducting field research on political economy and history.

The following is the full text of the interview:

■ A month after Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir was removed by a military coup, protest and opposition leaders on Wednesday called for a campaign of civil disobedience in response to what one of them described as the military's "disappointing" answer to their proposals for an interim government. What do you think about the latest developments in the African country? How do you predict the future of the developments? Will the military council hand over the power to a democrat government?

A: Recent events during the post-coup period has exposed the fragmentation and general political crisis of the opposition groups which held demonstrations leading to the removal of former President Omer Hassan al-Bashir by high-ranking military officials. There are negotiations to establish a joint civilian-military governing council. However, there is no firm agreement on the numerical composition and proportional representation of the envisioned temporary ruling body. The principal groupings which appear to be in the leadership of the opposition currents now talking with the transitional military council, the Sudan Professional Association (SPA) and the Forces for Freedom and Change, want to gain power immediately. Nonetheless, at some point in the near future, there has to be an election. This is what the African Union is calling for and the pressure from various political tendencies inside the country will become more evident as the weeks pass absent of a nationwide poll. What is often not discussed is that there are other political tendencies such as the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and the Popular Congress Party (PCP) which have significant support inside the country. In an electoral contest, these parties will have an opportunity to campaign openly and draw upon the historical support they have received in Sudanese politics.

■ According to media reports, there have been some meddling measures by Saudi Arabia and the UAE in Sudan. However, Sudanese protesters have declared their strong opposition to the two countries. What do you think about the future of relations between Sudan and the two Arab countries and do you think that the next Sudanese government would be an ally of the two?

A: The Saudis and Emirates want to maintain influence in Sudan for various reasons. Unfortunately, ousted President al-Bashir has sent troops to fight alongside the pro-imperialist countries and militias seeking to destroy the Ansarullah resistance movement in Yemen. A withdrawal of Sudanese military units would send a signal to other imperialist-allied states that the war, although lasting for over four years, is not sustainable. There is also the question of maintaining cooperation related to the exploitation and marketing of oil which Sudan has substantial reserves. The National Congress Party (NCP) led administration under al-Bashir has made numerous overtures to the United States. Nevertheless, in all likelihood, the US is playing a role within the opposition and government. Washington and Wall Street want to control events so that Sudan is firmly returned to the Western camp and sheds any semblance of anti-imperialism or independent domestic and foreign policy, as it exemplified in the past.

■ As you know, Sudan is part of Saudi Arabia's disastrous military campaign against Yemen. Given that a huge number of the Saudi-led coalition forces fighting in Yemen are Sudanese, what do you think about the effect of developments in Sudan on the protracted war on Yemen?

A: The involvement of the Sudanese Armed Forces in Yemen on the wrong side of the genocidal war has weakened the capacity of the state to address domestic concerns. Due to the economic downturn engendered by the decline in oil prices five years ago, Sudan has been adversely impacted. Prices have gone up in the last several months. Nevertheless, there has been a restructuring of the oil market accounting for the enhanced role of the US and other states creating a drop in demand from the emerging countries, particularly those targeted by successive regimes in Washington which have sought regime-change in states such as Iran, Venezuela, Russia, and Brazil. Therefore, Sudan is being placed at an even more disadvantaged position than other targeted states since they have undergone a fracturing within the governing politico-military strata as represented by al-Bashir and the NCP.

Ex-Qatari FM, ex-head of al-jazeera: No war between U.S., Iran

TEHRAN (FNA) — Former Head of al-Jazeera news channel Yasser Abu Hilala and Former Qatari Foreign Minister Hamad bin Jassim underlined that certain Persian Gulf Arab states should not pin hope on a war between the US and Iran as Trump is only after an annex to the 2015 nuclear deal.

Abu Hilala wrote on his twitter page on Saturday that the visit by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's visit to Iraq contained a message to soothe Iran as Donald Trump is only after an annex to the nuclear deal to make is a Trump deal.

"Trump is after an agreement of his own and not of Obama's," he added.

He said the US has ensured that it is not after a war as show in Trump's tweets about his desire to talk with Iran. Also, Iraq has received sanctions waivers from Washington, but they have been told that there won't be any official declaration about the exemption, he said.

Abu Hilala referred to the Saudi and UAE officials and media's pleasure in the US warmongering against Iran, and said that Trump uses Iranophobia to further milk Saudi Arabia as long as it can.

Meantime, Hamad bin Jassim wrote on his twitter page that there will be no war between the US and Iran and the current tensions are only aimed at returning the two sides to the negotiating table.

The United States tightened the screws further on Iran with sanctions on its metal industry on the day Tehran said it was suspending some of its commitments under the 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

The White House said that the new sanctions, announced on May 8, target Iran's steel, aluminum, copper and iron sectors.

Hours earlier, Iran said that it would no longer sell its surplus enriched uranium and heavy water to other nations as stipulated in the nuclear agreement between Tehran and six world powers few days after the US ended waivers on nuclear cooperation with Iran.

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.

Europeans' honesty in dealing with the Iran nuclear deal has always been seriously doubted by Iranian masses that were discontent with talks with European states.

Almost a year later, however, the EU failed to provide Tehran with its promised merits. Then, the US state department announced that it had not extended two waivers, one that allowed Iran to store excess heavy water produced in the uranium enrichment process in Oman, and one that allowed Iran to swap enriched uranium for raw yellowcake with Russia.

Until now, Iran was allowed to ship low-enriched uranium produced at Natanz to Russia before it hit the 300-kg limit and the US measure leaves no way for Tehran other than exceeding the ceiling for storing the enriched uranium in violation of the 2015 nuclear deal.

Also, the United States would no longer waive sanctions that allowed Iran to ship heavy water produced at its Arak facility beyond a 300-ton limit set in the 2015 nuclear deal to Oman for storage which again forces Tehran to store it inside country in violation of the nuclear deal.

In return, Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) announced in a statement on Wednesday that the country had modified two of its undertakings under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in return for the US abrogation of the deal and other signatories inability to make up for the losses under the agreement, warning that modifications would continue if the world powers failed to take action in line with their promises.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran declares that at the current stage, it does not any more see itself committed to respecting the limitations on keeping enriched uranium and heavy water reserves," the statement said.

The statement gave the Group 4+1 (China, Russia, Britain and France plus Germany) "60 days to put into action their nuclear deal undertakings, specially in the banking and oil sectors, warning that "in case these countries fail to meet Iran's demands, the Islamic Republic of Iran will cease implementation of restrictions on uranium enrichment levels and measures related to the modernization of Arak Heavy Water Reactor as well".

"Once our demands are met, we will resume implementation of the ceased undertakings. Otherwise, the Islamic Republic of Iran will stop compliance with its other undertakings in consequent phases," the SNSC warned.

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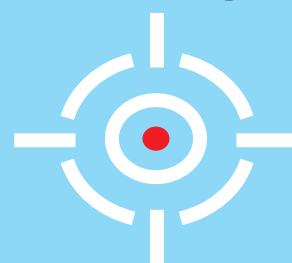
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SpaceX postpones Starlink satellite launch again, for “about a week”

A SpaceX launch already scrubbed once due to inclement weather was postponed again nearly 24 hours later on Thursday, this time for “about a week,” in order to update satellite software and “triple-check everything,” Elon Musk’s rocket company said.

The delayed mission is designed to carry into low-Earth orbit an initial batch of 60 satellites for Musk’s new Starlink global internet service, a venture intended to generate cash for the rest of the billionaire entrepreneur’s space exploration ambitions.

The Falcon 9 rocket and its satellite cargo

were originally set to blast off from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Florida on Wednesday night, but the flight was postponed by Space X, citing excessive winds over the launch site.

The launch was rescheduled for Thursday night, and SpaceX said in a midday Twitter message that the “Starlink and Falcon 9 are looking good” and that “winds are better for tonight’s launch.” Hours later, however, the company tweeted that the mission was being delayed.

“Standing down to update satellite



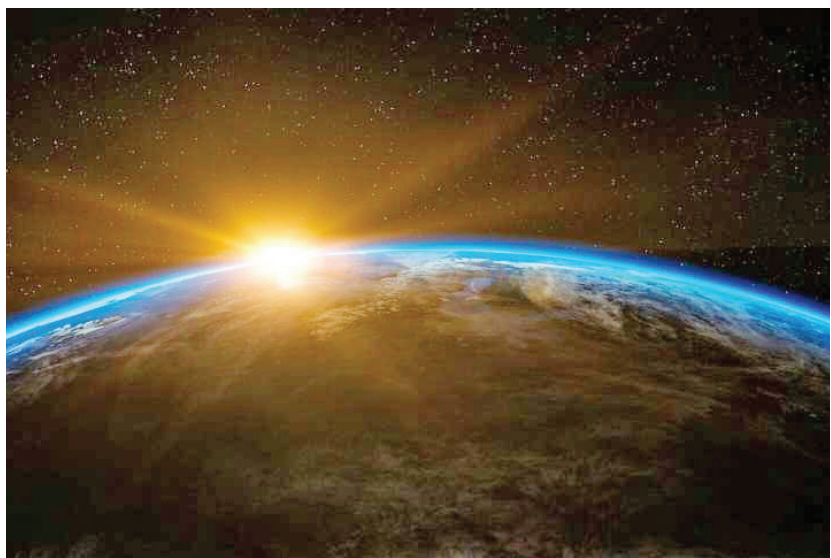
software and triple-check everything again,” the company said. “Always want to do everything we can on the ground to maximize mission success. Next launch

opportunity in about a week.”

No further elaboration was provided to reporters at the Cape.

(Source: Reuters)

Japanese space startup aims to compete with U.S. rivals



A Japanese startup that launched a rocket into space earlier this month plans to provide low-cost rocket services and compete with American rivals such as SpaceX, its founder said Wednesday.

Interstellar Technology Inc. founder Takafumi Horie said a low-cost rocket business in Japan is well-positioned to accommodate scientific and commercial needs in Asia. While Japan’s government-led space programs have demonstrated top-level technology, he said the country has fallen behind commercially due to high costs.

“In Japan, space programs have been largely government-funded and they solely focused on developing rockets using the best and newest technologies, which means they are expensive,” Horie told reporters in Tokyo. “As a private company, we can focus on the minimum level of technology needed to go to space, which is our advantage. We can transport more goods and people to space by slashing costs.”

Horie said his company’s low-cost MOMO-3 rocket is the way to create a competitive space business in Japan.

During its May 4 flight, the unmanned MOMO-3 rocket reached 113.4 kilometers (70 miles) in altitude before falling into

the Pacific Ocean. The cost to launch the MOMO-3 was about one-tenth of the launch cost of Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, the country’s space agency, according to Interstellar CEO Takahiro Inagawa.

Horie said his company plans to launch its first orbital rocket — the ZERO — within the next few years and then it would technologically be on par with competitors such as Elon Musk’s SpaceX, Amazon founder Jeff Bezos’ Blue Origin and New Zealand engineer Peter Beck’s Rocket Lab.

The two-stage ZERO would be twice as long and much heavier than the compact MOMO-3, which is about 10 meters (32 feet) long and 50 centimeters (1.5 feet) in diameter and weighs about 1 ton. It would be able to send satellites into orbit or carry payloads for scientific purposes.

Development of a low-cost commercial rocket is part of a growing international trend in the space business led by the U.S. and aggressively followed by China and others.

At home, Horie could face competition from space subsidiaries of major companies such as Canon and IHI, which have expertise from working with the government’s space agency.

(Source: AP)

Gannon engineering students build snow-removal robot



This is a senior project that everyone in Erie can appreciate.

In a region that gets about 10 feet of snow a year, imagine never having to shovel it again.

Five engineering students at Gannon University have built a snow-removal robot that does the job. They say it has 16 miles of battery life and can sweep up to 4 inches of snow.

“It was designed to work on sidewalks at schools and businesses,” said Mark Wesley, 22, a mechanical engineering major from Butler County.

“It would run overnight, while you sleep,” added Tenger Batjargal, 23, an electrical engineering major who is an international student from Mongolia.

The robot, which uses the chassis and drivetrain from a power wheelchair, was created as part of a senior engineering project. The team presented their findings Friday at Gannon’s Zurn Science Center.

The other team members are Tim Jackson, 23, mechanical engineering; Mark Wesley’s twin brother, Mitch Wesley, 22, software engineering; and Niklas Bitters, 22, computer engineering.

After a slideshow presentation of their findings to faculty and staff, they set the robot off to sweep about 100 feet of styrofoam packing peanuts in a hallway on the third floor. A user programs the route that the robot will cover, and then a navigation system designed by the team keeps it on course. It worked perfectly on the packing peanuts Friday morning.

What’s next for Erie’s dream machine?

The engineering students were to graduate Saturday, but they plan — with the help of the university — to pursue patents on the navigation system, if not the entire prototype.

But at least one person wants to see this thing on Erie’s sidewalks, pronto.

“You can’t let this level of thinking and this level of technology just end up as a one-year thought, and (then let it) go away,” said Keith Taylor, president of Gannon, who was at Friday’s demonstration.

“We really need to make sure, as an institution, that we are changing the way that people live and work in the community.”

(Source: AP)

Tweaking one gene with CRISPR switched the way a snail shell spirals

A genetic spin doctor sets snail shells to swirl clockwise, new research confirms. And the twist in this story comes at the beginning — when snail embryos are just single cells.

Though most pond snails (*Lymnaea stagnalis*) have shells that coil clockwise, a few have taken a left turn, curling counter-clockwise. Researchers had strong evidence that a mutation in a gene called *Lsdia1* caused the counterrevolution, but there was a possibility that the similar *Lsdia2* gene might be involved. The two genes are 89.4 percent identical, so teasing out which was responsible was tricky.

Working at the Tokyo University of Science, chemist and biologist Reiko Kuroda and colleague Masanori Abe snipped *Lsdia1* with the gene editor CRISPR/Cas9. The snip made a mutation in the gene that could be passed on to future generations. Snails that inherited two edited copies of the gene developed left-coiling, or sinistral, shells, say the researchers, who have relocated to the Chubu University in Kasugai, Japan.



The accomplishment — reported May 14 in *Development* — marks the first time researchers have been able to make heritable changes in snail genes, says evolutionary geneticist Angus Davison of the University of Nottingham in England. Teams led by Davison and Kuroda had previously published evidence independently that *Lsdia1* is responsible for the twist, but the new paper provides the definitive proof, Davison says.

In the new study, Kuroda and Abe also found that *Lsdia1* causes the cells’ internal scaffolding — the cytoskeleton — to skew to the left or right very early on, when snail embryos are just single cells. Finding that early twist solves a long-running mystery: When does asymmetry start?

Like snails, humans and many other organisms are asymmetrical, with internal organs growing on particular sides of the body. That asymmetry is necessary to fold intestines that are many times the length of the body in an orderly manner into a relatively small space, says Martin Blum, a developmental biologist at the University of Hohenheim in Stuttgart, Germany. Two genes, *nodal* and *Pitx*, are known to be involved in giving rise to that asymmetry, by being produced on only one side of the embryo. Gene-edited snail embryos turned on those genes in a pattern that is a mirror image to that of right-coiling snails, creating lefties, the researchers found.

“Now we know it starts in the symmetrical embryo,” Blum says. *Lsdia1*’s protein tugs on the cytoskeleton, which leads cells to divide in a spiral pattern. That somehow causes *nodal* and *Pitx* to turn on on one side of the embryo. “This riddle is solved,” he says, but there are still a few steps missing to connect how the skewing of cell division leads to activity of the two genes. Kuroda says she is working to fill in the details.

While the left-swirling version of *Lsdia1* may help researchers understand asymmetry, it’s probably not very useful for snails in the wild. Left-swirling snails have trouble hatching and finding mates, Davison says. “If you’re a snail out in the wild, it’s game over for that mutation.”

(Source: sciencenews.org)

Fossil teeth push the human-Neanderthal split back to about 1 million years ago

People and Neanderthals separated from a common ancestor more than 800,000 years ago — much earlier than many researchers had thought.

That conclusion, published online May 15 in *Science Advances*, stems from an analysis of early fossilized Neanderthal teeth found at a Spanish site called Sima de los Huesos. During hominid evolution, tooth crowns changed in size and shape at a steady rate, says Aida Gómez-Robles, a paleoanthropologist at University College London. The Neanderthal teeth, which date to around 430,000 years ago, could have evolved their distinctive shapes at a pace typical of other hominids only if Neanderthals originated between 800,000 and 1.2 million years ago, she finds.

Gómez-Robles’ study indicates that, if a common ancestor of present-day humans and Neanderthals existed after around 1 million years ago, “there wasn’t enough time for Neanderthal teeth to change at the rate [teeth] do in other parts of the human family tree” in order to end up looking like the Spanish finds, says paleoanthropologist Bernard Wood of George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

Many researchers have presumed that a species dubbed *Homo heidelbergensis*, thought to have inhabited Africa and Europe, originated around 700,000 years ago and gave rise to an ancestor of both Neanderthals and *Homo sapiens* by roughly 400,000 years ago. Genetic evidence that *Sima de los Huesos* fossils came from Neanderthals raised suspicions that a common ancestor with *H. sapiens* existed well before that (SN Online: 3/14/16). Recent Neanderthal DNA studies place that common ancestor at between 550,000 and 765,000 years old. But those results rest on contested estimates of how fast and how consistently genetic changes accumulated over time.

With that molecular debate in mind, Gómez-Robles calculated the rate at which eight ancient hominid species evolved changes in tooth shape. That enabled her to gauge how long it must have taken for *Sima de los Huesos* teeth to evolve after Neanderthals diverged from a common ancestor with *H. sapiens*.

Gómez-Robles used two possible evolutionary trees for the eight hominid species to estimate dental evolution rates. Aside from the Spanish Neanderthals and Stone Age *H. sapiens*, teeth in her study came from African hominids dating to as early as 3.2 million years ago.

Moving back the date of an evolutionary split between Neanderthals and *H. sapiens* appears reasonable based on the new data, says paleoanthropologist Aurélien Mounier of Musée de l’Homme in Paris. The timing of that split could still change, though, if further research modifies the Spanish fossils’ age, he says.

Other Spanish hominid teeth dating to nearly 800,000 years ago display some Neanderthal features, supporting the new study’s conclusions, says New York University paleoanthropologist Shara Bailey. But it’s unclear if Gómez-Robles’ contention that hominid teeth evolved at a steady rate will hold true, Bailey says.

(Source: sciencenews.org)

Hurricane hunters fly into dangerous hurricanes in the name of science

You’ve heard of storm chasers with their trusty getaway cars and gizmos. Now get ready for hurricane hunters, who dive nose-first into storms.

Like the storm chasers on land, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s hurricane hunters collect data that meteorologists otherwise wouldn’t be able to assess.

“Hurricane hunters are critical in determining the intensity of a tropical system by directly sampling the storm,” AccuWeather Meteorologist Randy Adkins said. “The data that they collect, including radar information, wind speed, temperature, pressure, etc. are instrumental in the forecasting process.”

This information is then used to determine the strength and category of the storm and goes into creating the models and warnings.

“The data that they collect is so instrumental in helping us make that forecast, the watches and warnings,” Director of the National Hurricane Center Ken Graham said. “But not only that, it gets in the models. So if the models are better, it helps all of us do our job.”

“If we didn’t send hurricane hunters into the hurricanes, we’d be relying more on satellite data which can give us a general idea but can’t be very specific about what’s happening within a particular section of the hurricane,” AccuWeather Senior Meteorologist Rob Miller said.

There are things that satellite images can’t provide, such as temperature, pressure and other measurements needed to create models and monitor hurricanes.

“Small errors with the input data can have a massive effect on the output, so it is extremely important that the data fed into the modeling is as accurate as possible — and the best way to do that is to fly into the system and collect the data directly,” Adkins said.

So the hurricane hunters retrieve the data themselves.

Their rides of choice include two Lockheed WP-3D Orion



four-engine turboprop aircraft specially equipped to gather data and see the scientists on board through the storm.

These aircraft cut into the raging storms and through the eyewall of hurricanes, dropping GPS dropwindsondes along the way. These tools are a meteorologist’s Swiss army knife of sensors wrapped in a cylinder tube with a parachute.

As they fall to the sea, they transmit measures of pressure, humidity, temperature, wind direction and wind speed. These recordings build a detailed look at the structure and intensity of a hurricane for meteorologists.

The aircraft also deploy bathythermographs, which measure the temperature of the sea.

Also on board are the tail Doppler radar, the lower fuselage radar system and Steeped Frequency Microwave Radiometers. The former two scan the storm vertically and horizontally, delivering a real-time look while the latter measures over-ocean wind speed and rain rate in hurricanes and tropical storms. These two measurements give insight into potentially deadly storm surges, which is the leading

cause of hurricane-related deaths in the United States.

According to NOAA, many of the 1,500 deaths that occurred from Hurricane Katrina were directly or indirectly related to storm surge.

High above the storm flies NOAA’s Gulfstream IV-SP, surveying the weather systems in the upper atmosphere around developing hurricanes.

The aircraft is built to cruise at altitudes of 45,000 feet with a range of 4,000 nautical miles, according to NOAA.

Like the P-3 aircraft, the Gulfstream IV-SP drops GPS dropwindsondes, recording higher altitude data. The aircraft’s tail Doppler radar allows forecasters to map the steering currents that influence the movement of hurricanes.

At the helm of the Gulfstream IV-SP are officers Capt. Kristie Twinning, the aircraft commander on the Gulfstream IV-SP “hurricane hunter” and chief of the Aircraft Maintenance Branch at the NOAA Aircraft Operations Center, and NOAA Corps Aviator Lt. Cmdr. Rebecca Waddington. This duo teamed up to survey Hurricane Hector in 2018 and become the first all-female team to pilot a NOAA aircraft during a hurricane mission.

Irma, Maria, Hector and Lane, the two pilots have each flown through some of the strongest hurricanes.

“Hurricane Maria and Irma were the most powerful and emotional,” Twinning said in an interview. “As we were flying these storms, we knew the path was headed for our homes, our families and our fellow Americans. This created a sense of ominous quiet in the aircraft as we flew over the Caribbean and Puerto Rico knowing the impact to these helpless communities was imminent.”

In the early 1990s, then-crew chief of the WP-3D Orion, N43RF, Hurricane Hunter Center Greg Bast had been assigned to an aircraft that was referred to as the “pig” at the center due to its lack of a lustrous “cosmetic appearance.”

(source: UPI)

Scientists unearth ‘most bird-like’ dinosaur ever found

Researchers in Germany have unearthed a new species of flying dinosaur that flapped its wings like a raven and could hold vital clues as to how modern-day birds evolved from their reptilian ancestors.

For more than a century and a half since its discovery in 1861, Archaeopteryx -- a small feathered dinosaur around the size of a crow that lived in marshland around 150 million years ago -- was widely considered to be the oldest flying bird.

Palaeontologists from Ludwig-Maximilians University (LMU) in Munich and the University of Fribourg examined rock formations in the German region of Bavaria, home to nearly all known Archaeopteryx specimens.

They came across a petrified wing, which the team initially assumed to be the same species. They soon found several differences, however. “There are similarities, but after detailed comparisons with Archaeopteryx and other, geologically younger birds, its fossil remains suggested that we were dealing with a somewhat more derived bird,” said lead study author Oliver Rauhut from LMU’s Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences.

They called the new bird-like dinosaur Alconavis poeschli -- from the old Celtic word for a nearby river and the scientist who discovered the fossil, excavation leader Roland Poeschl.

The study, published in the journal eLife Sciences, said Alconavis poeschli was “the most bird-like bird discovered from the Jurassic”. As well as being significantly larger than Archaeopteryx, the new specimen had more notches in its wing bones that pointed to muscles which would have allowed it to actively flap its wings.

Significantly, this “flapping” trait found in Alconavis poeschli is present in more recent birds, but not in Archaeopteryx.

“This suggests that the diversity of birds in the late Jurassic era was greater than previously thought,” Rauhut said.

The discovery is likely to fuel debate among dinosaur experts over whether birds and dinosaurs developed the ability to flap their wings from earlier gliding species.

“Its adaptation shows that the evolution of flight must have progressed relatively quickly,” said Christian Foth, from the University of Fribourg, and a co-author of the research.

(Source: AFP)

Luxurious private island resort opens -- and a night’s stay costs \$100,000

You can now book your stay in paradise -- but it won’t come cheap.

A luxurious private resort stretching across an island in the western Philippines has opened for business.

It offers white sand beaches, plush villas and plenty of amenities. But with a price tag of \$100,000 a night, Banwa Private Island is among the most expensive getaways anywhere in the world.

The resort, in the works for years, and benefits from year-round sunshine thanks to its location close to the equator. It features six villas and additional suites, meaning 48 people can stay at any one time. So if you have plenty of friends, it might be worth splitting the bill.

The resort’s surrounding Puerco Island, sits serenely off the coast of Palawan, an island province. Guests heading for Banwa will need to hop on a helicopter or seaplane for the final leg.

Once there, guests will be able to explore the entirety of the archipelago, relax in a hammock or sip cocktails at a bar.

Each villa has its own infinity pool and hot tub and a team of chefs will supply food and drink. Freshly caught fish and newly picked vegetables feature heavily on the menu.

Guests can also meet some of the island’s fauna, including sea turtles and tabon birds. There’s even an on-site wildlife expert.

Other amenities include a tennis court and a short golf course, plus access to a variety of boats. Jet skiing, scuba diving, sailing and kayaking are available. Of course, the gorgeous beach that stretches around the island is also a draw.

If all that sounds too strenuous, there’s also an on-site spa.

(Source: CNN)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Pantanal Conservation Area

The Pantanal Conservation Area in Brazil comprises a cluster of four contiguous protected areas: the Pantanal Matogrossense National Park and the Special Reserves of Acurizal, Penha and Doroche, covering a total area of 187,818 hectares.

This protected area complex is located in western central Brazil, in the extreme south-west of the Mato Grosso e Mato Grosso do Sul State and the international border with Bolivia and Paraguay.



The property includes the greater part of the Amolar mountainous ridge with a maximum altitude of 900 meters. The transition between the seasonally flooded areas and the mountains is abrupt. This ecological gradient is unique to the whole Pantanal region and offers a dramatic landscape.

Located between the river basins of Cuiaba and Paraguay, the site plays a key role in the spreading of nutritive materials during flooding as well as in the maintenance of fish stocks in the Pantanal. Although the property only covers a small part of the Pantanal (one of the largest wetlands of the world, covering around 14,000,000 ha), it is representative and of sufficient size to ensure the continuity of ecological processes.

It also protects numerous threatened species, such as the giant armadillo, giant anteater, giant otter, marsh deer and the hyacinth macaw, the largest species of parrot. The jaguar population in the property is probably the biggest in the entire Pantanal region. The number of aquatic plant species found there is also remarkable.

(Source: UNESCO)

Cool destinations to go if you need to escape the heat in Tehran

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN — If you can’t stand the heat in Tehran and want to take a break, don’t be disappointed!

Whether you’re in search of an ice-cold adventure or simply a sweat-free vacation, thankfully, there are plenty of destinations dotted around the Iranian capital to escape the summer heat.

It simply means that you don’t have to wait until fall or winter to enjoy colder temperatures: just skip the heat for many lush gardens and atmospheric townships in the surroundings.

On the northeast side of the metropolis, you can find plenty of cool townships and villages such as Damavand, Fasham, Oushan, Ahar, Meygoun, Cheshmeh A’la and Garmabdareh to name a few.

Along with the fresh air, fruit gardens and lush gardens, there are recreational facilities and abundant local restaurants as well.

To the eastward, Shahandasht waterfall may be your next destination. It is situated off the Haraz road that connects Tehran to the Caspian Sea coast in the north. The 50-meter cascade is adjacent to Qaleh Malek-Bahman, a Sassanid era (224 CE to 651) stronghold.

The list also includes Tangeh Vashi, a popular mountainous resort famous for having a cool stream where many opt for walking through.

To commemorate his hunts, Fath Ali Shah Qajar (r. 1797 – 1834) ordered a bas-relief carving in the midway point of the gorge. Today, the relief is very popular among holidaymakers.

Tangeh Vashi is situated some 15 kilometers west of Fir-ouzkouh. It is a heaven for trekking and hiking fans as well.

Apart from the east, you may choose to stay in Kan and Sulaqan, which are riverside rural districts westward. Another cool spot may be colorful valleys across the popular Chalous road that embraces hectic rows of restaurants and coffee shops.

The scenic villages of Darband and Darakeh stand out when it comes to the north. Moreover, they are amongst the most accessible destinations in this article.

Tajrish Sq. is a gateway to the rocky Darband where peo-



People walk through the atmospheric Darband village in northern Tehran.

Tajrish Sq. is a gateway to the rocky Darband where people hike upward trails which are teemed with atmospheric teahouses and restaurants.

ple hike upward trails which are teemed with atmospheric teahouses and restaurants.

Likewise, Darakeh embraces countless riverside restaurants. For people who want to do more it is possible to hike towards the Tochal cable car and beyond.

The bustling Iranian capital, however, never falls short of

interesting travel ventures for tourists. Visitors have at their disposal tours to UNESCO-tagged Golestan Palace, Grand Bazaar, Treasury of National Jewels, National Museum of Iran, Glass & Ceramic Museum, Masoudieh Palace, Sarkis Cathedral, Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, Carpet Museum of Iran, to mention but a few.

English queen’s bones ‘found in cathedral’s royal chests’

The bones of an early English queen are believed to have been discovered in mortuary chests at Winchester Cathedral.

Queen Emma of Normandy, who died in the Hampshire city in 1052, was the queen consort to two successive kings of England, Ethelred the Unready and Danish invader Cnut the Great, also known as Canute.

She was also the mother of King Edward the Confessor and King Hardacnut of Denmark.

Her remains are said to have been found among a jumble of 1,300 bones within six painted wooden caskets at the cathedral, which were believed to contain the remains of kings and bishops before the Norman conquest of England in the 11th century.

A conservation project was launched in 2012, and three years later, radiocarbon dating carried out by experts from the University of Oxford confirmed the bones were from the late Anglo-Saxon and early Norman periods.

Since then scientists from the University of Bristol have been trying to match the bones in the chests with historical burial records.

They believe some of the remains may belong to Queen



Emma of Normandy.

A cathedral spokesman said: “The secrets hidden within Winchester Cathedral’s mortuary chests are gradually being unlocked.

“The ability to identify the sex, age and physical characteristics of these individuals has resulted in some exciting

discoveries, including the remains of a mature female dispersed within several chests.

“It is not yet certain, but these bodily remains could be those of Queen Emma, daughter of Richard I, Duke of Normandy.

“She was a powerful political figure in late Saxon England, and her family ties provided William the Conqueror with a measure of justification for his claim to the English throne.

“Completely unexpected was the discovery of two juvenile skeletons, adolescent boys who had died between the ages of 10 to 15 years in the mid-11th to late 12th-century.

“Their presence in the chests was not recorded and their identity is still unknown, but they were almost certainly of royal blood.”

Professor Kate Robson Brown, who led the investigation, said: “We cannot be certain of the identity of each individual yet, but we are certain that this is a very special assemblage of bones.”

The cathedral spokesman added: “These discoveries could place Winchester Cathedral at the birth of our nation and establish it as the first formal royal mausoleum.”

(Source: Sky News)

China’s ancient city that’s luring expats



Nanjing’s 600-year-old wall contours to the city’s lake and mountain areas (Credit: National Geographic Image Collection/Alamy)

First established as a state capital in 229 CE, Nanjing, China, has long been one of the country’s most important (and largest) inland river ports and is recognized as one of the Four Great Ancient Capitals of China. Homo erectus fossils dating around 600,000 years have been found here; and the 600-year-old stone walls that surrounded the city during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) still stand alongside monuments to the early Republic of China and modern skyscrapers, giving the city constant visual links to its complex and changing past.

“From low-rise Nationalist period buildings around Beijing Xi Lu, towering skyscrapers around Xijiekou and winding alleys of shacks around old Pukou, Nanjing has a great deal of architectural variation,” said current resident and middle-school teacher Freya Drew, originally from Sheffield, England.

While this juxtaposition might seem jarring in other cities, it works in Nanjing. “Roads, often tree-lined, rise and fall within the city; old areas of housing back onto brazenly modern structures,” said teacher Ed Culham, who is from Scotland and has lived here since 2018. “While Nanjing is undoubtedly a modern city, it has an ancient feel, one where the historical site of the city renders the buildings harmonious with its natural surroundings.”

As a university city with a growing expat population, Nanjing offers a different pace than bustling Beijing (1,000km to the north) or futuristic Shanghai (300km to the east), but one that newcomers are happy to embrace for the peaceful trade-offs.

■ Why do people love it?

Though home to 8.3 million people, Nanjing is one of the few big cities left in China to offer easy access to peace and seclusion, Culham explained. “In Pukou [a north-west district in Nanjing], a 30-minute bus ride will leave you on the edge of the Laoshan Scenic Area. This large area of forested hills has many paths and trails from where it is easy to leave the crowds behind.”

Xuanwu Lake provides a peaceful escape right in central Nanjing, with temples, teahouses and restaurants located in nearby Xuanwu Lake Park. To experience more of Nanjing’s past, Culham recommends strolling the streets of Lao Men Dong, a renovated pedestrian street just north of the Qinhuai River. One of the oldest commercial streets in the city, Lao Men Dong features classic wooden structures (renovated to look like the originals) that house souvenir shops and small restaurants serving local specialties like salted duck, meatballs and savory pastries.

Unlike city walls in Beijing or Xi’an, Nanjing’s old wall isn’t geometric and instead contours the lake and mountain areas. As a result, natural sites often appear in unexpected areas of the city. The sense of surprise delivered by these central natural expanses, like the Yangtze River, Zhongshan Mountain range and Xuanwu Lake, is what new residents love about living here.

“Living in Nanjing for me means turning away from the busy main drag, diverting down old alleyways where you can emerge to courtyards or even areas of water or forest,”

Culham said. “It is this great variety that gives Nanjing its intrigue.”

■ What’s it like living here?

Home to Nanjing University, one of China’s top ranked universities, according to The Times Higher Education Asia University Rankings 2019, Nanjing has a large student population, which means it has better-than-average nightlife for a city of its size.

“There’s a great variety of cheap to expensive drinking establishments, and not just run-of-the-mill boring clubs,” Drew said. “Nanjing has a rather wild nightlife, especially amongst expats. There’s something going on pretty much every night around [the neighborhood of] Shanghai Lu.”

The city also has plenty of low-key clubs and live-music venues “for those who prefer to steer clear of the thump of a linear baseline,” Culham said. For those who miss the foods of home, there’s no shortage of foreign restaurants and cafes that cater to expats and international students. Getting around the city is easy. Nanjing has an efficient and expansive metro system that covers most of the city, but cycling is also an option,

with bike-friendly wide and straight roads.

Residents rave about how affordable Nanjing is compared to other Chinese cities, especially when it comes to housing. Rent for an 85-sq-m apartment is more than 50% cheaper than Beijing and 65% less than Shanghai, according to cost-of-living site Expatistan.com. That said, the weather can be rough in winter, since most buildings lack central heating. “The winters feel even colder due to the damp weather, and without central heating, it can get very cold inside,” Culham said. Summers are also very hot and humid.

■ What else do I need to know?

In 1937, during the Second Sino-Japanese War, Nanjing was the site of a deadly civilian attack. Known today as the Nanjing Massacre, a significant number of civilians were killed by Japanese soldiers (the total number is still widely contested among researchers and between countries), with many more injured or raped during the six-week attack. The memory of the event and Japanese occupation still lingers with residents.

“For many people, the more recent tragedies of the Nanjing Massacre and Japanese invasion simply cannot be forgiven or forgotten, a sentiment which in some cases is passed down generations,” Culham said. “The burden of this unique history may have an effect on how all expats are seen by some in the city.”

In general, Culham notes that a certain traditionalism and conservatism can be felt more strongly here than in other Chinese cities, which can make it more of a challenge to make local friends quickly. Learning and speaking Mandarin Chinese can help with integrating into the local community, as the language and cultural barrier tends to be high.

That said, Nanjing benefits from an “established and varied expat scene”, according to Cullen, so it’s easy to make foreign friends with similar interests.

(Source: BBC)

Will cotton waste stalks accelerate wound healing?

By Setareh Jahandideh

Cellulose nanocrystals (CNCs) extracted from cotton might be proper sources for making dressing material that can speed up the wound healing process, a new study shows.

In this study, cellulose nanocrystals (CNCs) were extracted from waste cotton stalks and then incorporated into electrospun gelatin nanofibers. The results were nanocomposites that may speed up wound healing process, yet further studies are needed before making a firm conclusion, said researcher, Ahmad Hivechi.

Hivechi conducted the research in collaboration with Hajir Bahrami in Amirkabir University of Technology.

According to Hivechi, the resulted nanofibers can be directly used as a dressing for wounds, or it can be incorporated into sterile gauze.

■ **What are the advantages of this new dressing?**

"The advantage of this wound dressing material, over other materials, is that it has a high rate of biodegradability. It means that the dressing material would be quicker in absorbing into the skin," said Hivechi.

The material contains Polycaprolactone



(PCL) that is a highly biodegradable polyester, he added.

■ **But does it mean that the material can make the wound heal faster? Or it means that only the dressing would be absorbed faster.**

The incentive behind this research is to enhance the industrial use, and accordingly, the revenue from cotton produced in Iran.

It can make the healing faster, he said, but we need to do more studies.

"The research so far has showed that the material increases cell adhesion and cell growth rate," he said.

"When tested on lab rats, the wounds that

had not been healed in 14 days, got healed in seven days."

"However, we need to do tests on bigger animals, and then human, before making any conclusion."

"There are some questions that we still need to answer. Are CNCs ideal for using in medical engineering? Is there any risk that they might be toxic to cells (Cytotoxicity)? Or are there going to be any long-term side effects on the body?"

"If the results were satisfactory, we can think about the industrial production."

■ **What motivated this research?**

"The incentive behind this research is to enhance the industrial use, and accordingly, the revenue from cotton produced in Iran."

"We used the waste stalks of cotton harvested in Golestan province; Golestan used to be among the biggest suppliers of cotton in the country, but unfortunately the production has decreased," said Hivechi heartily who himself was born in Golestan.

Parts of this research, including cell culture, drug delivery and modeling were done in University of Minnesota in collaboration with Professor Ronald A. Siegel.

The in vivo tests were carried out in Iran University of Medical Sciences in collaboration with Dr. Peiman Brouki Milan.

Iran, first in Middle East to do stem cell transplant on HIV patient

HEALTH **TEHRAN**— Blood stem cell transplant was carried out for the first time in Iran and the Middle East for treating cancer on a patient infected by HIV virus, Young Journalists Club reported on Wednesday.

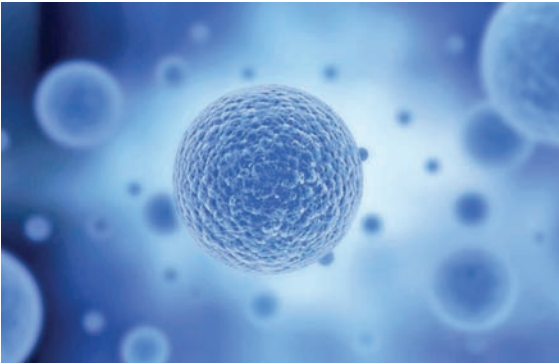
The transplant was carried out in Imam Khomeini Hospital. "This is the first time that such a transplant is done in Iran and the Middle East," said Dr. Mohammadreza Salehi who was the medical consultant to the transplant team.

According to WebMD, bone marrow and peripheral blood stem cell transplants are ways to treat blood cancers like leukemia, multiple myeloma, and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. They help restore the body's ability to make blood cells after high-dose chemotherapy or radiation.

"The 44-year old patient had HIV for seven years. The stem cell transplant was made a month ago, and the patient was discharged from the hospital after two weeks," said Dr. Salehi.

"Now, after visiting the patient, we realized that the cancer is cured. The patient, however, should have regular medical visits from now on," he added.

"A decade ago, it was impossible to do stem cell transplant



on HIV positive patients because of their weak immune system; but now, due to the discovery of new methods and treatments, such transplants have become possible."

■ **Possible effects of the transplant on HIV**

According to Dr. Salehi, the stem cell transplant has

no effect on curing the HIV/AIDS.

However, Dr. Seyed Reza Safaei, Oncologist and Hematologist, doesn't rule out the possibility, saying that there are cases when stem cell transplant helped remission of HIV.

In March, Nature journal reported that a person with HIV was seemingly free of the virus after receiving a stem-cell transplant that replaced their white blood cells with HIV-resistant versions.

The patient is only the second person ever reported to have been cleared of the virus using this method. But researchers warn that it is too early to say that they have been cured.

In April 2018, the chairwoman of HIV/AIDS department at the Health Ministry Parvin Afsar Kazerooni announced that some 36,571 were diagnosed with HIV virus up to late December 2017.

She further regretted that the number only constitute 40 percent of those who are actually suffering the disease and the rest are still undiagnosed while they might not even know they are having the infection.

Antibiotics: how beneficial side effects are starting to come to light

Despite being used for decades, we know very little about how antibiotics affect the body.

The discovery of antibiotics in the 1920s has contributed to longer and healthier lives, and they are now being used more widely than ever before. The main reason that antibiotics are prescribed is to kill bacterial infections. They are usually given when someone is already unwell and are taken until the infection is cleared. But, despite being used for decades, we know very little about how antibiotics affect the body beyond destroying bacteria.

Antibiotics use is particularly important in poorer countries, where people die from preventable infections every day. In these countries, antibiotics can be given before people get sick and taken over the long term to prevent illness. Protective doses of antibiotics have been tested for children with HIV, malnutrition and high infection risk with clear health benefits in some conditions and no improvement in others.

At the same time, global overuse of antibiotics is driving antimicrobial resistance, meaning that antibiotics can no longer clear common infections. It leaves us with a dilemma: how do we balance the need to protect vulnerable populations now with the threat of infections becoming harder to treat in the future?

Making better decisions about antibiotic use will rely on a better understanding of what they do. Research shows that some antibiotics do more than just kill bugs – and these "side effects" may have an under-appreciated role in health.

■ **Unexpected benefits**

Chief Medical Officer Dame Sally Davies: Resistance to antibiotics risks health 'catastrophe' to rank with terrorism and climate change

More than six decades ago, researchers first noticed that certain antibiotics had beneficial effects that were not explained by killing bacteria. When one of the first antibiotics, prontosil, was added to blood it made immune cells better at catching bacteria. Mice treated with the antibiotic trimethoprim before a skin transplant kept their new skin for longer than untreated mice and almost as



long as mice treated with azathioprine, a drug that suppresses graft rejection by immune cells. These experiments suggest that antibiotics can affect the immune system.

More recently, a review of 10 clinical trials of oral antibiotic use showed that antibiotic treatment promoted child growth. We also see this growth benefit in farm animals that have been treated with antibiotics. Growth was not only improved for children with infectious diseases but also those with malnutrition, where an overactive immune system and unhealthy gut also impede healthy growth.

It is not fully understood how these unexpected health benefits work, but they may explain why antibiotics continue to have health benefits despite antimicrobial resistance.

■ **Several mechanisms**

Cotrimoxazole is one antibiotic that promotes health and survival, even though many of the bacteria it is used to kill are resistant. Cotrimoxazole is often given to people with HIV. Infections and persistent inflammation (ongoing activation of immune cells) make HIV worse. Our research team set up a study to see if cotrimoxazole could improve the health of HIV-positive children by blocking persistent inflammation.

Infections and persistent inflammation (ongoing activation of immune cells) make HIV worse. Our research team set up a study to see if cotrimoxazole could improve the health of HIV-positive children by blocking persistent inflammation.

(Source: The Independent)

Novel Alzheimer's drug passes first phase of human testing

A new drug for treating Alzheimer's disease has successfully passed the first phase of testing in humans. Preclinical studies had already shown that the drug could improve memory and other symptoms of Alzheimer's disease in older mice.

Researchers at Forschungszentrum Jülich and Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf, both in Germany, developed the candidate drug, which, for now, bears the name PRI-002.

PRI-002 eliminates toxic beta-amyloid oligomers, the self-replicating proteins that scientists suspect of causing and advancing Alzheimer's disease.

The team had previously shown that the drug could significantly reduce signs and symptoms in older mice that were genetically engineered to develop an Alzheimer's-like disease through the insertion of a mutant human gene.

That preclinical study featured online in 2018 in the journal Molecular Neurobiology.

In the ensuing, recently completed phase 1 clinical trial, healthy volunteers took daily dosages of PRI-002 for 4 weeks. The results show that the drug is safe for human use.

Passing this stage of testing in humans means that the candidate drug can now proceed to a phase 2 trial to evaluate its effectiveness in people with Alzheimer's disease.

"Our next goal is the proof of efficacy in patients," says Prof. Dr. Dieter Willbold, who is director of the Structural Biochemistry Institute at Forschungszentrum Jülich and the Institute of Physical Biology at Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf.

He and his colleagues plan to pursue the next stage of clinical testing through Priavoid, a private company that they and others from both researcher centers set up in 2017 to develop drugs to treat severe neurological conditions.

■ **Alzheimer's and beta-amyloid oligomers**

Alzheimer's disease is the main cause of dementia. It gradually destroys people's ability to think, remember, relate to others, and have an independent life by killing off their brain cells.

The latest figures from the Alzheimer's Association suggest that there are now 5.8 million people living with Alzheimer's disease in the United States.

Scientists have recently agreed that



clumps of beta-amyloid oligomers are the most likely cause of Alzheimer's disease.

These oligomers are a toxic, aggregated form of naturally occurring beta-amyloid monomers, which are nontoxic. It is rare for the monomers to assemble into oligomers. However, the likelihood of rare events increases with time, which is probably why age is the biggest risk factor for Alzheimer's disease.

Beta-amyloid oligomers disrupt nerve cells and stop them from working properly. They can replicate and travel easily throughout the brain.

Many candidate drugs for Alzheimer's disease that have shown great promise in preclinical studies have failed to pass human trials that confirm efficacy and safety. They have not demonstrated improvements in memory and thinking.

Prof. Willbold says that the likely reason for this is that those studies either used enzymes to reduce the formation of beta-amyloid monomers from precursor protein, or they used antibodies to get the immune system to attack beta-amyloid.

■ **New drug tackles oligomers directly**

PRI-002 works in a different way. It causes the beta-amyloid oligomers to disassemble back into nontoxic monomers. In this way, it targets the oligomers directly without having to involve the immune system.

Another advantage of PRI-002 is that it belongs to a new class of drug called D-peptide. These compounds are mirror images of their naturally occurring equivalents, a feature that makes it harder for the body to eliminate them.

(Source: Medical News Today)

The advantages of diagnosing autism before age 2

Researchers say autism diagnoses made at 14 months generally don't change as a child gets older. Getty Images

The earlier you can start evidence-based interventions, such as occupational therapy, with a child with autism spectrum disorder, the more effective that treatment will be.

Most experts in the field agree on that.

However, one barrier to early treatment has been the reliability of autism diagnoses of young children.

Previously, a diagnosis wasn't considered reliable Trusted Source until the age of 2.

That may soon start to change.

A new study published in JAMA Pediatrics Trusted Source concludes that autism spectrum disorder (ASD) diagnoses made at the age of 14 months generally don't change as a child gets older.

Researchers tracked 1,269 toddlers while examining the children at multiple times, beginning at 12 months of age.

The researchers said they noticed an autism diagnosis at 14 months was generally "stable."

They also noted that 24 percent of the children eventually diagnosed with ASD were "missed" on initial evaluations by licensed psychologists who attributed behavioral patterns to other aspects such as language delay.

The new findings could support health professionals who want to make earlier diagnoses and begin implementing interventions sooner.

For families and children with ASD, this could have life-changing outcomes.

"Now that we understand the early nature of ASD and the very early age of diagnostic stability, it opens doors for researchers to begin examining the impact of very early delivered treatment," Karen Pierce, PhD, a study co-author and a professor in the neurosciences department at the University of California San Diego, told Healthline. "Our understanding of early brain plasticity suggests that very early treatment should result in excellent outcomes, but we will only know for sure once the studies have been conducted. Our findings open the door for such studies."

Two autism experts also interviewed by Healthline agreed a diagnosis earlier than 2 years of age is certainly possible, but they had a few cautions.

Rebecca Sachs, PhD, a licensed clinical psychologist at CBT Spectrum in New York, said indicators for autism such as language delay and social interaction are present as early as 14 months.

However, she noted that girls with autism sometimes aren't diagnosed until a later age or are often misdiagnosed due to the structure and measures used in ASD evaluations.

Kate Cody, PsyD, a licensed psychologist with Spectrum Psychological Services, said the accuracy of such early diagnoses can be determined by what experts are focusing on.

She also noted most early diagnoses are based on how a child interacts with an adult. Other signs might appear when the child is older and starts interacting with peers.

"There is a lot of variability," said Sachs.

■ **The benefit of early diagnosis**

ASD encompasses a wide range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech, and nonverbal communication.

It affects about 1 in 59 children Trusted Source, with boys being four times more likely to be diagnosed than girls.

How autism presents itself can differ greatly from one child to the next, making individualized intervention plans vital.

Timing is also an important factor in maximizing the potential benefits of treatment.

Pierce notes that the mean age for autism diagnosis in children is 52 months.

"Given the plasticity of the human brain to be shaped by early environmental experience, particularly within the first years of life, this late age of diagnosis is unfortunate because children are not receiving treatment at an age that might be most beneficial to them," she said.

Sachs and Cody agree.

"The earlier the intervention, the better prognosis we see," said Sachs. Cody added that earlier treatments have a better chance of rewiring a child's brain and adjusting behaviors.

"Early intervention tends to be more effective," she said.

Sachs noted that these therapies tend to develop better communication skills in children, which in turn can relieve frustration and stress.

"When a kid throws something across the room, they're communicating," she said.

Both Sachs and Cody said there appears to be little harm in using early intervention treatments on children who may not be on the spectrum.

The therapies will still help with language delays or any other developmental problems the child may be having.

"It's only going to benefit the child," said Cody.

■ **Available treatments, therapies**

There are three main approaches to intervention and treatment: medical, non-medical, and additional or alternative.

According to officials at Autism Canada, the medical approaches include:

- * specialized diets, such as gluten-free
- * pharmaceuticals, such as antibiotics
- * nutraceuticals, such as digestive enzymes

Non-medical approaches, according to the Texas Autism Resource Guide for Effective Teaching (TARGET), are vast and include:

- * Cognitive behavioral intervention that teaches individuals to understand and change thoughts and behaviors.
- * Exercise that uses physical exertion to reduce problem behaviors or increase appropriate behaviors while increasing physical fitness and motor skills.
- * Parent-implemented intervention that increases positive learning opportunities and acquisition of important skills.
- * Prompting that assists individuals when they are using a specific skill.
- * Reinforcement that establishes the relationship between the individual's behavior/use of skill and the consequence of that behavior/skill.
- * Self-management that teaches individuals to regulate behaviors and act appropriately.
- * Social skills training that aids individuals with peer, adult, and other individual social interactions.

In addition to the above interventions and therapy options, many families and children with ASD find support from other approaches.

According to Autism Canada, these other therapies include:

- * art
- * music
- * occupational therapy
- * sensory integration
- * therapeutic recreation

(Source: Healthline)



Water recycling atop agenda of biotech development center

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Biotech development center (BioDC) at science and technology vice-presidency is seriously following up on developing techniques and technologies for recycling water, IRNA news agency reported on Wednesday.

Water recycling, also referred to as water reuse or water reclamation, is an effective method of treating captured or conveyed wastewater and redistributing it to benefit other water-dependent applications.



Iran, a country located in an arid and semi-arid area, is suffering long-term and short-term water shortages and managing available water resources must become a priority for such a country, the report added.

Despite recent rainfalls and sharp rises in precipitations received almost nationwide, prolonged and persistent drought resulted in depletion of underground water re-

sources and dryness of wetlands and rivers, will not be addressed in such a short time span.

While dams and wetlands are reportedly filled with water following recent precipitation in the current water year (starting on September 2018) temperature rise during summer and high evaporation rate in the country can still cause water shortages in the years to come.

Inter-basin water transfer projects and setting up desalination plants can to some extent alleviate water shortages in some drought-ridden regions, however, they are not cost-effective, environmental friendly options.

■ Benefits of recycling water

The most common form of recycling, is industrial recycling. This allows us to use water for things like cooling in homes and vehicles. Recycling water also prevents it from being removed from natural habitats, like forest and wetlands that rely on it for survival.

According to the sciencing.com while wastewater can be severely damaging to rivers and oceans, the Environmental Protection Agency advises that recycled water often contains properties that are extremely beneficial to irrigating and fertilizing fields. Recycled water often contains high levels of nitrogen, which, while bad for aquatic life, is a required nutrient for plants.

Recycled water can also help improve wetlands. Wetlands provide many benefits to the environment, such as housing wildlife, diminishing floods, improving the quality of the water and providing a safe breeding ground for fish populations. Many times, recycled water can be added to the dried wetlands, helping them to once again thrive into a lush habitat.

Moreover, taking water from the rivers and oceans to use for things such as irrigation means using up part of the drinking water supply. Recycling water and using that instead, minimizes the potential loss of drinking water. This leaves the maximum amount of water possible for future generations to use for their drinking needs.

The need to recycle our wastewater is becoming more important than ever, as water shortages continue to spread throughout the world – and not just in low income countries. In fact, recycling is one of the best ways to make a positive impact on our planet. This means that taking necessary steps are vital for preserving life here on Earth.

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Turkish earthquake - the aftermath

The Turkish government faced difficult choices following the major earthquake. (August 26, 1999)

The situation is that we do not expect to find any more **survivors** in the ruins. Now the shift in emphasis is towards **ensuring the survival of the homeless people** and assessing their needs. And also beginning the assessment of the overall need for **reconstruction and rehabilitation**.

This is going to be a very difficult decision to be taken by the government of Turkey. For the moment it is definitely the government's policy to do **every possible effort to extract** all bodies that can be found in the ruins but obviously **you come to a point** where you do certainly not want to put people **at risk** at working in the very dangerous buildings that may collapse in order only to extract dead bodies. And this has **to be taken into account** by the government of Turkey.

■ Words

survivors, the survival : 'Survivors' refers to the people who lived through the earthquake and 'the survival' refers to the actual process of living after the disaster
the homeless people: this is another way of describing the survivors while giving more information about them
reconstruction and rehabilitation: reconstruction means rebuilding towns that have been destroyed; rehabilitation is improving their condition so that they can be lived in again
every possible effort: this refers to the lengths that the government were going to extract the bodies
extract: to remove with care
you come to a point: the time by which a reasonable decision is made, in this case that it was reasonable to stop looking for bodies
at risk: to be in danger
to be taken into account: one factor to be considered when making a decision

(Source: BBC)



Every action has a reaction. We have one planet; one chance.

5-year plan launched to safeguard Zagros forests

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — A 5-year conservation plan for Zagros forests has been designed and gone into effect this year (starting on March 21), an official with Forest, Rangeland and Watershed Organization (FRWO) has said.

Zagros Mountains forest steppe ecoregion with an area of about 6 million hectares (3.5 percent of Iran) is located primarily in Iran, ranging northwest to southeast and roughly paralleling the country's western border. The forests constitute 40 percent of the country's forested area and are stretching over 12 provinces. These forests have also been called western oak forests, due to the dominance of oak species.

According to the Science, Direct Western oak forests are home to many species including, the Persian squirrel which is the indicator species of this region. Persian squirrels and oak trees have symbiotic relationships, in which forests provide ecological requirements of Persian squirrels such as food and shelter and, in return, the Persian squirrel contributes in seed germination and forests' regeneration.

A wide variety of wildlife, including wolves, leopards, and even the Persian fallow deer which was once thought extinct have made their homes in the mountains.

Fariborz Gheibi explained that the plan is



comprising schemes for developing watershed management operations, increasing soil moisture, using cadaster [to fight against the land

grabbers and restrict activities linked with land grabbing in the country], pest control, and fighting wildfires.

Indian Shias donate \$715,000 to Iran's flood victims

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Shia Muslims in India have made contributions of 30 billion rials (nearly \$715,000) to help victims of recent floods in Iran, Mehr news agency reported on Friday.

Representative of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei in India Hojatoleslam Mahdi Mahdavi pour has delivered the donations to Parviz Fattah, the head of Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation, over a meeting held in India.

In addition to the cash contribution some Indians have donated some 39 pieces of gold jewelries, the report added.

Fattah, for his part, explained that Iranians have so far donated some 2 trillion rials (nearly \$47 million), including both cash and in-kind contributions, to their flood-hit fellow

countrymen and women.

He went on to explain that 30,000 housing units belonging to flood victims under Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation assistance are harmed by the flood and that reconstruction and rehabilitation of the damages would be finished by the yearend (March 19, 2019).

In mid-May Iran's Welfare Organization announced that within the framework of a campaign philanthropists donated a total of 190 billion rials (about \$4.5 million) to the flood survivors.

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.

Tropical forests 'empty' as illegal hunting slashes large mammal populations, study warns

Illegal hunting is causing catastrophic declines in mammal populations living in the world's remaining tropical forests, a new study has warned.

Jaguars, leopards, elephants and rhinos have seen population declines of 40 per cent in just 40 years and the study warned that hunting – half of which is done illegally – has left many tropical forests "empty" of wildlife.

Even the world's most pristine jungles are having their ecosystems damaged as key species are wiped out by hunters looking to collect valuable horns and bones, an international team of researchers lead by the Radboud University in Holland, found.

Within the tropics, only 20 per cent of remaining habitats are considered intact.

"Without adequate measures wildlife hunting will increase in the future," lead researcher Dr Benítez-López told The Independent.

"Our calculations show that even in protected areas mammal populations could be under hunting pressure, particularly in Western and Central Africa, and South East Asia. If projections of human population growth for

Africa are true, the demand will continue to increase. Plus there are many roads planned that will traverse tropical forests."

Until now there were vast understudied areas in the tropics where hunting impacts on mammal communities were unknown, according to the study which is published in the Plos Biology journal.

The biggest declines were seen in Western Africa, with more than 70 per cent population reductions. Researchers found primates and pangolins were most at risk.

Declines have largely been caused by increased human accessibility to remote areas.

Dr Benítez-López said: "Hunters target primarily large-bodied species because they provide relatively large meat yields and commercially valuable by-products such as horns and bones. In addition, large mammals reproduce at slow rates, which means that it takes longer for their populations to recover when exploited."

The study estimated the impact of hunting on 4,000 mammal species in the tropics. More than half of tropical forests are under pressure from hunting.

Dr Benítez-López said: "Hunting of carnivores may lead to an increase in herbivores with negative consequences for the vegetation whereas the hunting on species that feed on fruits and disperse their seeds can have negative consequences on forest regeneration"

The decline of mammals may have profound implications for ecosystem functioning.

"In the tropics habitat loss due to land use change (deforestation and conversion to croplands or rangelands) is still the leading cause of defaunation, yet hunting has comparable effects and, more importantly, it is responsible for massive declines in animal populations in seemingly undisturbed forests," said Dr Benítez-López.

"Even forests that are considered intact according to satellite images – in which there is no visible deforestation or logging – could be partially defaunated."

Rural communities who rely on wild meat for their food may find their main source of protein disappearing.

"Hunting effects were to this point not considered in large-scale biodiversity assessments and our results may help to fill this gap and



to eventually produce more representative estimates of human-induced biodiversity loss," she said.

The study looked at more than 3,200 data estimates from the last 40 years. It included more than 160 studies and hundreds of authors studying around 300 mammals across the tropics.

Researchers say this new study should help inform species extinction risk assessments and conservation planning.

(Source: The Independent)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → E

Tehran air pollution incurs annual loss of \$2.8b

Air pollution brings heavy economic burden amounting to \$2.8 billion for the Iranian capital, Tehran, head of the national working group for air pollution mitigation affiliated to the Department of Environment (DOE) has announced. The vehicle cycle consisting of manufacturing process to scrapping due to being clunker is the highest contributor to air pollution, as some 70 percent of the emission are generated by mobile sources, Vahid Hosseini lamented. The economic consequences of air pollution haunting the metropolis of Tehran equal \$2.8 billion per year, as estimated in 2018, he highlighted.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-itis”

- **Meaning:** a word ending that indicates inflammation, disease or excessive interest
- **For example:** **Arthritis** can be related to diet.

PHRASAL VERB

Gussy somebody/something up

- **Meaning:** to make someone look attractive by dressing them in their best clothes, or to make something look attractive by decorating it
- **For example:** Shopkeepers gussied up their window displays.

IDIOM

Bring the house down

- **Explanation:** if you bring the house down, you give a very successful performance.
- **For example:** "If Charlie sings like that on Saturday, he'll bring the house down."

خسارت اقتصادی آلودگی هوا سالانه ۲,۸ میلیارد دلار است

دبیر کارگروه ملی آلودگی هوای کشور گفت: خسارت اقتصادی آلودگی هوا برای تهران سالانه ۲.۸ میلیارد دلار است.

وحید حسینی گفت: چرخه تولید، مصرف و اسقاط خودرو مهمترین زنجیره انتشار آلودگی هواست. ۷۰ درصد از ذرات معلق هوا از منابع متحرک هستند.

به گفته دبیر کارگروه ملی آلودگی هوای شهر تهران، خسارت اقتصادی آلودگی هوا برای تهران سالانه بالغ بر ۲.۸ میلیارد دلار است که در سال ۲۰۱۸ برآورد شده است.

HRW urges Bahrain to ‘immediately’ halt death sentences against 2 dissidents

TEHRAN — Human Rights Watch has called on Bahraini officials to “immediately” suspend death sentences given to two political dissidents convicted on terrorism-related charges.

“Despite its rhetoric on reform, Bahrain is moving in the wrong direction by reinstating the death penalty,” Lama Fakih, deputy director in the New York-based group’s Middle East and North Africa division, said.

She added, “This irreversible punishment is cruel in all cases, but all the more so here amid evidence that the accused were tortured and denied fair trials. The death penalty is an archaic punishment that should be halted immediately.”

Fakih called on Bahrain’s European allies to “use their leverage to press” the tiny Persian Gulf kingdom to abolish the death penalty, “or at the very least, to reinstate the moratorium on executions.”

On May 12, Bahrain’s supreme court of appeal upheld death sentences against Zuhair Ibrahim Jassem and Mohammad Mahdi.

The two men were arrested separately on February 9, 2017 and sentenced with 58 other defendants on January 31, 2018, in a trial marred by allegations of torture and due process violations.



■ Bahrain court hands down jail terms to 10 dissidents

Meanwhile, a court in Bahrain has handed down prison sentences to nearly a dozen anti-regime protesters as the ruling Al Khalifah regime presses ahead with its heavy clampdown on political dissidents and pro-democracy activists in the country. The court sentenced a defendant to life

imprisonment and ordered him to pay a fine of 100,000 dinars (\$265,957). The same court also slapped jail terms of seven years against seven dissidents. Two other men were given three years in prison each, Arabic-language Luaia television network reported.

The defendants were convicted on charges of membership in the February 14 Youth Coalition — an opposition protest movement

named after the date of the beginning of a popular uprising against the Manama regime, and attacking a police station.

Thousands of anti-regime protesters have held demonstrations in Bahrain on an almost daily basis ever since a popular uprising began in the country in mid-February 2011.

They are demanding that the Al Khalifah regime relinquish power and allow a just system representing all Bahrainis to be established.

According to press TV, Manama has gone to great lengths to clamp down on any sign of dissent. On March 14, 2011, troops from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were deployed to assist Bahrain in its crackdown.

Scores of people have lost their lives and hundreds of others sustained injuries or got arrested as a result of the Al Khalifah regime’s crackdown.

On March 5, 2017, Bahrain’s parliament approved the trial of civilians at military tribunals in a measure blasted by human rights campaigners as being tantamount to imposition of an undeclared martial law countrywide.

Bahraini monarch King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifah ratified the constitutional amendment on April 3, 2017.

Sudan protesters tear down roadblocks, want army to resume talks

TEHRAN — Hundreds of demonstrators worked through the night into Friday clearing away bricks and debris, after military rulers demanded that roadblocks which have paralyzed parts of Khartoum must be dismantled before talks on a new transitional body can resume.

The ruling military council suspended crucial talks Wednesday with protest leaders for 72 hours, insisting that the security in the capital had deteriorated after demonstrators erected roadblocks on several avenues, AFP reported.

The council’s decision came as army generals and protest leaders were due to meet to finalize the make-up of a new body to govern Sudan for a transitional period

of three years.

The issue is the thorniest to have come up in ongoing talks on reinstating civilian rule after the generals took over following the ouster of autocratic president Omar al-Bashir last month.

But for the final talks to happen the military council chief, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, demanded that protesters dismantle roadblocks, open bridges and railway lines connecting the capital and “stop provoking security forces”.

In the early hours of Friday, hundreds of demonstrators chanting revolutionary slogans tore down roadblocks on Nile Street, a key avenue that had paralyzed downtown Khartoum for several days.

Palestine urges immediate ICC probe into Israeli crimes

TEHRAN — Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Malki has submitted a request to the International Criminal Court (ICC) to launch an immediate investigation into the situation of Palestinians under Israeli occupation.

During a meeting with ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda, Malki urged immediate action by the Hague-based court in light of the Israeli regime’s intention to annex the West Bank, the Palestinian Ma’an news agency reported Thursday.

Last month, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he would annex the occupied West Bank if he won another term in office.

He said he would not shy away from expanding illegal annexations to the West Bank, a land which the Israeli regime occupied during the 1967 Middle East war.

According to press TV, Netanyahu had previously said the fate of the West Bank, where President Mahmoud Abbas has its seat of power in the capital Ramallah, should be decided in talks with the Palestinians who seek to establish their own state in the territory.

A spokesman for Abbas said at the time that Netanyahu’s comments would not affect the illegal nature of the Israeli settlements in the West Bank which currently hosts some 400,000 settlers.

Brexit disarray returns: Labor declares talks dead as May’s premiership fades

TEHRAN — Britain’s tumultuous divorce from the European Union was again in disarray Friday as the opposition Labor Party declared last-ditch cross-party talks dead as Prime Minister Theresa May’s premiership crumbled.

Nearly three years after the United Kingdom voted 52% to 48% in a referendum to leave the EU, it is still unclear how, when or if it will ever leave the European club it joined in 1973. The current deadline to leave is Oct. 31.

Brexit talks between May’s Conservative Party and Labor collapsed hours after May agreed on Thursday to set out a timetable for her departure in early June, Reuters reported.

Labor leader Jeremy Corbyn wrote to May Friday informing her that the Brexit talks, which began on April 3, had “gone as far as they can” due to the instability of her government.

“We have been unable to bridge important policy gaps between us,” Corbyn, a socialist who voted against joining the predecessor of the EU in 1975, wrote to May.

“Even more crucially, the increasing weakness and instability of your government means there cannot be confidence in securing whatever might be agreed between us,” Corbyn said.

He said Labor would oppose May’s deal when it returns to parliament early next month.

The divorce deal, which May agreed last year with the EU, has already been rejected three times by a deeply divided parliament.

The pound sank to \$1.275, its lowest level since mid-January.

May’s hands have been tied, knowing that to make concessions to Labour would lead to fury in her divided party. Labor has feared any compromises on issues such as workers’ rights would be torn up by May’s successor.

Britain’s labyrinthine crisis over Brexit has stunned allies and foes alike, and with deadlock in London, the world’s fifth largest economy faces an array of options including an exit with a deal to smooth the transition, a no-deal exit, an election or a second referendum.

The Brexit impasse is unlikely to be broken swiftly.

May will put her ‘European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill’ to a vote in parliament in early June even though rebels in her party have pledged to defeat it. Then she must agree a timetable for the election of a successor.

Boris Johnson, the face of the campaign for Britain to



leave the EU, said he would be standing as a candidate to replace May as Conservative leader.

The winner of a leadership contest will automatically become prime minister and will take control of the Brexit process, which has plunged Britain into its worst political crisis since World War Two.

Trump propose U.S. immigration overhaul, ending green card lottery

TEHRAN — U.S. President Donald Trump has proposed overhauling the country’s immigration system to favor young, educated, English-speaking applicants instead of people with family ties to Americans.

Trump’s plan, which he announced on Thursday at the White House, has little to no chance of being approved in Congress and was strongly criticized by Democrats in Congress and immigration advocacy groups.

“If for some reason, possibly political, we can’t get the Democrats to approve this merit-based, high-security plan, then we will get it approved immediately after the

election when we take back the House (of Representatives), keep the Senate, and, of course, hold the presidency,” Trump said in a Rose Garden address to Republican lawmakers and Cabinet members.

“Companies are moving offices to other countries because our immigration rules prevent them from retaining highly skilled and even, if I might, totally brilliant people,” Trump said.

Currently, about two-thirds of the 1.1 million people allowed to emigrate to the United States each year are given green cards granting permanent residency because of

family ties.

Trump proposed keeping the overall numbers steady, but shifting to a “merit-based” system similar to one used in Canada.

Trump said the plan would result in 57 percent of green cards being based on employment and skills.

The president would also end the Diversity Immigrant Visa, also known as the green card lottery, used to give applicants from countries with low immigration rates a chance to immigrate to the United States.

According to Press TV, Trump’s plan includes proposals to increase security at the

U.S.-Mexico border to try to prevent people from crossing illegally and legal changes aimed at curbing a rise in Central American migrants seeking asylum.

However, the plan does not address the sensitive issue of how to deal with the roughly 11 million immigrants living in the country illegally - many for years.

It also left aside protections for “Dreamers” brought to the country illegally as children, a top priority for Democratic lawmakers.

6 civilians killed in Saudi strikes on Yemen’s capital

T Most of the strikes targeted residential areas in Sana’a, the officials said.

Warplanes also struck a building of Yemen’s Ministry of Information, al-Masirah added. There were no immediate reports about possible casualties or the extent of the damage caused.

According to Press TV, Saudi Arabia and a number of its regional allies launched a devastating campaign against Yemen in March 2015, with the goal of bringing the government of ex-president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi back to power.

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

The war has also taken a heavy toll on the country’s infrastructure, destroying hospitals, schools, and factories. The UN said in a report in December 2018 that over 24 million Yemenis were in dire need of humanitarian aid, including 10 million suffering from extreme levels of hunger.

Kremlin pledges a response to new U.S. sanctions on Russian individuals

The Kremlin said Friday it would respond in kind to a new round of U.S. sanctions on Russian nationals, saying its retaliation would be consistent with Russia’s national interest.

The United States Thursday imposed sanctions on a Chechen group and five people, including at least three Russians, over allegations of human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings and the torture of LGBTI people.

The sanctions against the Terek Special Rapid Response Team in Russia’s southern region of Chechnya and the five people were announced by the U.S. Treasury under the Magnitsky Act.

(Source: Reuters)

Iraqi national carrier to resume commercial flights to Syria after 8 years

TEHRAN — The national carrier of Iraq, Iraqi Airways, has announced that it will resume commercial flights to the Syrian capital for the first time since foreign-backed militancy broke out in the neighboring country eight years ago.



Layth al-Rubaie, a spokesman for the airline, said on Thursday that Iraqi Airways will operate a weekly service from Baghdad to Damascus as of Saturday.

The development comes nearly a month after the Syrian government agreed to a request by the Qatari civil aviation authority to allow planes of Qatar Airways to fly over Syria.

“Transport Minister Ali Hammoud has agreed to allow Qatar Airways to cross Syrian airspace, based on a request from the Qatari civil aviation authority,” the Syrian Ministry of Transport said in a statement released late on April 22.

Doha severed ties with Damascus in the wake of the foreign-backed militancy in Syria, and supported the so-called armed opposition groups in the conflict-plagued Arab country.

According to Press TV, Qatar Airways kept its planes at bay and took longer routes to circumvent the war zone, a policy that was also adopted by most other international airlines.

“The agreement came on the principle of reciprocity, as Syrian Air crosses Qatari airspace and never stopped flying to Doha throughout the war,” the statement further said, adding that the use of Syrian airspace would see “increased revenues in hard currency for the benefit of the Syrian state.”

On December 27, 2018, a flight from Damascus landed in Tunisia’s Monastir Habib Bourguiba International Airport, marking the first direct flight between the two countries since the outbreak of the Syria crisis.

Diplomacy on Venezuela crisis gains momentum

TEHRAN- Diplomatic efforts aimed at resolving Venezuela’s crisis accelerated Thursday as the government and opposition sent envoys to negotiate in Norway, though the two sides’ mutual mistrust and differences on key issues could prevent any quick solution.

The envoys’ trip appeared to be primarily a mediation attempt by Norway aimed at reducing tensions that exploded into street violence when the opposition called in vain for a military uprising on April 30.

It comes amid other diplomatic efforts elsewhere: A mostly European group of nations prepared to send a high-level delegation to Venezuela, and Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland met Thursday with Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez in Havana, Daily Star reported.

The Norwegian Centre for Conflict Resolution has been working quietly behind the scenes since last year to bring the two sides in Venezuela together. In October, it sponsored an initiative to bring a Harvard-trained conflict resolution expert to Caracas to foster dialogue. In recent months, with the support of Norway’s Foreign Ministry and diplomats based in Bogota, Colombia, its representatives have made several trips to Caracas.

Per Wiggen, an official from Norway’s Foreign Affairs Ministry, did not confirm planned talks in Oslo, though Norway has urged the two sides to talk since February. Minister Ine Eriksen Soeride told lawmakers on March 5 that Norway could be a mediator.

China says trade war will strengthen it, weaken U.S.

TEHRAN — With economists warning of yet another U.S. recession on the horizon, China’s top newspaper says an escalating U.S. trade war will never bring the Asian power to its knees, but will make it stronger.

The Communist Party’s People’s Daily wrote in a front page commentary on Friday that China is as “firm as a boulder” in protecting its national interests and dignity in the face of Washington’s trade war< Press TV reported.

Last week, the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump raised tariffs on \$200 billion of Chinese imports from 10 percent to 25, as the two sides appeared to be close to ending months of trade dispute.

A state media social media account said the United States is not sincere about wanting to resume trade talks with

China and has damaged the atmosphere for negotiations with its recent moves.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said on Wednesday he will likely travel to Beijing soon to try to salvage talks aimed at ending their months-long trade war.

But China’s Commerce Ministry said on Thursday it had no information on any plans for a U.S. trade delegation visit.

Taoran Notes, a WeChat account run by the Economic Daily, said in a post late Thursday that without sincerity there was no point in coming for talks and nothing to talk about.

“The U.S. side has been saying it wants to talk, and at the same time has kept up with its little tricks, damaging the atmosphere for talks,” it said.

“There can’t be seen any substantive negotiating sincerity from the United States. Conversely, methods of extreme pressure are spreading,” the post added.

The post was republished by People’s Daily which also said, “The trade war can’t bring China down. It will only harden us to grow stronger.”

The paper said China’s confidence comes from the spirit of its people’s perseverance and endless struggle, citing major disasters like floods, SARS and 2008’s massive Sichuan earthquake.

Tensions worsened this week after the Trump administration added China’s Huawei to a trade blacklist, immediately enacting restrictions that will make it extremely difficult for the telecom giant to do business with U.S. companies.

Football must get to grips with mental health, says Rose

England's Danny Rose says football has a long way to go to get to grips with mental health issues, revealing a club interested in signing him first wanted to make sure he was not "crazy".

The Tottenham left-back, 28, opened up about his struggles with depression in the build-up to the 2018 World Cup, an illness that was triggered by a significant knee injury and the death of a close family member.

Following his revelation, a club considering signing him said they wanted to meet him to check on his mental state.

He told the BBC One documentary, 'A Royal Team Talk: Tackling Mental Health': "I think there's still a long way to go in football because in the summer I was speaking to another club, and they said, 'The club would like to meet you, just to check that you're not crazy' -- because of what I'd said and what I'd been through.

"I was embarrassed, as whatever I've been through I like to think it doesn't affect me doing my job. I still know I'll always give 100 percent."

"In the end they didn't put a bid in, but to think that people assume I might be crazy is embarrassing and I'm still angry about it to this day," said Rose, who has also spoken out strongly on racism. "If that opportunity came around again I'd definitely say no now."

The documentary also features Prince William, president of the Football Association, former France star Thierry Henry and England boss Gareth Southgate.

Prince William earlier this week announced a new campaign that uses football to get more men talking about mental health. Heads Up is a partnership between the FA and Heads Together, the campaign spearheaded by William's Royal Foundation.

(Source: AFP)

Biathlon: Double Olympic champion Dahlmeier retires at 25

BERLIN (Reuters) — Double Olympic biathlon champion Laura Dahlmeier announced her retirement from the sport on Friday after a rollercoaster season that saw her miss out on gold at the world championships.

A multiple world champion, the German, who became the first female biathlete to achieve a sprint and pursuit double at the same Olympics when she won both at the Pyeongchang Games last year, has dominated her sport in recent years.

But the latest season was far from successful by Dahlmeier's standards as injury, illness and a dip in form took their toll.

"After an unbelievably tough season with lots of highs and lows I no longer feel the 100 percent passion that is needed for professional sports," Dahlmeier said in a statement.

"This is why after some long thought I decided to end my active biathlon career."

Dahlmeier, who won seven gold medals at world championships, also secured bronze in the individual event in Pyeongchang.

Barcelona to turn Camp Nou into rugby pitch

Barcelona's Camp Nou pitch will be put to a different use when it hosts a Super League game between Rugby League clubs Catalans Dragons and Wigan Warriors on Saturday.

The match could result in damage to the playing surface, but Barcelona are not due to play there again until friendly matches against Chelsea and Vissel Kobe are played in July.

The meeting between Catalans, based in Perpignan, France, and English side Wigan came about after Barca chairman Josep Maria Bartomeu watched the Dragons' Challenge Cup final win at Wembley last year.

Bartomeu also invited the victorious players to parade their trophy at the Camp Nou at half-time in Barca's Catalan derby against Girona last September.

ragons chairman Bernard Guasch told Forbes Bartomeu had been "surprised to see a lot of Catalan flags in the stands and to hear the Catalan anthem Els Segadors sung. Catalan culture is something really important at Barcelona, and in particular for their chairman."

Officials hope around 30,000 people will attend the match in the 99,354-capacity stadium, breaking the Super League attendance record. The two clubs have previously faced each other at Millwall's Den, playing there in 2015 and attracting a crowd of 8,000.

(Source: ESPN)

Japan bans drones over Olympic, military sites

Japan on Friday passed laws to ban drones being flown over Tokyo 2020 Olympic sites and US military facilities as a measure aimed at preventing terror attacks.

Drones will also be banned over Japan Self-Defense Forces' facilities.

Current law already bans the flying of drones over key facilities such as the Prime Minister's Office and the Imperial Palace.

Flying drones in densely populated areas is also forbidden but a foreign tourist received a warning from police last week after he flew one over the famous "scramble" crossing at Shibuya.

And several people told police they had seen a drone-like object near the Imperial Palace ahead of the new emperor's first public appearance. A broader public discussion about drones was prompted after a Japanese man was arrested in 2015 for landing a drone containing a bottle of radioactive sand from Fukushima on the roof of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's office.

Traces of radiation were detected but were reportedly too low to be a risk to human health.

The Tokyo District Court sentenced the man a two-year jail term, suspended for four years.

Following the case, the government imposed tighter regulations for flying unmanned objects in urban and densely populated areas, as well as around airports.

(Source: AFP)

Allegri and Juventus in surprise split at end of season

Coach Massimiliano Allegri will leave Serie A champions Juventus at the end of the season after guiding them to five straight Italian titles, the club said on Friday.

"Massimiliano Allegri will not be on the Juventus bench for the 2019/2020 season," the club announced in a surprise development.

Allegri, 55, held meetings with the club's hierarchy earlier in the week during which a clear disagreement between the two parties emerged.

He had rejected reports saying he was about to be dismissed last Saturday adding he had already been making plans for the side's future for the past six months.

Juventus have already wrapped up their record eighth consecutive title, and Allegri's fifth in as many years and he lifted the Coppa Italia on four occasions since replacing Antonio Conte in 2014.

The club's former midfielder Conte along with France boss and ex-defender and boss Didier Deschamps, Champions League finalist Mauricio Pochettino of Tottenham and Lazio's Simone Inzaghi have been linked with



British runner Pavey says Nike froze sponsorship when pregnant



British distance runner Jo Pavey has become the latest female athlete to complain that Nike halted her sponsorship payments when she was pregnant, Sky News reported on Thursday.

The five-time Olympian said the athletic apparel company froze her payments when she revealed that she was expecting her first child Jacob, who was born in 2009.

"When I announced I was pregnant my contract was immediately paused," Pavey, who won 10,000 meters bronze at the 2007 world championships, told Sky.

"One of the main problems is the target to get the contract back and the timescale," she said.

"It was the joy of running that kept me going because you think, 'What will be will be' and I was focused on being a mum. But you don't want to feel punished for being pregnant."

Pavey's comments come after American middle distance runner Alyisia Montano made similar claims in a video on the New

York Times website earlier this week.

"I was sponsored by Nike and when I told them I wanted to have a baby during my career, they said, 'Simple, we'll just pause your contract and stop paying you,'" said Montano, who famously competed while eight months' pregnant in 2014.

"How about when you tell my daughter she can achieve anything, you back it up?"

Nike frequently promotes gender and racial equality in its advertising campaigns.

In a statement to Reuters, Nike said it had changed its policy last year on sponsorship so that no female athletes would be "penalized financially for pregnancy."

"Nike is proud to sponsor thousands of female athletes," a Nike spokesman said in an emailed statement.

"As is common practice in our industry, our agreements do include performance-based payment reductions. Historically, a few female athletes had performance based reductions applied."

(Source: Reuters)

Tennis: Osaka pulls out of Rome quarters with hand injury



World number one Naomi Osaka pulled out of the Italian Open quarter-finals on Friday with a right thumb injury, casting doubts over her participation in this month's French Open.

The 21-year-old Japanese was scheduled to face sixth seed Kiki Bertens after coming through two matches on Thursday in the rain-affected tournament but said she was forced to withdraw due to pain and swelling at the base of her thumb.

"I woke up this morning and couldn't really move my thumb," Osaka told reporters. "I tried to practise and grip my racket but I couldn't, and I kept feeling this pain when I tried to move my hand in different directions.

"Right now I'm... in between sad and disappointed because I really wanted to play my match today. For me, it was sort of a test to play against Kiki because she's playing really well and I wanted to see how well I could do today.

taking over from Allegri in the Italian press in recent weeks.

Allegri's name shot up the bookmaker's list of favorites to be the next permanent coach at Inter Milan and Chelsea despite both sides already having men in place.

Despite signing Cristiano Ronaldo from Real Madrid last summer the Bianconeri failed to make it past the quarter-finals of the European football's top competition for the second successive season.

They were humiliated by modest-spending Ajax in the last eight in April despite a star-studded side including Ronaldo, Argentina's Paulo Dybala and France World Cup winner Blaise Matuidi.

Allegri guided Juve to two European finals losing to Barcelona in 2015 before being hammered by Real Madrid two years later.

Wales midfielder Aaron Ramsey has already signed for the Italian club on a free transfer from Arsenal for next season.

Allegri and club president Andrea Agnelli will hold a press conference on Saturday at 14:00 local time (1200 GMT).

Five rising Bundesliga stars of 2018/19



Bundesliga title.

■ **Kai Havertz**

Bayer Leverkusen could still secure Champions League qualification on Saturday. If they do, they will have 19-year-old playmaker Kai Havertz to thank.

In a season full of ups and downs at Leverkusen, Havertz has been a welcome source of reliability, playing in every Bundesliga game and chalking up 19 goals in all competitions.

He made his Germany debut in September, and has been heavily linked with Bayern Munich, though Leverkusen sporting director Rudi Voeller has insisted that the club will not let him go in 2019.

■ **Joelinton**

After spending two years on loan at Rapid Vienna, Brazilian striker Joelinton has established himself as first-choice striker at Julian Nagelsmann's Hoffenheim this season.

With seven goals and seven assists, the 22-year-old has been deadly on the counter-attack and shown a poacher's instinct in front of goal.

Joelinton has been linked with Liverpool in recent months, a move which would see him follow in the footsteps of fellow Brazilian and former Hoffenheim star Roberto Firmino.

■ **Alexander Nuebel**

Another young talent linked to Bayern, goalkeeper Alexander Nuebel has been a ray of sunshine in a dark season for Schalke.

His smart saves and excellent ball-playing skills helped steer the club away from relegation and have earned him comparisons with former Schalke number one Manuel Neuer.

The 22-year-old started the season as second-choice keeper behind Ralf Faehrmann, but was promoted to the number one spot in January. He hasn't looked back.

Faehrmann had predicted Nuebel's rise as early as 2016, calling him "one of the best goalkeeping talents Germany has ever had".

Nuebel is being mooted as a potential successor to Neuer at Bayern.

(Source: AFP)

Liverpool, Spurs fans want UCL sponsors' tickets

Liverpool and Tottenham supporters' groups have called on sponsors to return Champions League final tickets to allow more fans to attend the showpiece in Madrid.

Fans for the two sides have received a total of 33,286 tickets from the 68,000 available at Atletico Madrid's Wanda Metropolitan stadium.

Liverpool's Spirit of Shankly (SOS) and Tottenham Hotspur supporter's Trust (THST) have released a joint-statement, asking sponsors to "redress the balance."

"Spirit of Shankly and Tottenham Hotspur supporters' Trust -- the independent official fan groups of LFC and THFC -- are calling on the main sponsors of the UEFA Champions League to return a proportion of the tickets they have received for the Champions League final to the pot for supporters of both clubs," the statement read.

"We ask Nissan, Playstation, Gazprom, PepsiCo, Banco Santander, Mastercard, Heineken and Expedia Group to help redress the balance in the current unfair allocation

that means fans of both competing clubs receive less than 25 percent of available tickets.

"As major sponsors of the UEFA Champions League, your companies appreciate the passion and dedication of the fans who follow their teams and make every game a spectacle. But many of those fans who have followed their club throughout this season will miss out on the biggest game of all.

"As will thousands more loyal supporters. SOS and THST believe such a gesture by the sponsors would help lift the occasion

by increasing the number of passionate fans inside the stadium, and increase each brand's standing on a global scale.

"We also ask that each sponsor lobbies UEFA to allocate tickets for future finals on a fairer, more equitable split that has supporters benefit."

Meanwhile, Arsenal have demanded an explanation from UEFA over their decision to allocate just 6,000 tickets to their supporters for the Europa League final against Chelsea.

(Source: Soccernet)

Persepolis lift IPL title for third successive year

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Persepolis football team claimed Iran Professional League (IPL) for the third time in a row on Thursday.

Mario Budimir scored the winning goal in the 41st minute in Jam's Takhti Stadium to give Persepolis a hard-fought win over Pars Jonoubi.

Branko Ivankovic became the first coach in Iran's league to win three successive title with a team.

Persepolis claimed the title with 61 points, three points ahead of Sepahan.

Esteghlal and Padideh came third and fourth with 57 and 56 points, respectively.

Persepolis captain Jalal Hosseini also is the most-decorated football player in IPL with seven titles.

He claimed three titles in a row with Persepolis as well as three titles with Sepahan and one title with Saipa.

"We earned wonderful results in this season since Persepolis were banned from signing players in the first half of the season. To win the title for the third time was the toughest and it proves that we have moved in the right direction and we will keep going," Ivankovic said.

"Persepolis had a difficult fixture in the final weeks but we did well. From now on, we are thinking about the match against Al Sadd in AFC Champions League and Sepahan in Hazfi Cup's semifinals," he added.

"I am proud of my players because they dedicated themselves to the team. Persepolis don't need to new players, however some of players are on the radar of the other clubs," Ivankovic added.

At the end of the competition, Esteghlal Khuzestan and Sepidrood were relegated from the Iran Professional League.

IPL Weekend Results:

- Machine Sazi 1 – 2 Padideh
- Saipa 0 – 3 Sanat Naft
- Naft Masjed Soleyman 2 – 2 Zob Ahan
- Sepahan 2 -0 Esteghlal Khuzestan
- Nassaji 2 – 0 Paykan
- Foolad 2 – 2 Tractor Sazi
- Esteghlal 2 – 1 Sepidrood



Iran seize two medals at World Taekwondo Championships



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran's Mahla Momenzadeh and Armin Hadipour Seighalani claimed two medals on the opening day of the World Taekwondo Championships in Manchester, England on Thursday.

Momenzadeh lost to title-holder Sim Jae-young from South Korea 11-6 in the women's under-46kg final match.

She defeated Kazakhstan's Ainur Uashpay (21-1), British Jordyn Smith (17-7), Russian Galina Medvedeva (23-3), Croatian Lena Stojkovic (30-20) and Chinese

Tan Xueqin (11-9) on her way to the final.

Earlier on the day, Hadipour won a bronze medal at the men's under-54kg after losing to Russia's Georgy Popov 14-4 in semifinals.

Popov will face Bae Jun-seo from South Korea in the final match.

Around 975 athletes from 150 countries and one refugee team under World Taekwondo's flag are competing in 16 weight categories (eight men, eight women) over five action-packed days at the Manchester Arena.

Tractor Sazi part company with Georges Leekens: report



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** —Iranian football club Tractor Sazi have reportedly parted company with Belgian coach Georges Leekens.

The 69-year-old coach replaced Welshman John Toshack in the Tabriz based football team in January but failed to meet expectations in the Iranian top-flight football team.

Tractor Sazi were a favorite to win Iran Professional League for the first time but finally finished in fifth place in the table and it means the team have also missed a place

in the next year's AFC Champions League.

The Belgian started his coaching career in 1984 at Cercle Brugge and has also worked as head coach in Belgium, Hungary, Algeria and Tunisia national football teams as well as Belgian clubs Anderlecht, Lokeren, Gent, Club Brugge, Kortrijk, Charleroi, and Excelsior Mouscron.

Antonio Jose da Conceicao Oliveira, known as Toni, is a candidate to take charge of Tractor Sazi.

The Portuguese coach has had three stints with Tractor Sazi.

Yaya Toure on trial at Qingdao Huanghai

Former Barcelona and Manchester City midfielder Yaya Toure has landed in China PR on a trial with second-tier Qingdao Huanghai, the club said on Friday.

The 36-year-old has been without a team since December after an unsuccessful three-month spell at Olympiakos in Greece.

There were suggestions that the former Ivory Coast international had retired, but he denied that earlier this week and said he wanted to keep playing "for a few more years".

It appears that his swansong could now be a sojourn in eastern China at Qingdao, who are top of the second-tier China League One and play in Barcelona colours.



Toure was pictured on Thursday arriving at the city's airport and British media said that he was poised to sign. But a Qingdao Huanghai press official said such reports were wide of the mark.

"He is here for a trial," said a spokesman. "The coaching team will assess his physical condition and ability to decide whether he is suitable for our team."

Toure, who spent eight successful seasons with Premier League champions City before being released last summer, has long been linked with a move to China PR.

Ricardo Vaz Te, the 32-year-old former Bolton Wanderers and West Ham United forward, is on Qingdao's books.

(Source: AFP)

Al Duhail lift Qatar Amir Cup



The start of the second half saw Al Sadd reduced to 10 men when Tarek Salman was red-carded for a late tackle on Edmilson

and following that, the momentum swung Al Duhail's way.

A quick exchange of passes with Yuself

El Arabi saw Edmilson scoring from close range in the 58th minute and the Brazilian then sent a cross which El Arabi chested into goal four minutes later.

Edmilson completed a perfect night for Al Duhail with the fourth in the 81st minute and it got worse for Al Sadd as Bounedjah and Hamed Ismael were sent off for off the ball incidents.

Both teams will be in action in the 2019 AFC Champions League next week with Al Sadd facing Islamic Republic of Iran's Persepolis in their final Group D match, having already sealed their place in the knockout stage.

Al Duhail, who have also confirmed knockout stage qualification, play Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal.

(Source: the-afc)

Wilmots has yet to sign contract with Iran

PLDC — Marc Wilmots left Tehran on Friday after reaching an initial agreement with Iran Football Federation.

The Belgium coach came to Tehran on Wednesday to take charge of Team Melli until the 2022 World Cup.

Wilmots watched the Iran Professional League final weekend along with Mehdi Taj, head of Iran football federation, Thursday night.

Wilmots, 50, is reportedly asking for an annual salary of US\$ 1.5 million along with two assistant coaches of his choice. However, the Iranian federation is interested in adding former Iran international and Osasuna midfielder Javed Nekounam to the national team coaching staff.

The coach has returned to Belgium without finalizing his contract but it seems two parties have reached an agreement.

Iran, who are top AFC team in the FIFA rankings at No. 21, will host Syria in Tehran on June 6 and Wilmots will have to return to Iran several days before the match.

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.



Brazilian duo win IPL Golden Boot

TASNIM — Brazilian strikers Kiros Stanley and Luciano Pereira scored final-day goals to share the Iran Professional League (IPL) Golden Boot.

Pereira's double for Foolad means he joins Sepahan forward Stanley who scored 16 goals.

Persepolis striker Ali Alipour failed to win the prize for the second successive year after scoring 14 goals.

Persepolis goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand also won the Golden Glove as the league's best keeper.

The Iran international kept his 16th clean sheet of the season in the match against Pars Jonoubi to help the Reds to a 1-0 victory.

Persepolis won the title for the third season in row, followed by Sepahan and Esteghlal.

Foolad finished in eighth place.

Huddersfield Town linked with Mehdi Taremi

Serbian website Telegraf.rs claim that Huddersfield Town are among a bevy of European clubs interested in Iranian international forward Mehdi Taremi.

The 6'2" forward, who has been described as 'the Iranian Zlatan Ibrahimovic', currently plies his trade for Qatari side Al-Gharafa, for whom he has scored nine goals in 23 games this season.

Alongside Town in the list of clubs reportedly interested in Taremi are Serbian side Red Star, Portuguese side Braga, Ukraine's Dynamo Kiev, and his former club, Iranian giants Persepolis.

Taremi has hit 14 goals in 18 games for Iran and was impressive at the World Cup in Russia last summer, appearing in all three of their games and going agonizingly close to putting them through the group stage at Portugal's expense, hitting the side netting in the dying moments of their game against Cristiano Ronaldo and co with the scores level at 1-1.

(Source: The Examiner)

Esteghlal's Khosro Heydari announces retirement

TASNIM — Iran and Esteghlal long-serving right-back Khosro Heydari called time on his 17-year career on Thursday night.

The 35-year-old player hung up his boots after the match against Sepidrood of Rasht in Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

Heydari was cheered by Esteghlal fans and retired from football in a tearful farewell.

Heydari is one of the most-decorated Iranian footballers, winning three Iran Professional League titles with Esteghlal (two times) and Sepahan (one time).

He has also made 59 caps for Iran national football team.

Heydari was a member of Iran national under-23 football team, participating in the 2006 Asian Games in Doha, Qatar.

He started his playing career in 2002 at Aboomoslem and has also played at Pas, Paykan, and Sepahan.

Iran envoy calls for sport cooperation with Hungary

IRNA — Iranian ambassador to Hungary called for improvement of all-out ties with Hungary, in particular, in the field of sport.

The Iranian embassy in Hungary is ready to help promotion of cooperation between the two countries in sport field, Iranian Ambassador to Budapest Gholam-Ali Rajabi Yazdi said.

He made the remarks in a meeting with Iran's horseback archery team.

Cooperation in sport field can promote all-out ties between the Iranian and Hungarian nations, the envoy added, referring to the two nations' cultural and historical commonalities.

He also called for promotion of ancient Iranian sports, including the horseback archery.

The envoy also described export of Iranian horses to the European countries, including Hungary as another field of cooperation.

The Iranian horseback archery team is in Budapest to attend an international horseback archery championship which is held from 16-19 May, 2019.

Over 66 athletes from 14 countries compete in this championship. The Iranian team is attending the event with 6 athletes.

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING



A trouble that saddens you is better than a blessing that rouses your selfishness and loses you God's favor; for, the former grinds your body like a rasp, and the latter burns your spirit little by little.

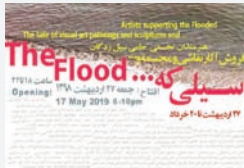
Imam Ali (AS)

WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES

Multimedia



der of a Trace" will run until May 31 at the gallery located at 33 Delaram Alley, Roshanai St. in the Qeitarieh neighborhood.



An exhibition underway at White Line Gallery is displaying works by a large number of artists, including Gizella Varga Sinai, Sadeq Adham, Kambiz Derambakhsh, Shideh Zarabiha, Afruz Yasrebi, Vahed Khakdan and Behzad Shishegaran.

The exhibition has been organized to raise funds for victims of Iran's recent floods. The exhibit entitled "The Flood" will be running until June 10 at the gallery located at 22 Parvin Alley, off Jame Jam St. off Vali-e Asr Ave.

Painting



Saye Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of paintings by Bahar Ranjbar. The exhibit named "The Solitude that Entwist Inferno for Blessing Monsters" runs until May 29 at the gallery located at No. 21, 13th Alley, Sanai St. off Karim Khan Ave.



An exhibition of paintings by Mohammad Karamipur is underway at Saleess Gallery. The exhibition will run until May 22 at the gallery, which can be found at 148 Karim Khan Ave.



Paintings by Javad Modarresi are currently on view in an exhibition at Asar Gallery. The exhibit titled "Paradox II" will be running until June 21 at the gallery located at 16 Barforushan St., Iranshahr St.



A collection of paintings by Fatemeh Pashangpur is on display in an exhibition at Pol Gallery. The exhibition named "Legendary Heroes of the Shahnameh" will run until May 24 at the gallery that can be found at 34 Ferdowsi Alley off Dabestan St. near Seyyed Khandan Bridge.



An exhibition of paintings by Shahram Karimi is currently underway at Etemad Gallery 1. The exhibition titled "I Left Myself Somewhere Behind" runs until June 11 at the gallery located at 4 Bukan St., off Yaser Ave., in the Niavaran neighborhood.



Najmeh Kazzazi is showcasing her paintings in an exhibition at Inja Gallery. The exhibit titled "Predicting the Fall" will run until May 31 at the gallery located at 4 Pedram Alley, Neauphle-le-Chateau St.



An exhibition of calligraphic paintings by Afruz Hushang is underway at Mojdeh Gallery. The exhibition will be running until May 24 at the gallery that can be found at No. 27, 18th Alley off North Allameh Blvd. in the Saadatabad neighborhood.



A group of artists, including Ahmad Mohammadpur, Reza Mafi, Ali Shirazi, Ahmad Ariamaneh and Mahmud Zendebrudi, is displaying their latest calligraphic paintings in an exhibition at Negah Gallery. The exhibition runs until June 12 at the gallery located at 64 Ghaffari St., Jam St., Motahhari Ave.

Iran seeks to screen films from Vareshe festival in ECO member states

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iran is seeking to screen a selection of films acclaimed at the Vareshe International Film Festival in all member states of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

"The ECO has established an office in the festival headquarters in the northern Iranian town of Babol, and we have begun negotiations to screen a selection of films from the festival in all ECO member states," director of the festival Mehdi Qorbanpur said in a ceremony held in Babol on Thursday to show appreciation to the organizers of the event.

Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are the members of the ECO.

"Takleef: The Day of Duty" by Ali Farahani from Iran was selected as best film at the 9th edition of the short film festival, which was held in northern Iranian towns of Sari, Babol and Ramsar from April 29 to May 3.

In the fiction section, "The Crying of Tanbur" by Tajik director Anisa Sabiri won the award for best film and "Faith" by Russian filmmaker Tatiana Fedorovskaya received the special jury award.

Russian director Roman Sokolov's "The Theory of Sunset, Navajo Song" won the award for best animation.

The organizers reviewed movies by a number Azerbaijani filmmakers in a special section by screening a lineup of eight movies, including "Chovkan" by Rafiq Guliyev, "Heritage" by Fariz Ahmedov and "Baku in the Mirror of Time" by Natalia Zavoznenko.



A scene from Iranian director Ali Farahani's short drama "Takleef: The Day of Duty", which was named best film at the 9th Vareshe International Film Festival.

Official says Iran welcomes psychiatrists' assistance in movie ratings

A R T **TEHRAN** — Cinema Organization of Iran (COI) deputy director Ebrahim Darughezadeh said on Friday that his organization welcomes any assistance from the Iranian Psychiatric Association in rating movies.

In a letter sent to the COI, the association has said that the institution is ready to help the organization in rating movies.

A council composed of experts in various fields is scheduled to begin rating Iranian movies this summer based on an age-based ratings system, which was announced on April 30, Darughezadeh said.

According to the ratings system, "Movies having inappropriate words and scenes are forbidden for children under nine."

Films with cigarette-smoking characters, "inappropriate language and violence, or horror scenes" are forbidden



Cinema Organization of Iran deputy director Ebrahim Darughezadeh.

for children under 12

In addition, people under 15 are not allowed to watch scary movies and films with strong language and violence, drug abuse scenes, and relationships that violate common law.

People under 18 are not allowed to watch movies with strong language, extreme violence, drug abuse and marriage relationship scenes.

Based on the system, movies are not allowed to depict scenes promoting ethnic, racial, gender and religious discrimination.

According to the new regulations, film distributors, movies theaters, movie streaming sites and movie ticket booking sites must inform people of the ratings of movies onscreen.

Disregard for the regulations by the relevant organizations will be prosecuted, the Cinema Organization of Iran noted.

"Body of a Woman as a Battlefield" to go on stage at Tehran theater

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian director Elham Yusefi plans to stage Romanian-French playwright and novelist Matei Visniec's play "The Body of a Woman as a Battlefield in the Bosnian War" at Tehran's Neauphle-le-Chateau Hall on May 29.

Written in 1996, the play follows the relationship that develops between two women, Kate and Dorra.

Kate is an American Harvard-trained psychologist, who is sent to Bosnia to help a team digging up mass graves, and as a consequence is impaired by a variation of PTSD. She meets pregnant Dorra, a mute victim of a politically motivated gang rape, in a NATO medical facility.

While Kate tries to heal Dorra and build a professional connection with her, the audience realizes she is also institutionalized in the

hospital because of her own breakdown after looking at so many mass graves and trying to retrieve corpses.

Translated into Persian by Tinush Nazmju, the play was published by Nei Publications in 2008 and has been republished several times since then.

Soheila Salehi and Ava Alavi are the members of the cast for the play, which will be on stage until June 18.



A poster for the play "The Body of a Woman as a Battlefield in the Bosnian War" that will be staged by Iranian director Elham Yusefi in Tehran.

"Varnish" to compete in Okno Filmfest in Russia

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian short film "Varnish" directed by Mahnaz Ronaqi will be competing in the 27th Okno Filmfest – Window to Europe, which will be held in Vyborg from

August 2 to 8, a public relations team announced on Thursday.

The film is about a writer who suffers from the repercussions of an accident he had in his childhood.

He is faced with the dilemma of choosing between forgiveness or revenge.

The festival is organized every year with support from the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation.

Dismayed or grieving, "Game of Thrones" fans prepare for the final episode



A visitor poses for a photograph as he sits on a replica of the iron throne, as part of the promotion of the final season of "Game of Thrones" in Mexico City, Mexico April 10, 2019. (Reuters/ Carlos Jasso)

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Passions are running high as "Game of Thrones" nears its final episode this weekend, with hundreds of thousands of unhappy fans signing an online petition and a counseling service offering to help those grieving the end of the TV fantasy saga.

Some 600,000 fans worldwide had signed a Change.org petition by Thursday criticizing Season 8 of the HBO series and calling for a remake. "This series deserves a final season that makes sense," said Dylan D. from Texas, who launched the "Remake Game of Thrones Season 8" petition ahead of Sunday's series finale.

The story of warring families in the fictional kingdom of Westeros has drawn to a close with ever more bloody battles and favorite characters being killed off.

"Season 8 was very disjointed and rushed. Charac-

ters were hastily written off and plots became twisted. It was not a good close to a great series!!!" wrote Marilyn Marnell, one of those signing the petition.

HBO did not return a request for comment on the petition. The show was created by David Benioff and D.B. Weiss, who have taken the story beyond George R.R. Martin's source material book series, "A Song of Ice and Fire."

Despite the criticism, the eighth and final season of the Emmy-winning series has broken records for HBO, which says it has so far averaged 43 million viewers per episode in the United States alone - a 10 million increase over Season 7 in 2017.

Among television critics, reviews have gone from 92 percent positive for the Season 8 opener on April 14 to 47 percent favorable for the penultimate episode, "The Bells," which aired on May 12, according to review aggregator RottenTomatoes.com.

Monet "Haystacks" painting sells for record \$110.7 million at auction



The painting by Claude Monet, part of the Haystacks "Les Meules" series is displayed at Sotheby's during a press preview of their upcoming impressionist and modern art sale in New York, U.S., May 3, 2019. (Reuters/Lucas Jackson)

NEW YORK (Reuters) — One of the few paintings in Claude Monet's celebrated "Haystacks" series that still remains in private hands sold at auction on Tuesday for \$110.7 million, setting a record for an Impressionist work.

The oil on canvas, titled "Meules" and completed in 1890, is the first piece of Impressionist art to command more than \$100 million at auction, said Sotheby's, which handled the sale.

That also represents the highest sum ever paid at auction for a painting by Monet, the founder of French Impressionism and a master of "plein air" landscapes who died in 1926, aged 86.

"Meules" was one of 25 paintings in a series depicting stacks of harvested wheat belonging to Monet's neighbor in Giverny, France.

The works are widely acclaimed for capturing the play of light on his subject and for their influence on the Impressionist movement.

Most works in the series have long been displayed in top world museums, from the Getty Center in Los Angeles to the Musee D'Orsay in Paris and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

"Meules" is one of only four to have come up for auction this century.

Sotheby's said the painting was acquired by wealthy Chicago socialites directly from Monet's dealer in the 1890s and remained in the family until it was bought at auction in 1986 by the present sellers for \$2.53 million.

The auction house did not identify the painting's buyer, who beat out five other bidders in an eight-minute auction in New York City.