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# Iran not looking for war but ready to fight back



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## Pompeo fails to sway allies on Iran

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Pompeo presented what the U.S.

claims is fresh intelligence on the threat posed by Iran in meetings with counterparts from the three EU nations that joined the landmark 2015 accord, Bloomberg reported on Sunday. The top U.S. diplomat received a cool initial response to the surprise visit as foreign ministers from the 28-member bloc convened in the Belgian capital. **→2**

## U.S. to blame for obstructing drug war: Iran

**TEHRAN** — Hossein Maleki, head of the Iranian Foreign Ministry Department of International Cooperation for Countering Terrorism and Extremism, said on Sunday that the U.S. should be blamed for obstructing fight against drug trafficking.

"The U.S. sanctions have affected

negatively the procedure of international cooperation in fighting drug trafficking. So, the U.S. should be blamed for this," Maleki said at an anti-terrorism conference in Tajikistan.

He noted that Iran's campaign against drug trafficking has been costly for the country. **→3**

## Warsaw Summit II: Saudi calls for urgent Arab summit

**TEHRAN** — Saudi Arabia has called for two urgent meetings of its Arab allies later this month to discuss recent attacks on shipping and oil-production sites amid rising tensions with Iran, RFERL reported on Sunday.

Saudi King Salman on May 18 called for leaders of the (Persian) Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab League to

meet for the emergency summits in Mecca on May 30.

Analysts have said the summit is the second version of the anti-Iran conference in Warsaw in mid-February, which was arranged by the United States. During the Warsaw summit, certain Arab officials and Israeli prime minister used the opportunity to vent their anger against Iran. **→3**

## U.S. airline call serving psychological warfare

By Mehdi Sepahvand

**TEHRAN** — A recent call by the United States administration to American airliners to avoid flying over the Persian Gulf is a tool of psychological warfare, according to Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"It is quite clear that [such a call] is aimed at creating psychological warfare and representing the situation as unusual," Foreign Ministry spokesman Seyyed Abbas Mousavi told the Tehran Times.

On Saturday, U.S. media reported that the country's diplomats had warned that American air carriers and commercial operators flying over the Persian Gulf face a risk from being "misidentified" as tensions between U.S. and Iran continue to escalate.

The warning relayed on Saturday by officials in Kuwait and the UAE came from a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Notice to pilots published on Thursday.

It said that all U.S. air carriers and commercial operators flying over the waters of Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman should exercise caution due to "heightened military activities and increased political tension" in the region.

This presents "an increasing inadvertent risk to US civil aviation operations due to the potential for miscalculation or misidentification," the FAA said.

It also warned that aircraft flying over the region could experience inadvertent GPS interference and other communications jamming,

which could occur "with little to no warning".

Recently the U.S. has been claiming tense security situations in the Persian Gulf area following its "maximum pressure" policy towards Iran. The Central Command (CENTCOM) said its forces in the region had been placed on "high alert".

Two U.S. guided-missile destroyers entered the Persian Gulf on Thursday, two U.S. defense officials confirmed to USNI News on Thursday.

A few days earlier, the United States' McFaul and Kearsarge warships left the Persian Gulf while carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN-72) and its strike group quickly left the Mediterranean Sea and sailed swiftly through the Red Sea to the Gulf of Oman.

## Dissecting Bin Salman's utterances on Sheikh Zakzaky

By Ammar Muhammad Rajab

**NIGERIA/ ABUJA** — The Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Muhammad Bin Salman, also known as MBS, during his interview with the American Time Magazine last year declared that they have succeeded in altering what he termed as; "attempt to overthrow the government by Al-Zakzaky in Nigeria."

Radio Deutch Welle Hausa service also reported and there was a clarification by a top member in the house of Saud. They plainly stated how they arrived prevalence due to their efforts towards obliterating Al-Zakzaky errand in Nigeria.

If Nigeria is a serious country the Saudi crown Prince utterances could have open a serious criticisms and caution urging the citizens of Nigeria

to be vigilant. If those at the helm of affairs in Nigeria are not control by treasonable elements (apology to Professor Sule Bello), MBS's statement would have triggered condemnation for interfering in the affairs of a foreign country. I wonder how on earth a human being will accept a contract of destroying an ideology that is based on reason which he doesn't contribute in establishing it. I am still befuddled. I never come across a textual History or oral history were tortured, murdering and killings succeeded to deterioration of an ideology, never! I thought you only have right on what you found. Why the West with the help of Saudi Arabia aim in killing innocents people?

To dissect MBS utterances, we end to under-

stand the conspiracy behind the killing of innocents Nigerians, the Saudi Arabian officials took the responsibility of killing members of Islamic Movement in Nigeria. They have the guts because they served as paymasters in crushing the Islamic Movement in Nigeria. Thus, the President of Nigeria, Buhari took the advantage of his hatred toward Islamic Movement to pull the trigger on them. Aftermath of Zaria Massacre, Nigerians bear witness of many Saudis government officials, Scholars and securities in the presidential house.

In a courtesy visit paid by the Nigerian President in 2016, the President said it clearly to an Arabian TV owned by UAE; they wouldn't fold their arms to see Iranian influence in Nigeria. **→6**



**REPORT**

**Fatemeh Salehi**  
Mehr News Agency  
journalist

## Capturing Al-Baghdadi: West new pretext to plunder Libya oil

**T**hese days we see many news on media about ISIS activities all around Libya. However, such news can take on a new meaning, if we look at them in light of recent unrest in Tripoli.

Libya has become the battlefield among paramilitary forces.

The capital, Tripoli, has been in a critical state since 4 April, when Khalifa Haftar, the renegade military commander, ordered his troops to advance on Tripoli.

Haftar troops, majorly supported by Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE), have not made any success yet and are now launching attacks on residential areas in Tripoli to compensate for their military failures.

After Haftar military failure, western countries, backed up by Saudi Arabia and UAE, are now trying to run a new plan. They are trying to exaggerate ISIS presence in Libya and has started publishing several news about ISIS threats in Libya.

The scheme is however an elaborate one. Recently, after five years of silence, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, ISIS leader, released a video. The video has caused concerns about the possibility of him being alive and has given rise to speculations about his whereabouts.

Daily Express has recently published a report saying that U.K. and Arab countries are aiming to go to Libya to look for Al-Baghdadi since they have received intelligence that he has fled to Libya.

According to the report, British, American and Italian planes are carrying out round-the-clock flights in search of a symbol to define Al-Baghdadi as a target.

We should not forget that ISIS was initially created by western intelligence services, and especially those of U.S.

It was actually created so that U.S. can use it as an excuse to lead an international coalition to Syria where it can both give logistic and military support to terrorist groups and attack the country's army bases and residential areas.

U.S. also substantially supported QSD, the Kurdish militia group in Syria, a group that Syrian people had long requested to cast out in demonstrations. **→13**



**REPORT**

**Faranak Bakhtiari**  
Tehran Times journalist

## Iran facing population decline; is it possible to reverse the trend?

**M**any demographers believe that Iran's population has started to decline more sharply, one point to consider, however, is that Iran's population growth rate is similar to today's world average but substantially lower than its peak a few decades earlier.

The country's population reached up to 80 million, while its growth rate declined to 1.2 percent a year. Censuses in 1350s-1360s (1971-1991), showed that population grew from 34 million to nearly 50 million, corresponding to an average annual growth rate of 3.9 percent (3.2 percent from births and 0.7 percent from net migration).

Iran experienced the highest population growth rate over a 5-year period between 1980 and 1985, when the population grew by nearly 4 percent per year.

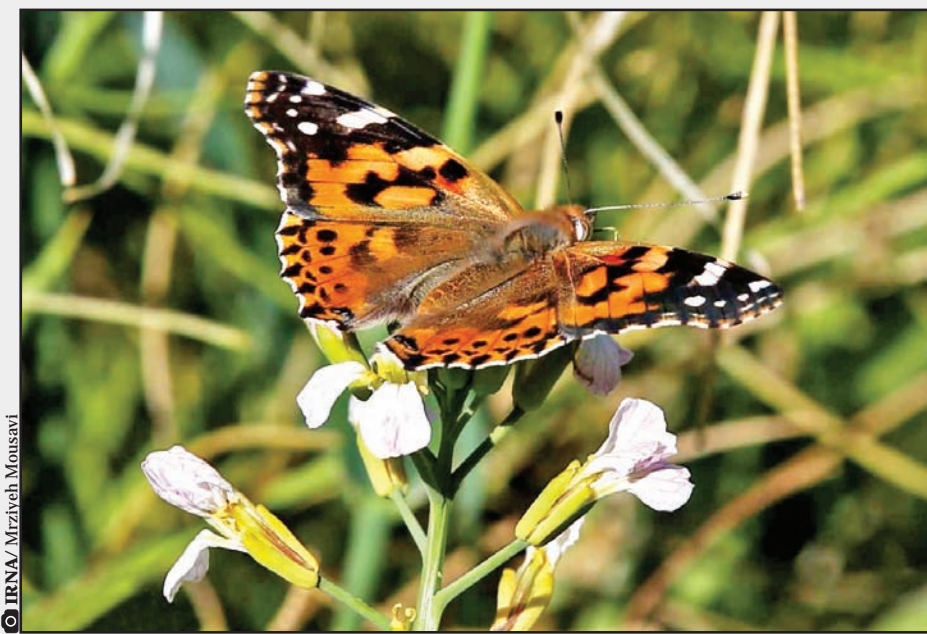
Decade later, however, in the Iranian calendar year 1374 (March 1996- March 1997), the results of census showed a rapid decline in the population growth rate due to fertility decline, which dropped from 6.2 births per woman to 2.5 births per woman, over a decade.

According to the data released by the National Organization for Civil Registration, comparing past three years, some 1,366,509 infants were born in the country, whose births were registered last year, while 1,487,913 births occurred a year before it, and 1,528,053 births have been recorded in the Iranian calendar year 1395 (March 2016- March 2017), a difference of roughly 100,000 per year.

**■ Factors affecting birth rate in the country**

Ali Akbar Mahzoon, head of population and immigrant statistics at the Statistical Centre of Iran said that the latest Iranian census conducted in 2016 put Iran's population at 79,926,270 with a male to female ratio of 1.027.

"The annual number of births was fluctuating around 1.4 million before 1370s (1991-2001), which increased sharply to about 2.5 million in late 1370s, however, over the past few years, the number is again estimated at 1.5 million births per year," he added. **→12**



© IRNA/ Mrzveh Mousavi

## ‘Painted ladies’ spread their wings across Tehran

Painted ladies (Vanessa cardui), one of the world's most common butterflies, are the unexpected guests in the capital this spring.

Hundreds of the colorful butterflies have been fluttering in the city for a few weeks now. Increased rainfalls and vegetation cover are cited among the reasons for the sharp rise in the population of the butterflies in the city.

They are also observed in other cities such as Semnan, Qom, and Arak. With the onset of the hot season and temperature rise the butterflies' population will decline as well.



## Iran not looking for war but ready to fight back: IRGC chief

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — The Islamic Republic is not looking for war with any country but is ready to counter any threat posed by the enemies, chief of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said on Sunday.

“We are not looking for war and yet we are not afraid of it either, but on the other hand, our enemies lack the will to wage a war and are afraid of fighting,” Major General Hossein Salami said, Tasnim reported.



“The Americans’ political philosophy is to plunder nations and pave the way for modern slavery and unilateral dominance over the fate of nations, but such philosophy has failed,” he added.

The general said Washington is well aware that engaging in a conflict with Iran would not be in its interest.

Highlighting the Iranian armed forces’ readiness to counter threats, Salami said Iran is currently in an “intelligence war” with the United States and other enemies.

“This means a mixture of psychological and cyber operations, military movements, public diplomacy and intimidation,” he remarked.

The IRGC chief further pointed to the gradual decline of big powers, saying that the IRGC is “at the forefront of a confrontation” with the exhausted and disheartened enemies who are looking for a new way to regain power.

General Salami also said that the proximity of American forces to Iran has given the IRGC the opportunity to mobilize its forces.

“When the threat is distant from us, we deal with it on a strategic scale, but when the threat approaches us, we will be activated at the operational levels as well,” he concluded.

Salami made the remarks at a ceremony to introduce his new deputies.

It came three days after Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei named Rear Admiral Ali Fadavi as the IRGC second-in command and Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Naqdi as the IRGC deputy chief for coordination affairs.

Ayatollah Khamenei, who is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces under the constitution, 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.

## Pompeo fails to sway allies on Iran in awkward surprise visit

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo made scant progress persuading European Union counterparts to take a harder line toward Iran during a quick visit on May 13 to Brussels, with the EU standing behind the nuclear accord abandoned by Washington -- and warning of a potential military conflict.



Pompeo presented what the U.S. claims is fresh intelligence on the threat posed by Iran in meetings with counterparts from the three EU nations that joined the landmark 2015 accord, Bloomberg reported on Sunday. The top U.S. diplomat received a cool initial response to the surprise visit as foreign ministers from the 28-member bloc convened in the Belgian capital.

“I confirm my worry about the risks of an escalation in a region that definitely doesn’t need further elements of destabilization and tensions,” European Union foreign-policy chief Federica Mogherini told reporters after the meetings. “Our call is to show maximum restraint from all sides.”

As alarm in European capitals grows at Trump’s hard-line approach in the region, there was no appreciable movement in the talks with Pompeo. The U.S. stance has left European allies irritated at the lack of strategy and powerless to sway an American administration that’s failed to provide answers on where it all leads, according to diplomats in Berlin, Paris and London.

Foremost among European concerns is the risk of a return to a nuclear threat in the Middle East, diplomats said on condition of anonymity as talks proceed behind closed doors. The Europeans are in a bind, with limited options to protect the deal.

Pompeo gave his European counterparts little time to prepare as ad-hoc meetings were scheduled individually. The other 25 member states were left out as Pompeo met with Mogherini, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt and France’s Jean-Yves Le Drian.

Looming over the shuttle diplomacy lies a sense that more than 15 years of heavy lifting that culminated in the nuclear deal is slipping away, according to senior European diplomats. And even if few expect an open conflict in the near term, the fear is that Trump’s unpredictable approach could have unintended consequences.

# Judiciary chief urges support for entrepreneurs

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Ebrahim Raeisi, the Judiciary chief, said on Sunday that all officials are duty bound to support businessmen and entrepreneurs.

During a meeting with a number of businessmen, he said that under the current situation in which the United States has waged an economic war on Iran, all officials and state bodies are duty bound to fully support businessmen and entrepreneurs.

He noted that it is essential to counter enemies’ plots through taking moves in line with boosting production and creating jobs.

The Judiciary will take steps in line with of boosting production sector and fighting corruption, Raeisi promised.

The Supreme Council of Economic Coordination convened on Saturday during which a plan to facilitate production process and removing obstacles to it were approved.

The session, headed by President Hassan Rouhani, brought together Raisi, Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani, Vice President Es’haq



Jahangiri and some economic officials.

It was also decided to facilitate repayment of debts by production enterprises in order to prevent their closure.

In May 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump unilaterally pulled Washington out of the JCPOA (the official for the international nuclear deal) and ordered

reimposition of sanctions against Iran. The first round of sanctions went into force on August 6 and the second round, which targets Iran’s oil exports and banks, were snapped back on November 4.

John Bolton, the national security advisor to Trump, said in November 2018, “We think the (Iranian) government is under real pressure and it’s our intention to squeeze them very hard. As the British say, squeeze them until the pips squeak.”

Rouhani has repeatedly called for unity to counter the economic war.

During a meeting with political activists on May 11, he described the enemies’ economic and political pressure against Iran as an “all-out war” which is unprecedented in the history of the Islamic Revolution.

“Today, it cannot be said that the situation is better or worse than the ‘imposed war’, but during the war we did not have problems in areas of banking relations, oil sale or importation and exportation; the only sanction on us was in purchasing weapon,” he stated.

The imposed war refers to Saddam Hussein’s war against Iran in the 1980s.

## Iranian stem cell scientist behind bars in U.S. for 7 months without trial

**(Press TV)** — Top Iranian stem cell scientist Dr. Masoud Soleimani has been behind bars in the United States without trial for the past seven months.

Back in October last year, Soleimani, a professor and biomedical researcher at the Tarbiat Modares University (TMU) in Tehran, was arrested by the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) upon his arrival in the U.S.

According to his Atlanta attorney, Leonard Franco, he has since been held behind bars in a jail in Atlanta without bond.

Soleimani had been invited by the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota for leading a research program there, but he was secretly indicted by the FBI, which also canceled his research visa. Neither the FBI nor the U.S. prosecutors have so far officially commented on his detention.

BJay Pak, the U.S. attorney in Atlanta, secured Soleimani’s indictment on June 12, 2018, just a month after President Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from the Iran nuclear deal, and Soleimani had been fully unaware of such an indictment when he flew to the U.S.

Franco and Page Pate, another Atlanta lawyer, said that they had been puzzled by the federal government’s decision to prosecute a renowned Iranian professor and two of his former students - Mahboobe Ghaedi and Maryam Jazayeri - for purported



trade sanction violations over eight vials of human growth hormone.

Franco said that Soleimani’s treatment by federal authorities, the revocation of his visa and the decision to detain him without bond doesn’t square with Soleimani’s international reputation as a scholar, professor, and doctor widely known in the field of stem cell research and regenerative medicine. Soleimani has no criminal history anywhere in the world, he added.

The hormone, which is a form of synthetic protein, was seized from Jazayeri in 2016 by customs authorities

in Atlanta when she was heading to Iran to give it to professor Soleimani for research purposes. Jazayeri had received the hormone from Ghaedi.

The seizure occurred at a time when Washington was still a signatory to the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and anti-Iran sanctions had not been re-imposed yet.

The growth hormone is not banned in the U.S. or Iran and was being used “exclusively for medical research”, which is still considered largely exempt from U.S. sanctions, Franco said.

## “If U.S. has evidence why doesn’t it declassify its ‘intelligence’ on Iranian threat in Iraq?”

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Majid Takht Ravanchi, Iran’s permanent representative to the United Nations, has urged the U.S. to declassify its alleged intelligence on “Iranian threat” to U.S. forces in Iraq.

“If they have credible evidence and information, why don’t they declassify them and make it known to the American people and to the people of the world?” Press TV quoted him as saying in an interview with CBS News channel aired on Thursday.

He said reports that the alleged “Iranian proxies” are posing a threat to the U.S. forces in the Middle East “are part of the same propaganda tools that Americans are employing.”

“These are the same fake intelligence



that is being used to provoke,” he added.

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.

## Saudi, other Arab states okay U.S. troop deployment in Persian Gulf: report

**(Press TV)** — Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf Arab states reportedly gave the green light to the U.S. deploying its troops and warships to the region to counter what they claim “imminent threat” from Tehran.

The announcement came Wednesday through the Asharq al-Awsat newspaper, citing unnamed senior diplomatic sources.

The deployment of its aircraft carrier strike group was agreed “on the basis of bilateral deals between the U.S. and Arab countries of the Persian Gulf,” it read.

Earlier in the day, several unnamed senior U.S. officials were cited as saying that President Donald Trump was not seeking a military clash with the Iran. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia’s King

Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud has called for an emergency meeting of [Persian] Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC) member states amid escalation of pressure against Iran by the United States.

The reports came after it was claimed the White House planned to send more than 120,000 troops to the Middle East for a potential war with Iran, an allegation later denied by the U.S. president.

Trump has been at odds with the U.S. European allies but supported by the Saudis and Israelis ever since he pulled out last year of an international agreement on Iran’s nuclear energy.

The U.S. president has reportedly ordered his administration to avoid a military confrontation with Iran.

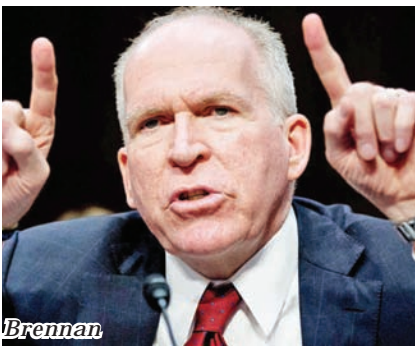
## Ex-CIA chief Brennan and top nuclear deal negotiator Sherman to brief Dems on Iran: AP

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Former CIA director John Brennan and top negotiator of the Iran nuclear deal, Wendy Sherman, will brief Democrats on the situation in Iran amid the Trump administration’s heightened tension with Tehran.

The report cited anonymous sources as saying that the private caucus meeting will be held on Tuesday.

Both Brennan and Sherman are outspoken critics of President Donald Trump. Sherman is also a supporter of the JCPOA and has recently censured U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton for his warmongering attitude toward Iran.

Democrats’ meeting with Brennan and Sherman offers counterprogramming to the Trump administration’s closed-door briefing for lawmakers, also planned for



Brennan

Tuesday, which Democratic lawmakers are likely to attend, according to the report.

Writing an article in the New York Times on May 15, Sherman said, “The best way to avoid (a) war is to talk with Iran, which President Trump has said he



Sherman

wants to do. Prisoner-swap negotiations, to bring home Americans imprisoned or missing in Iran, could create an important channel of communication, and the leadership in Tehran is open to this. But a leader-to-leader meeting can happen only if the United States rejoins

the nuclear deal — and at this point that unfortunately seems unlikely.”

There has been a clear lack of consensus between Trump and his hawkish top aides over Iran-related issues. Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif recently said in a tweet that the U.S. is currently confused over its strategy toward Iran, “with the B-Team doing one thing and Trump saying another thing.”

The hawkish “B-team” is comprised of U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed.

Zarif had previously said that he did not believe Trump wants war with Iran, “but he could be lured into a conflict” by the B-team.



# Europe unwilling to pay the price to save JCPOA: MP

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Chairman of desks the Majlis Nuclear Committee Mojtaba Zonnour said on Sunday that while European countries are capable of preserving the Iran nuclear agreement, they are not willing to pay the price for saving it.

Speaking to Mehr, Zonnour said European parties to the 2015 nuclear deal should fulfil their obligations to preserve the deal, officially known as the JCPOA, if they really approve of it. The top lawmaker maintained that European payment mechanism, known as INSTEX, should be able to facilitate Iran's economic transactions with all countries in the world, not just with the Europeans.

He said it is against the JCPOA that INSTEX be just restricted to providing humanitarian aid such as medicine.

Zonnour said humanitarian aid is for a country which has started a war against a country and then suffered a defeat, citing Iraq as an example that was allowed to sell oil to import food and



medicine under the supervision of the United Nations during the Saddam Hussein regime in the 1990s and early 2000s.

The parliament "will definitely reject this

restriction, and our diplomats should beware of Europeans' empty promises and deceptions."

He added, "The European side has been only killing time and playing 'good cop/bad

cop' with the U.S."

The parliamentarian argued since the introduction of U.S. sanctions against Iran, the Europeans have let Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to take Iran's share in the oil market.

"Since the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA, Europe has used this opportunity to let Saudi Arabia and the Emirates increase their oil productions so that their oil could replace ours."

In late January 2018, European signatories of the JCPOA announced the establishment of a special trade mechanism dubbed INSTEX (Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges) in a bid to save the JCPOA after the withdrawal of the United States from it.

INSTEX, which has yet to become operational, is registered in Paris and headed by German banker Per Fischer who visited Iran last week and discussed the status of the mechanism with Iranian officials.

## Fadavi got new post due to his experiences: general

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Rear Admiral Ali Fadavi was named the deputy chief of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) due to his operational experiences, director of the Supreme Leader's Military Office said on Sunday.

Brigadier General Mohammad Shirazi made the remarks while addressing a ceremony to introduce Fadavi in his new post, Tasnim reported.

"The body of the Guards' work is revolutionary," Shirazi said, adding that Admiral Fadavi can fulfill the duties of the IRGC's deputy chief because of his experiences.

The IRGC has been tasked with unique missions and has so far done very well, he remarked.

Shirazi added that the IRGC should be able to predict

today's threats and be ready to counter them.

In separate decrees on Thursday, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei appointed Fadavi as the second-in-command at the IRGC and Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Naqdi as the IRGC deputy commander for coordination affairs.

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

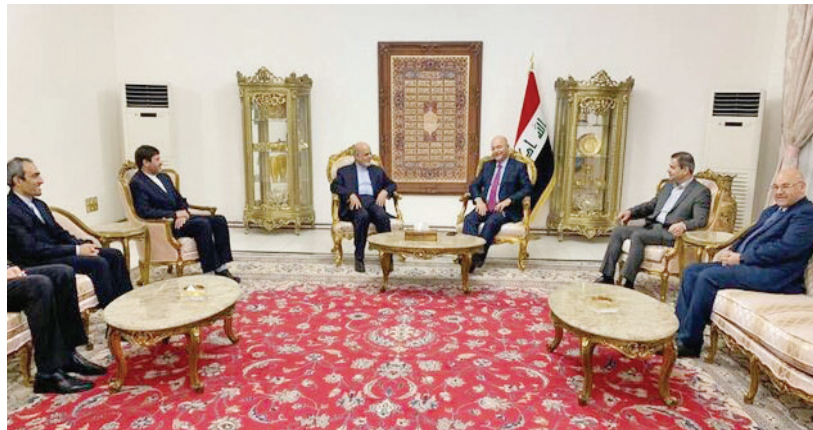
Fadavi also served as commander of the IRGC Navy from May 2010 to August 2018.

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



Mohammad Shirazi

## Barham Salih: Iraq will stand beside Iranians in difficult times



**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Iraqi President Barham Salih said on Saturday that Baghdad will stand beside the Iranian government and people in difficult times.

"We will stand beside the Iranian government and people in difficult times as the Islamic Republic of Iran stood beside the Iraqi government and people in difficult times of fighting the terrorist groups," he said during a meeting with Iraj Masjedi, the Iranian ambassador to Baghdad.

Salih said that the Iraqis will never forget Iran's support in fighting terrorism.

In an article published by the Iran newspaper in March, Masjedi said that Iran-Iraq relations can serve as a role model for cooperation between countries in the Middle East region.

He also described President Hassan

Rouhani's three-day visit to Iraq in March as a turning point in relations.

Masjedi said that the U.S. withdrew Washington from the 2015 nuclear deal - the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action - and put pressure on other countries, including Iraq, to cut economic interaction with Iran, however, the Iraqi officials have repeatedly refused to comply with the U.S.

President Trump unilaterally pulled Washington out of the nuclear deal in May 2018 and ordered reimposition of sanctions against Iran in contravention of the UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

Iraq is one of the major economic partners of Iran.

Masjedi met separately with French Ambassador to Iraq Bruno Aubert and discussed latest international developments.

## Expert enumerate measures to counter U.S. hostile actions



**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Hossein Sheikholeslam, an expert on international affairs who served as deputy foreign minister and ambassador for years, has said that internal integrity is a deterrent element to counter the U.S. hostile actions.

"Military, economic and cultural power and also internal integrity are deterrent elements against the U.S. hostile actions. Words and logic do not work for the U.S.," he told ISNA in an interview published on Sunday.

He ruled out negotiations with Washington and noted that the U.S. administration cannot be trusted.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said during a meeting with authorities on Tuesday, "Negotiating is poisonous as long as the U.S. continues with the same course of action; besides, negotiating with the current government of

the United States is all the more poisonous."

Speaking in the same meeting, President Hassan Rouhani said the Iranians can overcome problems through unity and solidarity. "We can pass problems through unity, coordination and better management," he said.

Ebrahim Raeisi, the Judiciary chief, said on May 13 that Iran can achieve victory over the U.S. economic and political pressure through resistance, suggesting that Iran will not surrender or hold negotiation with the Trump administration.

Kamal Kharrazi, chief of the Strategic Council on Foreign Relations, said on May 12 that U.S. President Donald Trump's act in quitting the landmark 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), "has left no room for trust and negotiation".

## Warsaw Summit II: Saudi calls for urgent Arab summit

**1 →** Analysts say since the U.S. failed to mobilize countries, even its European and most of its Middle East allies, against Iran, they have now embarked on another attempt to demonize Iran, this time in Mecca.

According to Vox, the U.S.-led conference in Warsaw that was intended to isolate Iran ended up isolating America instead.

The hastily organized summit was billed as a Middle East security conference, but it was an open secret that the gathering of more than 60 countries was really about getting the world on board with America's tough-on-Iran policy, Vox said.

### Pretext for the meeting

Saudi and other officials said the discussions would focus on an attack on four commercial vessels off the coast of the United Arab Emirates and a series of armed drone attacks on oil-production sites near Riyadh.

Iran has denied it was involved in the attack on the vessels. Iran has even sought clarification on the incident and said it endangers maritime security.

Leaders at the summits will "discuss these aggressions and their repercussions on the region," the official Saudi



news agency SPA quoted a Foreign Ministry official as saying.

The United Arab Emirates, a close Saudi ally, welcomed King Salman's call to convene the Mecca summits and said the "critical circumstances" in the Middle East called for a united stand by Arab nations in the Persian Gulf and elsewhere.

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are strong allies of the United States in the geopolitical battle against Iran.

Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Adel al-Jubeir on

May 19 accused Iran of seeking to destabilize the region and urged the international community to take responsibility to stop Tehran from doing so.

The flurry of activity comes amid increasing tensions between the United States and Iran. Washington has beefed up its military presence in the Middle East after what it claimed were intelligence reports suggesting Iran was planning an attack.

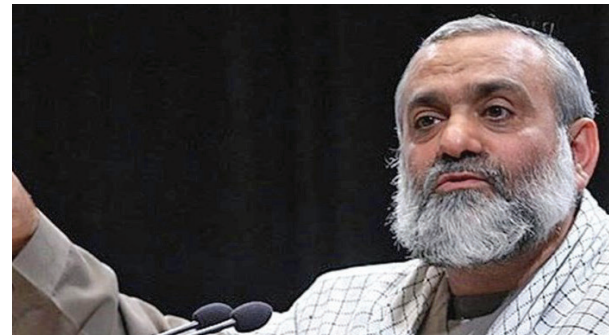
Despite the moves, U.S. President Donald Trump has said he was not looking to start a war with Tehran and has urged Iranian leaders to sit down for talks.

Iranian leaders have also dismissed the possibility of war. "There will be no war because neither do we want a war, nor has anyone the idea or illusion it can confront Iran in the region," Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said during a visit to Beijing, according to IRNA.

Jubeir also said his country "does not want a war in the region nor does it seek that."

"It will do what it can to prevent this war and, at the same time, it reaffirms that in the event the other side chooses war, the kingdom will respond with all force and determination, and it will defend itself and its interests," he said.

## Naqdi hails IRGC as a successful model in Islamic world



**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Mohammad Reza Naqdi, the newly-appointed deputy coordinator of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), has hailed the IRGC as a successful model in the Islamic world, saying other countries want to have an organization like the IRGC as well.

Naqdi made the remarks on Sunday at a ceremony to introduce the newly-appointed commanders of the IRGC.

"Today, there is no honor higher than serving in the Guards," he said, Tasnim reported.

IRGC emerged as a strong force against Daesh and other vicious groups in Iraq and Syria.

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.

## Aref to run for Majlis presiding board elections: lawmaker



**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — A member of the pro-reform Hope faction's presiding board in parliament has announced that Mohammad Reza Aref, chairman of the faction, will run for the Majlis presiding board elections.

Mostafa Kavakebian said according to the discussions at meetings of the Hope faction, Aref will definitely run in the elections, Fars reported.

Kavakebian also said it was decided in the meetings that if Aref declines to run in the elections, he will run instead and other members of the faction will support him.

Aref was a candidate in the 2013 presidential election but withdrew his candidacy upon a request by Mohammad Khatami, who was president from 1997-2005.

On November 4, 2014, he announced he would run for parliament in the 2016 election from Tehran.

He was elected to the parliament with 1,608,926 votes which was the highest in the election.

All the 30 candidates in the Hope list, led by Aref, found a seat in parliament in Tehran.

## MPs call for impeachment of oil minister

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — A number of lawmakers have initiated a motion to impeach Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh for "mismanagement" and "harming the country".

"On the sidelines of the legislature's meeting today, a number of representatives called for impeachment of the oil minister and are collecting signatures for their motion," Tasnim reported on Sunday.

According to the MPs, Zanganeh's mismanagement has led to the loss of natural resources, losing the region's gas market, abandoning common fields to the benefit of the other side, and favoritism.

## 1.5 tons of narcotics seized in Sistan-Baluchestan

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Sistan-Baluchestan's police forces have seized 1.5 tons of opium in Zahedan city, according to provincial police chief Mohammad Ghanbari.

Ghanbari said the drug consignment was seized at a midnight battle between the antinarcotics forces and a gang trying to smuggle the drugs into Zahedan, Mehr reported on Sunday.

He added that during the encounter two offenders were detained and 1.5 tons of opium, some weapons, including two hunting weapons, 136 cartridges and a colt, were seized.

The commander also said that investigations for arresting other members of the gang are underway.

Iran has been actively fighting drug trafficking over the past four decades, despite its high economic and human costs. The war on drug trafficking originating from Afghanistan has claimed the lives of nearly 4,000 Iranian police officers over the past decades.

The Islamic Republic has spent more than hundreds of millions of dollars on sealing its borders to prevent the transit of narcotics destined for European, Arab and Central Asian countries.

## U.S. to blame for obstructing drug war: Iran

**1 →** Eskandar Momeni, chief of Iran's drug war commander, announced last week that 800 tons of trafficked

narcotics are annually discovered and seized in Iran. According to Fars, he said a major portion of these cargoes

are destined for Europe.

"Annually, over 800 tons of drugs are discovered in Iran, a major part of which

is used (by traffickers) for transit towards Europe," General Momeni told reporters in Alborz province.



STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	212851.5
IFX	2633.49

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,923 rials
GBP	53,418 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
Platinumium	\$827.35/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

No U.S. auto import quota in works, says Japan’s Motegi

There is no need to be worried that the United States will impose a quota on Japanese automobile imports, economic revitalization minister Toshimitsu Motegi said Sunday.

Japan Times reported “there is no worry judging from the U.S. announcement,” Motegi said on a television program, noting that such a quota was not specified in the announcement.

On Friday, U.S. President Donald Trump put off a decision on whether to impose additional tariffs on automobile and auto parts imports by up to six months.



Before that, a U.S. media report said Trump is considering an executive order that may include import quotas for Japanese and European automobiles.

“We have told (the United States) that we oppose trade-distorting measures including a quota,” Motegi said, stressing that he has secured the United States’ assurances it will not take such measures.

Asked whether Japan will be able to avoid a U.S. import quota after bilateral negotiations on trade, he told reporters after the TV program that it depends on how the accord is worked out. Motegi represents Japan in the trade talks.

Despite concerns over a downturn in the Japanese economy, Motegi said on the program that he sees no need at present to draw up additional economic stimulus measures in light of the planned consumption tax hike in October.

On Friday, Motegi said that U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer had confirmed the United States will not push Japan to restrain automobile exports as part of a bilateral trade deal.

Trump has threatened to impose additional tariffs of up to 25 percent on imported cars and parts. If he follows through, the new duties would significantly impact major car exporters such as Japan and Germany.

Automobiles and auto parts accounted for about 75 percent of the U.S. trade deficit as of 2017.

Toyota Motor Corp. rebuked U.S. President Donald Trump’s declaration that imported cars threaten national security, signaling contentious talks are ahead for the White House and America’s key trading partners.

In an unusually strong-worded statement, Japan’s largest automaker said Trump’s proclamation Friday that the U.S. sees no need to defend itself against foreign cars and components “sends a message to Toyota that our investments are not welcomed.”

The company said it has spent more than \$60 billion building operations in the country, including 10 manufacturing plants.

Trump on Friday agreed with the conclusions of his Commerce Department, which investigated imports of vehicles and auto parts and found they harmed national security by causing a declining market share for “American-owned” carmakers since the 1980s. The White House set a 180-day deadline for negotiating deals with Japan, the European Union and other major auto exporters.

Toyota said it remains hopeful those talks can be resolved quickly, but warned that curbing imports would force U.S. consumers to pay more and would be counterproductive for jobs and the economy. The company’s critique comes two months after its pledge to add \$3 billion to a years-long U.S. investment plan.

S. Korean stocks dip 7 percent after Trump’s tariff remark

South Korean shares have plummeted a whopping 7 percent over the past two weeks after U.S. President Donald Trump announced the plan to impose new tariffs on Chinese goods, market data showed Sunday.

As per en.yna.co.kr, the benchmark Korea Composite Stock Price Index (KOSPI) closed at 2,055.80 on Friday, down 7.09 percent from May 3, the last trading session before Trump said on social media that Washington will raise tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods to 25 percent from the previous 10 percent. The new decision went into effect May 10.

Over the period, technology firms were the biggest losers by nose-diving 10.25 percent, followed by carmakers and insurance firms, which dropped 9.63 percent and 8.94 percent, respectively.

Other major losers included manufacturers, machinery firms and pharmaceuticals, the market data showed. Mobile carriers were among the few winners, rising 2.13 percent over the cited period.

Analysts said the decrease came as investors expressed concerns over the deepening tension between the United States and China, which are the top two trading partners for Asia’s fourth-largest economy.

TPO to hold 1st meeting of Iran-neighbors joint economic committees

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iran’s Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) will hold the first meeting of the chairmen of the country’s joint economic committees with its neighboring countries on Monday, Mohammadreza Modoudi, the acting head of TPO, announced.

The official, who is in charge of implementing resistance economy outlines in the export sector, said this meeting will be held at the place of TPO in line with the main plan of this organization which is promoting the country’s export status, TPO website reported.

Modoudi also mentioned increasing the volume and diversity of the products to be exported to the neighboring countries, strengthening specialized export unions, development of large export companies, and establishment of international consortiums as the main responsibilities that the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade has specified for TPO.

In a press conference in late January, the official had said that Iran will not solely rely on Iran-Europe trade mechanism, known as special purpose vehicle (SPV), for developing foreign trade and it will rather use its own capacities and capabilities in doing so.

He said despite the U.S. efforts for isolating Iran, the country has a good economic relationship with its neighbors and Iran’s foreign trade is flourishing strongly.

Mentioning the great potential of Iran’s neighboring markets, the TPO acting head said, “Iran’s neighbors have a \$1 trillion



import capacity annually, and considering the U.S. sanctions we should focus more on our neighboring markets.”

Surrounded by fifteen neighboring countries through land and sea, Iran enjoys a very strategic geopolitical and economic position in the Middle East and considering the U.S. recent actions for increasing pressure on the country’s oil industry, many economy experts and scholars believe that Iran should retaliate by focusing more on improving domestic production and increasing non-oil trade especially with its neighboring countries.

As mentioned before, Iran shares border

with fifteen countries, namely the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Russia, Oman, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kuwait, Qatar, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia.

Based on the latest data published by TPO, the value of trade with the neighboring countries stood at over \$36.5 billion in the past Iranian calendar year (March 2018-March 2019), that is about 41 percent of the country’s total non-oil trade in the mentioned time span.

The country, however, doesn’t have equal trade with all the mentioned nations and Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Oman, Azerbaijan,

Kuwait and Turkmenistan account for most of Iran’s trade with its neighbors.

As Iran’s top trade partner in the region, Iraq is one of the most important nations that the Islamic Republic is closely interacting with on many levels and considering the two country’s great potentials for mutual trade, both sides are eager for increasing their trade turnover to a level much higher than its current amount.

The Arab neighbor supplies most of it electricity and gas needs from Iran and imports a wide range of non-oil commodities from Iran including foodstuff, home appliances, agricultural products, air conditioners and spare car parts.

Iran and Iraq’s current trade turnover stands at \$12 billion which is the highest among all the neighboring countries. Earlier in March, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani announced in an Iran-Iraq business forum in Baghdad that the two countries plan to boost this number to \$20 billion in the near future.

Iran’s non-oil trade data for last year indicates that exports to Iraq accounted for more than 37 percent of Iran’s total exports to the neighboring countries and the number increased by over 36 percent compared to the preceding year. In terms of imports, however, Iraq stands at the seventh place among exporters to Iran in the region which consequently pushes the trade balance between the two countries significantly positive toward Iran.

Iran calls for exploiting private sectors' capacities in trade with Czech Republic

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Mohammadreza Modoudi, the acting head of Iran’s Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), called for using the potentials of the Iranian and Czech private companies for expanding mutual trade, the portal of TPO reported.

The official made the remarks in a meeting with Eduard Muricky, the Czech deputy minister of industry and trade, in Tehran on Saturday.

Speaking in the meeting, Modoudi mentioned the monetary and banking problems that the U.S. sanctions have created in the way of Iran’s trade with Europe, saying “Although

the U.S. has unilaterally left the JCPOA (the official name for the multilateral nuclear deal), Iran adheres with the deal however the European trade partners of Iran are still suffering the consequences of Trump’s decision.”

The official pointed to the potent areas for investment in Iran including agriculture, food, oil and petrochemicals projects, saying “Iran is still a golden opportunity for European investors.”

Modoudi further called for exploiting the significant capacity of the two country’s private sectors and noted “We are ready for cooperation in the form of expert work groups or

at macro levels to explore new mechanisms for expanding the mutual trade.”

Muricky for his part expressed satisfaction with his visit to Iran adding, “Good negotiations have been made with Iranian sides, and considering Iran’s positive attitude, I am optimistic about finding a way to keep business ongoing, because Iran has a large economy with great capacities and facilities.”

“The exports of some Iranian goods to Czech Republic, including in the agricultural field, are of great importance,” he added.

Over \$3b allocated to supply basic goods in 2 months

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejjasand said the government has allocated over \$3 billion for importing basic goods since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21), IRIB reported.

“We are still using the last year’s imports and so far [since the beginning of the current year] over \$3 billion has been allocated for supplying basic goods,” the official said.

Dejjasand noted that the government is seeking to separate trade ministry from the ministry of industry, mining and trade in order to be able to better manage and monitor the market.

According to the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) data, Iran imported \$14 billion worth of basic goods during the first 11 months of the past Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2018 – February 19, 2019).



Earlier in March, Head of IRICA Mehdi Mirashrafi said “Regarding the basic goods, the country is well supplied and even the imports of some commodities like corn and meat have increased.”

Also in December 2018, the Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani announced that since the beginning of the last Iranian calendar year the government paid \$14 billion of foreign currency at official exchange rate to import basic goods.

Turkey wants removal of barriers in trade with Iran: Turkish envoy

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Turkish ambassador to Iran said his country wants the barriers in the way of trade with Iran to be removed, IRNA reported.

The envoy said if some of the obstacles are removed, Turkish businessmen and investors would be keen to come to Iran.

“The obstacles facing Turkish investors, which are often related to Iran’s regulations, should be resolved”, Derya Ors said on Saturday at a meeting with Tehran’s governor.

Turkish merchants are now well represented in Iran and have invested in units such as Razi and Pars Hayat petrochemicals, he said.

Ors went on to say that the existing barriers to Turkish investment in Iran are more in keeping with the rules that prevent investors from investing in some fields.



The Turkish ambassador in Iran said: “These issues are regularly reviewed by the two governments on the negotiation table, and all the doors are open for negotiations.”

He also announced that the meeting of Iran-Turkey Joint Economic Committee will be held in summer or fall of this year, and members will discuss all the existing problems and solutions for removing obstacles.

Global economy was improving before fighting resumed

In ordinary times, worries about the health of the global economy tend to prompt leaders of the largest countries to join forces in pursuit of safety.

The biggest threat to global fortunes has become the intensifying conflict between the two largest economies on earth, the United States and China. As their leaders openly contemplate how to inflict pain on each other, the rest of the world now frets about becoming collateral damage in an escalating trade war.

This month, China and the United States appeared to be moving toward cooling their hostilities, while global economic prospects were improving. Worries about a worldwide slowdown were giving way to burnished hopes for expansion.

Fears about the weakening of China’s economy were easing as President Trump advertised a soon-to-be-signed trade deal. That lifted the outlook for Asian economies dependent on global commerce like Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. Europe, a perpetual source of concern, was flashing signs of renewal. Defying skeptics, the U.S. economy remained on a tear.

But then, as Trump sharply increased tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods, the world found itself grappling with the likelihood that the trade war will cost treasure. The concern mounted a week ago as Beijing retaliated and the Trump administration detailed plans to slap 25% tariffs on virtually all goods that China sends to the United States.

For businesses and consumers alike, it all raised the prospect that they would soon be paying higher prices for goods, a reality that discourages commerce.

■ Negative impact on trade

An “escalation scenario would be terrible all around,” said Gabriel Sterne, head of global macro research at Oxford Economics in London. A “negative impact on trade flow is going to be bad for global growth for several years. It’s bad news for almost everybody.”

If both sides follow through on their threatened tariffs, China’s annual economic output will be reduced by 0.8% while the United States will see its annual growth reduced by 0.3%, according to Oxford Economics.

Those numbers are small in the grand scheme of things,



but the damage could be felt acutely within industries that are especially exposed to the trade war, such as American agriculture and Chinese electronics manufacturers. The weakness was underscored last week by the latest indications that China’s economy is slowing and by lower-than-anticipated figures for retail sales and factory orders in the United States.

The harm could be especially severe for countries that are most dependent on trade, including Singapore, Malaysia, Mexico and Japan.

At the center of trouble sits China, the world’s most populous country. Its breakneck development over recent decades has added hundreds of millions of consumers to the global marketplace while supplying a vast assemblage of low-cost goods.

Given that China is the source of roughly one-third of the world’s economic growth, any disruption to its trade amounts to a global event.

■ State-owned companies

Trump has designed his tariffs to wound China as he seeks to pressure its leaders to agree to cease subsidizing state-owned companies, stop demanding intellectual property from U.S. businesses and open its markets to foreign competitors. Until last week, the president was insisting that a trade deal with China was imminent. Then, he abruptly accused China of renegeing on its commitments and opted to increase tariffs.

The sharp escalation comes at an especially fraught time for the world economy, jeopardizing what had seemed to be a stabilizing, if gradually slowing Chinese economy.

Volumes of freight imported by China rose in April, according to an analysis of data by UBS, the global investment bank. Worldwide, airfreight was up in March compared with a year earlier, according to the International Air Transport Association.

But these trends are fragile. Airfreight has declined nearly 4% since its peak in 2017. Outside China, manufacturing in Asia has been slowing for much of the last two years. A trade war between the United States and China — two countries that collectively account for roughly 40% of world economic output — would almost certainly aggravate the situation.

Exports to China from Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam have plunged by about 14% over the past year, or about \$6.3 billion, according to analysis from Oxford Economics.

Those same countries have lifted their exports to the United States by a similar percentage. But the United States is a less important trading partner, and the increase amounts to less than \$2 billion.

In Europe, the trade war presents another unwanted source of concern at a time of tenuous progress.

Concerns that Britain’s unruly departure from the European Union would damage trade across the continent had abated — at least in the immediate term — as London and Brussels agreed to extend their fractious divorce proceedings until the end of October.

■ The largest economy

Germany, the Continent’s largest economy, had been moderating fears of weakness, with data showing an increase in factory orders and exports. Germany’s exports to China were up by more than 5% in March compared with a year earlier.

But much of what Germany sends China amounts to the pieces of China’s industrial apparatus — car parts, engines, electrical machinery and other gear folded into factory operations. If Chinese factory operations slow in the face of American tariffs, China’s appetite for German goods will wane.

In Italy and France, industrial activity has been weakening. (Source: sfgate.com)



# Oil loadings from Iranian ports ongoing as before: PMO

**ENERGY** **TEHRAN** — Deputy director of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) said crude oil loadings and exports from the country's ports has not been halted and the exports are ongoing just like before, ILNA reported on Saturday.

"Perhaps the destinations of oil cargoes from our ports have changed but the legal exports are ongoing," Hadi Haqshenas said.

The official noted that the oil ministry has adopted new tactics and new destinations in shipping its oil exports following the

re-imposition of U.S. sanctions, giving no details of the new tactics or destinations.

"Of course, it cannot be denied that the loading of oil and products has fallen compared to the past, but the shipping of oil cargoes from out ports has definitely not stopped," he added.

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.

In late April, 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.

## NPC calls for accelerating completion of prioritized projects

**ENERGY** **TEHRAN** — The managing director of Iran's National Petrochemical Company (NPC) has stressed the need for accelerating the completion process of prioritized petrochemical projects across the country, Shana reported.

"NPC will maximize collaboration with all the country's petrochemical subsectors in order to identify and eliminate the obstacles and challenges in the way of completing the industry's important projects," Behzad Mohammadi said in a meeting with the managers of petrochemical holdings and companies on Saturday.

Speaking in the meeting, the official underlined the barriers and challenges facing the petrochemical industry and outlined the deterrent factors in the development of the prioritized projects.

The attendees further explored and introduced necessary



solutions to facilitate the completion and implementation of such projects.

Last week, Mohammad Bossaqzadeh, director of projects at NPC, said NPC is planning on completing the petrochemical value chain in Assaluyeh petrochemical zone in southwestern Bushehr province.

"Development of mid-stream and downstream projects in Assaluyeh has for long been considered as a strategy for NPC," he said.

Petrochemical industry is one of the most important pillars of Iran's economy and one of the main suppliers of foreign currency especially euro for the country.

According to Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh, the country is currently producing 62 million tons of petrochemical products annually and with the new projects going on stream the number is expected to jump to 65.5 million tons further cementing the Islamic country's stance as a major petrochemical supplier to the world markets.

## ExxonMobil pulls 30 workers from Iraq field, output unaffected: Basra Oil

ExxonMobil has withdrawn its 30 foreign staff from Iraq's West Qurna 1 field, according to Iraqi state-run Basra Oil Company, following a U.S. State Department warning about security risks from paramilitary groups.

As per spglobal.com, "in a temporary precautionary procedure, the operator of West Qurna 1 field has decided to move its office from Basra to Dubai," BOC said. "It is an act that didn't, nor will it, affect the production capacity of crude or natural gas." The field, which currently produces 440,000 to 490,000 b/d of oil and 150 to 200 Mcf/d of gas is run jointly with BOC

staff under ExxonMobil supervision, and ExxonMobil will continue to manage the field from its Dubai office, BOC added.

The statement said development and scheduled maintenance will be unaffected, as well. No other companies - American or otherwise - are known to have evacuated staff from Iraq.

"No other companies have left the oil fields in Basra," said Ali Shadad al-Faris, the head of the Basra Provincial Council's oil and gas committee.

In a statement, ExxonMobil declined to comment on the status of its staff in Iraq.

"ExxonMobil has programs and measures in place to provide security to protect its people, operations and facilities," spokeswoman Julie King said in a statement. "We are committed to ensuring the safety of our employees and contractors at all of our facilities around the world."

Rhetoric between the U.S. and Iran has increased in recent weeks, in the wake of the White House's decision to tighten sanctions by allowing waivers granted to eight countries to continue purchasing Iranian oil to expire on May 2.

Attacks on four tankers near the Port of

Fujairah in the UAE and on a key oil pipeline in Saudi Arabia last week are being blamed on groups outside Iraq.

ExxonMobil won the West Qurna 1 field in a 2009 bidding round. It is the operator with minority partners of PetroChina, Pertamina, Itochu and Iraq's Oil Exploration Company.

Faris said that Iraqi staff at the field and Exxon staff in Dubai will still manage the field on schedule.

"Work continues to increase the field's production by the end of this year 2019 by 100,000 b/d," he said.

## The 2 energy giants reshaping the Middle East

By Alan Mammoser

Countries of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), which today are powered mostly by fossil fuels, are now implementing far-reaching renewable energy programs. Saudi Arabia has a target to achieve 59 GW of renewables by 2030. The UAE has set a national goal to gain 44% of its energy from renewable sources, mainly solar, by 2050. Egypt, Morocco and other countries also have ambitious goals. They are quite ambitious, considering that the Persian Gulf countries' share of renewable electricity capacity is less than 1 percent today. Two regional companies are leading the way, gradually building the renewable energy framework to power the future.

Riyadh-based ACWA Power began in 2004 building combined-cycle power and water desalination plants. It later expanded into solar and wind power generation and now approximately 22% of its assets are in renewables. The group, which is owned by a combination of Saudi-based investors and public funds, has offices in 11 countries. It had net operating income of approximately \$420 million in 2017.

Masdar, or Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company, was established in 2006 as a wholly owned subsidiary of the Abu Dhabi government's Mubadala Investment Company. Its Masdar Clean Energy division is a major developer of renewable energy projects in the MENA region, while its investments extend to projects in Europe, the Caribbean and Pacific Islands.

While the company does not publicly disclose its financial results, its parent Mubadala states that it has over \$1.7 billion of equity invested across a portfolio of renewable energy projects, which have a total value of \$6.4 billion. Masdar Clean Energy employs about 80 personnel at its offices in the experimental sustainable development Masdar City. Site work is performed by qualified contractors in the various countries.

Both companies have played major roles in developing one of the region's premier renewable energy projects: the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park (aka MBR Solar Park), an enormous facility in the desert southeast of Dubai, which is being developed in stages under the independent power producer (IPP) model. Planned to provide 5 GW of electric power at build-out in 2030, it has been the scene of record-setting low bidding for utility scale solar power in recent years.

It was in 2015 that an ACWA-led consortium broke records in bidding for MBR Phase 2, agreeing to deliver electricity to the Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (DEWA) for 5.84 cents / kWh. That was for a 200 MW solar photovoltaic (PV) installation that became operational in 2017.

### ■ Solar PV installation

A year later in 2016 a Masdar-led consortium broke records again with a winning bid to deliver electricity for 2.99 cents / kWh. That was for MBR Phase 3, consisting of an 800 MW solar PV installation featuring robotic cleaning and solar tracking technology. Much of this phase, developed



with France's EDF Energies Nouvelles, is now in operation and the rest is scheduled to be completed next year.

ACWA came back in 2017 to win MBR Solar Park's phase 4. Leading a consortium with Shanghai Power, it will build a 950 MW hybrid CSP/PV facility that includes 700 MW of concentrated solar power (CSP), combining a 600 MW parabolic basin complex and a 100 MW solar tower. This project, called Noor Energy 1, breaks world records for size of a CSP facility and for the 260 meter height of the solar tower. It is scheduled to enter service late next year.

Masdar (and possibly ACWA) is now bidding on MBR Solar Park's Phase 5, a 900 MW photovoltaic facility that was tendered by DEWA last month. When finished, this phase will put the big solar park at the halfway point to its build-out and well on the path to completion by 2030, when it could provide 25% of Dubai's power requirement.

The two companies are also active in the stiff competition to build Saudi Arabia's small but quickly expanding renewable energy infrastructure. Masdar, in consortium with EDF, is now approaching financial close on the 400 MW Dumat Al Jandal wind farm, which will supply electricity for 2.3 cents / kWh, a record low tariff. It will deploy Vestas wind turbines. Meanwhile ACWA is developing the Kingdom's first big utility-scale solar facility, the 300 MW PV plant at Sakaka.

Both are now bidding on more Saudi projects, as the Kingdom's National Renewable Energy Program gears up to produce 60 GW of renewable power by 2030. For its part, Masdar is currently bidding on four Saudi projects that will generate a total of 1.4 GW of electricity: Al Faisaliah Solar PV (600 MW), Jeddah Solar PV (300 MW), Rabigh Solar PV (300 MW), and Qurayyat Solar PV (200 MW).

"Saudi Arabia has a very ambitious program and good financing to produce low cost electricity," he says. "What will make the difference in winning projects now are the conditions," he says, referring to the cost of site preparation.

There is need to flatten the dunes for huge sites like MBR Phase 3 that covers 16 square kilometers. "In the 'old days' it was not so critical if your site costs were 5% higher," he continues. "But that's not true now because, with very low prices, it becomes a big job to move sand."

Masdar gained notoriety early on for its development of concentrated solar power plants. It entered a joint venture with Spain's Sener to build the Gemasolar and Valle 1 and 2 plants, now producing 120 MW of power in southern Spain. Another high profile project was Shams 1, a 100 MW CSP facility in Abu Dhabi's western desert inaugurated in 2013.

Now, in addition to its bidding on the Saudi projects, the company is working on a commercial waste-to-energy plant in the Emirate of Sharjah, a solar project in Oman and two solar projects in Ethiopia, each 125 MW, in cooperation with the International Finance Corporation of the World Bank.

Masdar also has a 20% share in the enormous 600 MW London Array offshore wind farm now under development, and a 25% share in the Hywind (Scotland) offshore project that features floating wind turbines.

### ■ A winning bidder

The company is developing a CO2 capture and sequestration process with injection for oil recovery for the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (Adnoc). And, in a consortium with EDF, it is proposing new technology for a 400 MW Hybrid Plant (CSP trough plus PV) at Midelt in Morocco. A winning bidder for that project should be selected this month.

ACWA Power has been quite active in Morocco, taking a leading role in development of the Ouarzazate Solar Complex in south-central Morocco. As planned by the Moroccan Agency for Solar Energy (MASEN), it is to become a 500 MW solar park that incorporates several utility-scale solar power plants.

ACWA led development of the NOOR PV I project, which comprises a total 135 MW at three sites near Ouarzazate. And, with Sener and other consortium partners, it built three projects including: NOOR I CSP IPP with a capacity of 160MW with three hours of thermal energy storage (to deliver power at the evening peak times); NOOR II which features parabolic trough CSP technology with a capacity of 200 MW and 7 hours of storage; and, NOOR III with a CSP tower with a capacity of 150 MW and 7 hours of storage.

ACWA also has a controlling position in the 120 MW Khalladi Wind Farm near Tangiers in northern Morocco. In Egypt, it is developing three solar photovoltaic power plants with an aggregate capacity of 165.5 MW, located in the Aswan Province at Benban.

In Jordan, the company built the Mafraq PV project, a 50 MW solar PV plant located within the King Hussein Bin Talal Development Area near the city of Al Mafraq north of Amman. It is now developing the Risha solar PV project, a 50 MW solar plant located 300 km east of Amman.

In South Africa, the company has invested in the 100MW Redstone CSP plant, with 12 hours of energy storage to deliver a stable electricity supply well after the sun has set. It has also participated in the development of a large solar project in Bulgaria and is leading the development of another in Vietnam.

(Source: oilprice.com)

## Azar oil field's total output reaches 20,000 million barrels

**ENERGY** **TEHRAN** — Cumulative oil extraction from Azar oilfield has reached 20 million barrels since it began operation in March 2017, IRNA reported on Sunday.

According to Touraj Dehghani, the chairman of the board and CEO of the Petroleum Engineering and Development Company (PEDEC), the field's oil production is planned to hit 65,000 barrels per day (bpd) in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 19, 2020).

In a ceremony attended by Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh, early production from Azar oilfield started on March 14, 2017 with an output capacity of 15,000 bpd.

As there is still no processing installation at the place of this field, its output is going to be sent to the processing facilities of Dehloran oil field through a 120-km pipeline, Shana reported.

With 2.5 billion barrels of oil reserve, Azar field is located in Iran's western region of Mehran along the border with Iraq.

The field is developed jointly by Oil Industries Engineering and Construction Company (OIEC) and Oil Industry Pension Fund Investment Company (OPIC) in a period of 55 months.



## RIPI to produce a wide range of downstream catalysts

**ENERGY** **TEHRAN** — Iran's Research Institute of Petroleum Industry (RIPI) has it on the agenda to produce various types of catalysts used in the oil industry's downstream operations, Shana reported quoting an official with the institute.

According to Mash'al Weekly, Akbar Zamanian, head of RIPI's downstream faculty, said the catalysts could be used for a wide range of downstream activities.

"The produced catalysts could also ensure profitability for the country and the companies that use them in their operations," he added.

He said Iran's oil industry was capable of localizing production of many oil industry items and parts as well as catalysts.

Earlier in May, RIPI signed a deal with Sabalan Petrochemical Plant for buying catalysts produced by RIPI.

## Global oil shipping concerns rise over Middle East tensions

By Tim Daiss

While global oil markets are accustomed to factoring geopolitical uncertainty into oil prices, this kind of geopolitical fallout hasn't been seen for a number of years. The world's largest oil exporter, that still along with its OPEC+ partners, plays the role of global oil markets swing producer, is seeing an escalation of attacks on its oil export infrastructure and shipping.

Saudi Arabia said on Tuesday that armed drones had attacked two of its oil pumping stations. This came just two days after the sabotage of two oil tankers carrying Saudi oil near the UAE. Meanwhile, the U.S. military, amid an increasingly tense tit for tat exchange of words between Washington and Tehran, said it was braced for "possibly imminent threats to U.S. forces in Iraq" from Iran-backed forces.

Tuesday's attacks on the pumping stations more than 200 miles west of Riyadh and Sunday's attack on four tankers off the UAE have raised concerns that the U.S. and Iran might be inching toward military conflict. However, on Thursday Trump told media that he did not want a war with Iran.

Also on Thursday, a Saudi-led coalition carried out airstrikes on Sanaa, the Yemeni capital. The deadly airstrikes, that reportedly left six dead, came after Yemen's Houthi rebels, who control the capital, claimed responsibility for the Tuesday drone attack on Saudi Arabia's critical oil pipeline. All of this, of course, isn't being lost on global oil markets which ticked up on Thursday by more than 1 percent.

### ■ Brent crude futures

Global oil benchmark Brent crude futures ended the day's session at \$72.62/barrel, up 1.18 percent, while U.S. oil benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were up 1.37 percent, at \$62.87/barrel, near its highest level in two weeks.

Global oil traders aren't the only ones closely monitoring increased tensions in the Middle East, global ship insurers also considering their next course of action. On Thursday, London maritime ship insurers met to consider whether or not to increase shipping insurance rates for tankers in the Persian Gulf.

However, thus far they have failed to reach a consensus. The Joint War Committee, which includes Lloyd's Market Association (LMA) members and representatives from other insurance providers, will meet again on Monday to discuss the matter further, said the LMA's Head of Marine Underwriting Neil Roberts.

According to reports, the group doesn't have enough information yet to make a decision over rate possible increases. «At the moment there are not many facts or verifiable information (about the attacks on Sunday).» Roberts said on Wednesday. «There is no decision yet on whether to change the listed areas of enhanced risk.

### ■ A number of options

There are a number of options, which include no change. He added that any changes would take seven days to come into effect. «Ships going into the Persian Gulf already have to inform underwriters; the question is whether vessels within the Persian Gulf and operating there are additionally exposed," he said. The last time The Joint War Committee updated the list of high-risk areas was June 2018.

Some are already anticipating an increase in shipping rates, including Asian oil refiners which rely heavily on Middle Eastern crude imports. Asia derives around 70 percent of its crude oil from the Middle East, while disruptions in oil production or shipping routes can severely affect Asian economies, including China and Japan, the world's second and third largest economies, respectively.

Ashok Sharma, managing director of shipbroker BRS Baxi in Singapore, told Reuters earlier this week "there seems to be no increase in (insurance premiums) as of yet," while he warned that if security in the Persian Gulf region deteriorated, then insurers may be left with no choice but to increase marine insurance premiums.

(Source: oilprice.com)



## Can the U.S. drive a wedge between Russia and China?



**Global Times** — U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo traveled to Sochi May 14 to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Russian presidential aide Yuri Ushakov said the two sides had a “constructive” discussion and “we confirmed the agreements reached by the two presidents on launching dialogue between our foreign ministry and U.S. Department of State on issues of strategic stability.” Ushakov also stressed that there has been no breakthrough in Russian-U.S. relations, but the U.S. has “demonstrated a constructive approach.”

Moscow has long wanted to ease relations with the U.S.. Its attitude is simple: Why should the relations be antagonistic? Washington has an additional interest in improving relations with Moscow: To drive a wedge into the comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination between Russia and China and convert Russia from an adversary into a lever to strategically squeeze out Chinese influence.

Beijing's attitude is calm: It wants to see better relations between Russia and the U.S. Russia is wary of Washington's attempts to sow discords between China and Russia and has never responded to the U.S. side's proposal. For example, when the U.S. tried to bring China into arms control negotiations, Moscow gave Washington the cold shoulder.

In the early 1970s, the U.S. united with China against the Soviet Union. Now China is regarded by the U.S. political elite as the top strategic opponent. Wouldn't it make sense to turn around and unite Russia against China? In Washington policy circles, there are people mulling this idea.

But even they know they can't do it, and so they prefer to settle for the next best thing: Ease relations between the U.S. and Russia, reorient Moscow's strategic anxieties and draw more attention to its differences with China.

Relations between Russia and the U.S. have only gone from growling at each other to being nice to each other. It is currently only an idea at President Trump's level and it is hard to say if the U.S. has begun to form a strategic consensus.

The U.S. still regards Russia's huge nuclear arsenal as a serious threat and is trying to establish an overwhelming military advantage over Russia. The U.S. has not yet stepped away from the NATO thinking of eastward expansion and continues to include anti-Russia countries in eastern Europe into its new strategic territory. In addition, the U.S. maintains huge sanctions against Russia. Trump's desire to eliminate them would be fiercely opposed by the domestic establishment and with elections approaching, it would be almost impossible to do so.

The Sino-Soviet relationship in the 1970s was confrontational. China felt a serious military threat from the Soviet Union and the U.S. and China had a huge common interest in working together. Relations between China and Russia began to strengthen during the years of former Russian President Boris Yeltsin when Russia had good relations with the West. Neither side would compromise its relationship in order to please a third party.

It's true that Beijing would like to see better relations between the U.S. and Russia. We are very confident when we say this.

## U.S. need for rare earths an ace in Beijing's hand

By Hu Weijia

**Global Times** — Shares of rare-earth producers on Thursday led the stock markets in the Chinese mainland higher after the U.S. decided not to increase tariffs on rare earths and other critical minerals from China.

Why did the U.S. threaten to raise tariffs on “essentially all remaining imports from China” while sparing rare earths? The answer is simple: Without a reliable domestic supply, the U.S. must rely on rare earths from China to supply industries of strategic importance.

Rare earths are vital to many modern technologies and a wide array of weapon systems used by the U.S. military, but China controls the vast majority of the world's supply. Some statistics show China currently produces about 95 percent of the world's rare earths. It will take many years if the U.S. wants to rebuild its rare-earth industry and increase its domestic supply to reduce its dependence on China's minerals.

That's long enough for China to win a trade war against the U.S., during which time China's monopoly on the production of rare earths will help Beijing control the lifeblood of the U.S. high-technology sector.

It will test China's wisdom in deciding how to fully utilize its advantage in rare earths. Jin Canrong, an expert on U.S. studies at the Renmin University of China, said the “ace” in China's hand is a complete ban on exports of rare earths to the U.S.. However, this is not the only way to make the U.S. economy feel pain.

China can raise the price of rare earths exported to the U.S. in response to higher tariffs on Chinese products. The U.S. decision to omit rare earths from the China tariff list shows how much the country depends on these minerals from China. This can give Chinese rare-earth producers the confidence to raise prices. In the short term, U.S. users won't be able to find alternatives, so they have to accept higher prices.

The trade war is prompting China to rethink its rare-earth strategy. The country has various tools in hand, such as cutting the number of rare-earth mining licenses, raising market access standards for miners, reducing exports of primary rare-earth products, and restricting outbound and inbound investment in related industries.

China will likely be wary of a total export ban to avoid escalating tension with the U.S., but it won't ignore the opportunity to safeguard and maximize its interests.

# Dissecting Bin Salman's utterances on Sheikh Zakzaky

**1 →** Afterwards, those scholars hold the view of Wahhabism in Nigeria, extolled the Nigerian government for killing 1000+ belong to Islamic Movement. Prior to that, the King of Saudi Arabia called the Nigerian President through phone were He congratulated him for killing the Shiites. He labelled it as “fighting terrorism in Nigeria.”

WISAL TV owned by Saudi Arabia in 2015 prior to Zaria Massacre produced a documentary were they raised alarm about; “the spread of Shi'ism in Africa”, particularly in Nigeria. The Politics of killing everyone diverging with their creed by Saudi Arabian officials is not new, they continuously pay the contracts to achieve the West agenda in altering the real teachings of Islam by founding terrorism groups in the name Of Islam. The Saudi Arabian officials stand on their fit as the paymasters of destroying Muslim's countries (Nigeria Inclusive) using terrorism.

On the issue of 'attempting to overthrow the Nigerian government,' why will Sheikh Zakzaky waste 39 years before over-throwing the Nigerian government? If his assertion is true, Sheikh Zakzaky would have over-thrown the government before the Crown Prince was given birth to. Islamic Movement in Nigeria under the auspices leadership of



Sheikh Zakzaky emerged 6 years before the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabian was born.

In addition, can the Prince tell it to the public the exact figures of those overthrow government in Nigeria how they were arrest? Why are they still walking freely without

keeping them incommunicado including the present President? Why will a group or groups their aim is to over-throw a government but they didn't hold a single bullet despite their existence for about four decades? Those that overthrow a government in Nigeria how many

years did they wasted before executing their plans? How many children did they lost? How many family members of their own were mercilessly killed? How many of their supporters were massacred before over-throwing the government? Did it reach up to 1000?

This obviously indicates how the spread of the authentic teachings of Ahlul Bayt scared Saudi Arabia, it provokes them. On the part of the western Powers, including The America, Britain and Israel, a call for reawakening Muslims advocates by Islamic Movements in Nigeria to rise against injustice, oppression, dictatorship makes them scary, because whenever you understand how you are been oppressed by the traitors, it's the real moment you wake up to fight for your right and liberty, to deny your right, the oppressors do their best. But, the truthful ones are on the path of triumph.

On a final note, Islamic Movement in Nigeria under the leadership of Sheikh Ibraheem Zakzaky was found in the midst of a time were Iran is battling to survive their revolution from the Western Powers. Islamic movement in Nigeria is an Ideology of reasoning founded by Sheikh Zakzaky, to achieve his set goals, He doesn't need the assistance or supports of any country.

## Who will blink first in renewed trade war?

By XUAN LOC DOAN

**Asiatimes** — The United States and China have resumed and intensified their tariff war after the collapse of trade talks. What's more, this renewed and escalated battle is becoming bitter and ugly, because it's no longer only a fierce fight between the world's biggest economies, but also a personal showdown between their leaders.

As Donald Trump and Xi Jinping cannot afford a deepening and long-lasting trade conflict, which will not just hurt their countries' economies, but may also spread to other key areas of the world's most vital bilateral relationship, sooner or later, either one or the other must make the first move to de-escalate or terminate it. The question is, who will blink first in this stare-down?

On May 10, a day after the trade talks broke down, the U.S. hiked tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese products from 10% to 25%. Three days later, Beijing announced it would increase tariffs on \$60 billion of U.S. imports to 10%, 20% and 25%. On the same day, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative listed \$300 billion more of Chinese goods, which is in essence all remaining imports from the Asian country, for possible 25% tariff levies. In 2018, China bought only about \$120 billion worth of U.S. goods while selling \$540 billion worth of its products to the U.S..

While – or, perhaps, because – it cannot match the United States' tariffs dollar by dollar, during the last few days, Beijing has allowed or encouraged its officials and, especially, state-run media to adopt an antagonistic and nationalistic posture vis-à-vis the U.S..

As reported by CNN and other international outlets, Xinhua News Agency and the People's Daily – the Communist-ruled country's two main mouthpieces – published a strongly worded editorial (in Chinese), which argued that the U.S. was fighting for “greed and arrogance” while China only fought to defend “its legitimate rights and interests.”

The piece also made another distinction, claiming that America's trade war “is the creation of one person and his administration who have swept along the entire population of the country. Whereas the entire country and all the people of China are being threatened.” That's why, it vowed: “For us, this is a real ‘people's war.’” Though it didn't mention Trump by name, the comment was a direct rebuke of, and a personal attack on, the U.S. president.

A defiant statement read during the primetime news on state broadcaster China Central Television likewise claimed the country would “fight for a new world” and said: “As President Xi Jinping pointed out, the Chinese economy is a sea, not a small pond. A rainstorm can destroy a small pond, but it cannot harm the sea.”

Without doubt, such fiery comments are mainly aimed at galvanizing support and stoking patriotism at home as those directed at international audiences by Chinese officials and state run outlets are less aggressive and confrontational. That said, they still offer a defiant message.

This Tuesday, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman said: “China doesn't want a trade war, but is by no means afraid of fighting one. If someone brings the war to our doorstep, we will fight to the end. China never succumbs to external pressure.”

In a commentary headlined “China will never bow to any extreme pressure” a day earlier, the English-language edition of the People's Daily said Beijing “will never yield to the extreme pressure from the U.S., or compromise on matters of principle.” According to this piece, Washington “wielded the tariff stick once again because of its misjudgments on China's strength, capability and willpower.”

In its editorials on May 13 and 14, the China Daily, another key state-run outlet, held the same view, stressing that “China does not want to be dragged into a trade war with the U.S., but it is not fearful and, if forced into one, it will safeguard its national interests.” That's why, it warned, “the U.S. should not fancy that it can force China to give in” because “China will not knuckle under.”

On May 12, the Global Times, a well-known tabloid published by the People's Daily, told the U.S. that its “maximum pressure policy is useless” as Beijing “has adhered to its principles, not fearing the trade war while trying to crumble the U.S.' provocations with stout endurance.”

China's fiery rhetoric in recent days is a reaction not just to the Trump administration's decision to raise tariffs on Chinese goods but also to his numerous criticisms against China and its leadership. These included the Republican president's accusation of his Chinese counterpart renegeing on the trade deal both sides had negotiated and agreed in



**The United States and China have resumed and intensified their tariff war after the collapse of trade talks. What's more, this renewed and escalated battle is becoming bitter and ugly, because it's no longer only a fierce fight between the world's biggest economies, but also a personal showdown between their leaders.**

recent months, indirectly but pointedly telling Xi Jinping that “you had a great deal ... & you backed out.”

Yet the belligerent comments by Chinese officials and state media of late aren't completely new. For several months last year, when Trump started and then escalated his trade war against China, through its officials and its state-controlled media, Beijing adopted the same rhetoric.

For instance, in a bellicose editorial headlined “China won't cave in to Trump's trade bluster” in March last year, the Global Times said the “U.S. has been wielding sticks worldwide over the past year. Washington needs to be taught a real lesson and such a lesson can only be taught by China, the world's second-largest economy.”

A month later, when Trump instructed the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative to consider slapping an extra \$100 billion in tariffs on Chinese goods, a Foreign Ministry spokesman stated that China was “definitely unafraid of a trade war even though [it did not] seek one” and would “take new comprehensive countermeasures to resolutely safeguard [its] interests ... at whatever cost.”

An editorial by the People's Daily in early August, when the U.S. threatened raising tariffs to 25% on \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods, vowed that the People's Republic of China “will not surrender to U.S. threatening tactic[s]” and its “trade blackmail.” This official mouthpiece of the Communist Party of China even stringently accused Trump of starring in his own “street-fighter-style deceitful drama of extortion and intimidation.”

In blunt remarks later that month, Cui Tiankai, the PRC's ambassador to the U.S., said Washington should “give up the illusion” that his country “will ever give in to intimidation [and] coercion.”

But by late September and early October last year, Chinese officials and media notably tempered their rhetoric. Unlike a month before, Cui fervently talked about and called for cooperation between the two countries.

The pugnacious Global Times even sounded unusually cooperative, writing: “China knows how powerful the U.S. is, and China doesn't want any strategic confrontations. But the U.S. should respect China's right to development.”

Beijing by then opted for a reconciliatory tone not only because a tough Trump showed no sign of bluffing but also, and more important, because China's economy was hit hard by his tariff war.

As noted, in a rare admission in March this year, Chinese

Premier Li Keqiang even acknowledged that trade frictions with the U.S. “had an adverse effect on” China's economy. That was a key factor why, in his Government Work Report, China's second highest-ranking official announced a GDP growth target of 6-6.5% for 2019, which is the country's lowest rate of growth in nearly three decades.

As it couldn't afford a prolonged trade war with the world's largest economy, in early December, China had to soften its posture, agreeing to strike a truce and to negotiate a trade deal with Washington. According to the White House, Beijing agreed “to begin negotiations on structural changes with respect to” a wide range of issues that Washington has demanded, such as “forced technology transfer, intellectual property protection, non-tariff barriers, cyber intrusions and cyber theft, services and agriculture.”

Without doubt, an escalating trade war will badly affect the two countries. Yet many indicators show that it has, so far, inflicted more pain on China than on the U.S..

If its subdued response to Trump's trade war in late 2018 is any guide, China – or, more precisely, its paramount leader, Xi Jinping – may again change tone and tack, adopting a softer posture toward the U.S. on trade matters. There are many other reasons for such a possibility.

One of these is that, while people may disagree with many of Trump's proclamations and actions, they hardly disagree that when it comes to trade disputes with China, he is very tough and unusually consistent.

To this point, the U.S. has followed through on all of his tariff threats against the Asian power. If a trade deal is not achieved, it's very likely – if not certain – that his administration will impose 25% levies on the remaining \$300 billion worth of Chinese imports. Should this happen, it would be difficult for China to hit back, as it exports four times more to the U.S. than the latter does to China. More important, such an all-out trade war would be a huge blow for China's economy.

Unlike Trump, Xi holds a tight grip over all aspects of China – from the 1.3-billion-people country's politics, economy and military to its civil society, media and public opinion. But that doesn't mean he is completely immune to pressure. If economic growth slows down significantly, he will face great discontent and dissent within the CPC and from society.

On this reading, it's likely that Xi's China – rather than Trump's America – will blink first in their renewed trade conflict



# The economic struggle between Washington and Beijing continues

By Saeed Sobhani

The controversy between the United States and China over commercial matters continues. The conflict is so widespread that other international actors, such as the European Union, Japan and South Korea, have also been involved. The fact is that Donald Trump's economic approach is rooted in his views on issues such as international trade and economics.

Donald Trump's protectionist policies are strongly put under question in the U.S.. Although some people are supporting these policies, others firmly believe that Trump lacks the necessary seriousness that is the prerequisite of such big steps, and thus he's incapable to direct these policies.

As a result, the U.S. economy will be vulnerable in the long run. Moreover, it seems that Trump wasn't able to achieve his economic goals in the international system up to now. The existing evidence shows this very well. Accordingly, one of the most important issues is the economic relationship between China and the United States of America.

As CNBC reported, Negotiations between the U.S. and China appear to have stalled as both sides dig in after disagreements earlier this month. Scheduling for the next round of negotiations is 'in flux' because it is unclear what the two sides would negotiate, two sources briefed on the status of the talks said. China has not signaled it is willing to revisit past promises on which it reneged earlier this month, despite showing up for talks in Washington last week. Both sides have dug in on their positions this week. China dropped up its currency and cut U.S. pork orders, while state media took on an increasingly nationalistic message. The Trump administration, meanwhile, put Chinese telecommunications company Huawei and its affiliates on a business blacklist and banned it from the supply chain, actions it had shelved earlier in the trade talks to smooth relations.

China has invited the U.S. delegation to Beijing, and earlier this week, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin appeared open to accepting the offer. But sources say scheduling discussions have not taken place since the Trump administration ratcheted up its scrutiny of Chinese telecom companies. The move was seen as a shot across the bow.

The White House, Office of the U.S. Trade Representative and Treasury Department did not immediately respond to requests to comment. Stocks dipped after the report that trade discussions have stalled. The three major U.S. indexes all closed lower Friday.

President Donald Trump on Friday again said the world's two largest economies came close to a trade agreement before China backtracked.

"We actually had a deal and they broke it, OK?" the president told the National Association of Realtors.

A spokesperson for China's Foreign Ministry said that China prefers to resolve



disputes through dialogue. The countries' two presidents have been in touch, the spokesman said, but the U.S. overall has been "insincere" in its position. "Words must be matched with deeds," spokesperson Lu Kang said at a daily briefing.

Reacting to U.S. actions on Huawei, China's Commerce Ministry said in a statement, "We firmly oppose the act of any country to impose unilateral sanctions on Chinese entities based on its domestic laws, and to abuse export control measures while making 'national security' a catch-all phrase. We urge the U.S. to stop its wrong practices."

Last week, the U.S. increased tariffs on \$200 billion in Chinese goods. China retaliated by raising duties on \$60 billion in American products.

On the one hand, the president of the United States, on the one hand, insists on deterrent economic and commercial policies, and on the other hand, China has also resisted a strong resistance against the United States. U.S.-China relations continue to decline during the Trump presidency. Of course, there were disagreements between Beijing and Washington over security and cyber-security issues at the time of Barack Obama, but the emergence of trade and economic disputes in their bilateral relations should be analyzed "beyond a simple controversy." In other words, from the beginning of 2017 and Trump's presence at the top of the political and executive equations of the United States, we have witnessed the emergence of constant crises and challenges in the relations between Washington and Beijing. Many international affairs analysts rightly believe that the conflict is not limited to economic and commercial issues, and it will also affect the political, security and regional spheres.

A review of The Hill report

The continuation of Trump's economic approach has led to the concern of many economists and commercial companies in the United States. As The Hill reported, U.S. companies are speaking out against President Trump's escalating trade war with China, with major players such as Walmart saying tariffs are forcing them to raise prices on consumer goods for Americans. The price hikes could complicate things for Trump as the 2020 campaign picks up. The president has repeatedly asserted that China, and not U.S. consumers, would pay the price of the trade war.

"There are some places where, as we get tariffs, we will take prices up," Walmart Chief Financial Officer Brett Biggs said Thursday in an earnings call.

Macy's CEO Jeff Gennette issued a similar warning, saying another round of tariffs would almost certainly hit consumers in their pocketbooks.

"When you do the math, it's hard to find a path through that wouldn't impact customers," he told investors and analysts on Thursday. "It will affect a lot of apparel and accessories categories."

Trump has imposed tariffs on China in stages, starting in July when he targeted \$50 billion of imports. He later added \$200 billion of goods to the list. Last week he raised tariffs from 10 percent to 25 percent on the \$200 billion of goods, and on Monday threatened to impose tariffs on the remaining \$300 billion of goods imported into the U.S. from China.

Retailers say they have bent over backwards to avoid increasing prices up until now, but that the latest round has left them with few options. Ed Weinstein, vice president of tax and government affairs for the retail chain Jo-Ann Fabric, said his company navigated the first rounds of

tariffs by looking for alternative source materials, negotiating with suppliers and cutting margins. But those options are largely exhausted, he said, in the face of 25 percent tariffs.

"At 25 percent, we will need to pass on the pricing to our consumers. We're not happy about that, but that would just be the reality, and we anticipate that the increased pricing could lead to reduced profit, which could lead to store closings and employee layoffs," Weinstein said. Trump is betting that an increase in consumer prices won't sour voters amid strong economic growth and the lowest unemployment rate in 50 years.

But company heads argue that more tariffs will eat into economic growth. "We know that employment is good now, but if companies are forced to lay off employees that would turn the economy in the other direction," said Weinstein.

The National Retail Federation (NRF) estimates that the latest round of tariffs will raise the cost of the trade war to \$750 a year for the average family of four, and shave as many as 1 million jobs from payrolls nationwide. If Trump follows through with the next round, that cost would rise to \$2,300 a year, and kill twice as many jobs, according to NRF projections.

"The last thing any retailer wants to do is raise prices, but if you're talking about a 25 percent tariff, there's only so much the supply chain can absorb," said David French, senior vice president for government relations at NRF. For business leaders, Trump's assertion on Twitter that "there is no reason for the U.S. Consumer to pay the Tariffs" fails to resonate.

"Saying that China is paying these tariffs doesn't hold water," said French.

Trump expects the higher tariffs to force China into striking a deal, but an agreement isn't expected anytime soon. In announcing the new tariffs, Trump accused China of backtracking on previously agreed-upon positions in the negotiations.

China has since hardened its position, with officials sounding off in state-run media against the U.S. tariffs and the trade negotiations. Chinese Commerce Ministry spokesman Gao Feng called the tariffs "bullying behavior by the United States," in the state-run Xinhua news service.

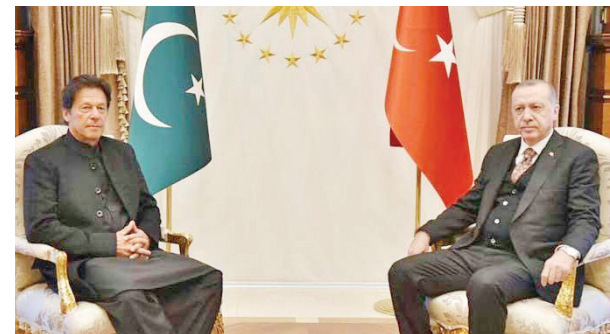
"It is regrettable that the U.S. side unilaterally escalated trade disputes, which resulted in severe negotiating setbacks," Gao said.

But as Trump ramps up pressure on Beijing, he has shifted gears on other trade battles that could mitigate some of the harm to U.S. consumers from the China trade war.

Conclusion

The economic actions of the Trump government in the long term will lead to serious and serious damage to the U.S. business and economic equation. Hence, not only the current U.S. government, but also its next governments (whether Democrats or Republicans) are involved with the business crisis.

## Turkey, Pakistan upgrade strategic partnership



By SABENA SIDDIQUI

Adding a fresh chapter to their historic relations, Turkey and Pakistan recently upgraded their military and strategic relationship. Ever since Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan's visit to Ankara early this year, the two countries' defense relations have been getting stronger and are now on a decidedly upward trajectory.

Proactively dealing with the shifting security dynamics in South Asia and the Middle East, the brotherly countries ramped up joint counter-terrorism exercises and drills with Uzbekistan in the last week of April.

Simulating terrorist infiltration, the Partnership Shield 2019 military drills focused on coping with proxy warfare. Held in eastern Uzbekistan this time around, the next phase of these tri-country drills will take place in Turkey. Describing the Ankara-Islamabad equation, Turkish Air Force Chief General Hasan Kucukakyuz stressed that "Turkey will always stand by Pakistan through thick and thin," while addressing officers at the Raisalpur air force base in Pakistan last month.

Having had regular military training exchange programs since 2000, Turkey and Pakistan established a high-level military dialogue mechanism in 2003. Over the years, both countries found each other to be reliable defense partners and bilateral military mechanisms were further synchronized.

Nevertheless, the strategic ties we see today are unprecedented and a further consolidation of interests can be expected in the future.

Amid a worsening geopolitical scenario, Ankara and Islamabad plan to stick it out together. While Turkey's neighborhood has been destabilized by the Syrian civil war and Arab-world tensions with Iran and Qatar, Pakistan faces a terror threat due to enduring instability in Afghanistan. To make matters worse, uncertainty has clouded U.S. relations with both Turkey and Pakistan over the past year. Istanbul diverges with Washington over the situation in Syria, while Pakistan-U.S. ties have fluctuated constantly over the civil war in Afghanistan.

Facing constraints in updating the F-16s provided by the U.S.

**Turkey and Pakistan recently upgraded their military and strategic relationship. Ever since Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan's visit to Ankara early this year, the two countries' defense relations have been getting stronger and are now on a decidedly upward trajectory.**

for its air force, Pakistan asked Turkey for help and it has now become Pakistan's second-biggest arms supplier after China. Up until now, the most important defense deal between Islamabad and Ankara has been the procurement of four MILGEM Ada Corvettes for the Pakistani navy, while the largest ever defense contract has been the sale of 30 Turkish T129 ATAK helicopters to Pakistan for \$1.5 billion. At the same time, Turkey also purchased training planes from Pakistan recently.

While Turkey's neighborhood has been destabilized by the Syrian civil war and Arab-world tensions with Iran and Qatar, Pakistan faces a terror threat due to enduring instability in Afghanistan.

From being Islamabad's only supporter when Pakistan was being put on the "grey list" by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) last year, to being one of the main and most regular participants in Pakistan's International Defense Exhibition and Seminar (IDEAS), Ankara remains Islamabad's most dependable ally.

Meanwhile, strategic partner Islamabad also helps Ankara bridge the divide between East and West. Over the years, ambiguous neutrality has been the linchpin of Ankara's foreign policy, and extending military ties with Pakistan will increase Turkey's leverage towards the East and facilitate more interaction in South Asia. Diversifying options is a better long-term policy for both countries and this can be achieved with mutual cooperation.

In the near future, the Istanbul Tripartite Summit (Turkey, Pakistan and Afghanistan) is to be held and Ankara will be playing an important role in resolving the Afghanistan conundrum. Being a part of both "worlds," the East and the West, offers multiple benefits, and both Islamabad and Ankara help each other bridge this divide.

Along with strategic ties, more economic interaction has also been planned and a Strategic Economic Framework (SEF) is being mullied over. Pakistan requires direct foreign investment while Turkey is interested in construction projects and Prime Minister Khan is planning to build five million houses for the poor in the next five years.

Projected to increase the trade volume by at least five times, the SEF is expected to be operational soon while negotiations are in progress towards the inking of a free trade agreement. In tandem, a direct Istanbul-Tehran-Islamabad trade corridor was initiated in Pakistan under the TIR system in April 2018. Once fully operational, this fast-track route would link up Iran, Central Asia, Turkey and Europe, and the trade possibilities are endless.

Sharing a history dating back to Turkish-origin Mughal emperors ruling the Indian subcontinent, both countries are intricately interlinked. Considering that even Pakistan's national language Urdu has linguistic roots in the Turkish language, it is a precious relationship. Both nations share an emotional bond and one of the best examples of this friendship is that many landmarks in Pakistani cities are named after the Turkish leader Kemal Ataturk, while one of the main avenues in Ankara is named after Pakistan's founder, Muhammad Ali Jinnah – "Cinnah Cadesi."

# Trump's New Immigration Plan Is Indefensible, Discriminatory Again

**TEHRAN (FNA)** — The Trump administration has enacted the harshest immigration policies in a century, but it has also reached the outer limits of what any government can illegally do to stem the flow of migrants and refugees.

President Trump, who has welcomed many anti-immigrant voices into the White House, has just proposed overhauling the U.S. immigration system to favor young, educated, English-speaking applicants instead of people with family ties to Americans, a plan he will push in his 2020 re-election campaign.

As always, the politicized plan has roundly been panned by human rights and immigration advocacy groups. They say the plan leaves aside the problem of how to deal with the roughly 11 million immigrants living in the country illegally - many for years - and protections for "Dreamers" brought to the country illegally as children.

It also does not include changes for refugees, but proposals to beef up security at the Mexican border to try to prevent people from crossing illegally and legal changes aimed at curbing a rise in Central American migrants seeking asylum. As well, because of Trump's previous immigration overhauls, border facilities where migrants sleep on the floor, sometimes for weeks, before being processed and released, are still overwhelmed.

Under Trump's plans, refugee children can be taken from their parents as well. This raises many more questions than the Trump administration officials would like to answer. The children and their families are sent to separate military bases, a controversial move that violates their basic human rights. The use of military facilities is outrageous and flies in the face of international humanitarian law.

Tragically, this kind of brutal immigration and refugee policy has also inspired many far-right governments in Europe. Many European leaders have not only expressed admiration for Trump's draconian policies but have initiated ways to implement them in their own nations. Just like in the U.S., refugees are imprisoned in privatized or military



detention centers across the EU. The xenophobic idea is to contend with the recent surge of people fleeing Africa and the Middle Eastern conflicts the West helped to fuel.

Then there is Trump's executive order on blocking citizens of six Muslim countries from entering the U.S.. The Muslim ban executive order reflects Washington's war-on-Islam pledge to safeguard against what he claims is a hidden influx of terrorists and criminals - a hardline campaign promise that resonated deeply with White Supremacists and far-right voters.

As always, Trump's new immigration overhaul in the pre-textual guise of national security and others is indefensible, discriminatory, and against International Human Rights Law. He has replaced it with a scaled-back version that shares the same fatal flaws. He has re-committed himself to ethnic, social, family and religious discrimination, and he can expect continued disapproval from the United Nations, American people, the rights groups, Muslim nations, and the international civil society.

No doubt the new overhaul will still continue apace until he is re-elected in 2020 - with or without consent from

Congress - if he is re-elected at all. History tells us this is just the beginning of a decades-long campaign against migrants, refugees and Muslims. History also tells us it's harder to run for re-election when you haven't delivered on your biggest immigration promises.

Which is to say the plan will remain in place for many decades after Trump's re-election if he wins a second term, and has nothing to do with Democrats or Republicans. Like many other discriminatory executive orders before him, Trump's immigration overhaul plan is intended to target immigrants, refugees and Muslims forever and wholesale.

That's how things are done in Washington. First, it's just a simple order with its own critics. But after it's introduced, it becomes law one way or another - with or without Congress approval. The same thing happened with Trump's Muslim ban. It's still in place despite court disapprovals and widespread protests in the U.S.. There is overwhelming evidence that this new plan is here to stay and do the same thing: discriminate against immigrants and their families - without a valid legal justification.

The Trump White House should lay its cards on the table regarding exactly what this new plan is. But they never tell the American people and the world community what they are going to do if Congress disapproves the plan. At its core, this policy is indefensible, as Trump holdovers have slapped together a shoddy pretext for it. They seek to divide migrant families up and escalate the unending war on migrants and refugees.

What's actually happening here should be obvious. Instead of ending their "regime change" wars, military buildups and interventionist campaigns across the globe that only exacerbate the current refugee and migrant crises, the Trump administration has decided to sweep the indefensible, discriminatory problem under the rug and call it shifting the immigration process to a merit-based system.



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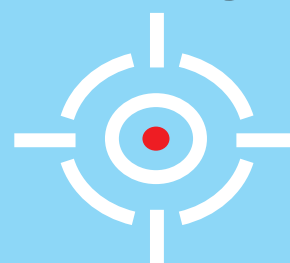
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# SpaceX will launch its first 60 satellites to deliver Internet from space

SpaceX wants to beam cheap broadband internet all over the planet. It's gearing up for the first crucial step toward making that a reality.

Elon Musk's rocket company will try to deliver a batch of 60 satellites into low-Earth orbit, the first for a megaconstellation of satellites that SpaceX is calling Starlink. The launch could happen sometime next week.

It was scheduled to take off Wednesday night, but rough winds in the upper atmosphere caused a one-day delay. And SpaceX said in a Thursday tweet that it would wait another week so the company can "update satellite software and triple-check everything again."

The upcoming mission is a small part of what SpaceX ultimately wants to be a much grander project: a group of potentially thousands of satellites swirling over Earth that the company says could eventually make available low-cost internet for a significant portion of the world's population that isn't yet online.

If SpaceX is successful, the launch would mark the largest test yet for any company attempting such a project. It could even set SpaceX up to beat out competitors like Amazon and SoftBank-backed OneWeb, which each want to form internet constellations of their own.

The project is still in its early days. Musk told reporters during a conference call Wednesday that the satellites in the first batch will be virtually identical to the mass production version. The only feature they lack is the ability to communicate with each



other while in orbit.

"There is a lot of new technology here, so it's possible that some of these satellites may not work," Musk said, adding that there is a "small possibility" that none will work.

SpaceX will need another six missions, he said, before Starlink can provide consistent internet coverage for small parts of the world. It will take 12 launches before the company can provide coverage for a significant portion of the world's population, according to Musk.

Getting the full constellation up and running will likely cost billions of dollars, and Musk has conceded that such efforts have bankrupted others, like the satellite operator Iridium. But when asked about SpaceX's fu-

nading, he said the company has "sufficient capital" to carry out its plans. He added that SpaceX's latest funding round attracted "more interest than we were seeking." In April, the company sought to raise about \$400 million.

Right now, internet is mostly delivered via wireless cell towers or cables routed to your home or office. That leaves extremely rural or impoverished communities without affordable access. There are options for satellite-based internet, but those services are notoriously slow, expensive or unreliable. (The Wi-Fi you get on board a transatlantic flight, for example, is delivered from satellites.)

The biggest problems with satellite-based internet service right now are that it's too

pricey for common consumers, and the satellites are so far from Earth that they have frustrating dial-up era lag times.

SpaceX is one of several companies that wants to overhaul internet delivery. The idea is to put up tiny satellites that stay in orbit much closer to home. In low-Earth orbit, though, satellites blaze across the sky extremely quickly — which is why a massive "megaconstellation" is needed, so as to blanket the lower altitude and avoid service interruptions.

SpaceX has competition from other heavily funded companies. OneWeb and Amazon are the big ones, but there are also lesser known companies, like LeoSat and Telesat.

Amazon unveiled its Kuiper Project plans last month. And rival OneWeb, which has attracted billions in investment from companies including SoftBank and Qualcomm, already has the first six satellites of its constellation up.

A successful launch this month would "surely put SpaceX in the lead," said Shagun Sachdeva, an analyst at Northern Sky Research.

But Sachdeva has raised questions about whether SpaceX is wise to plan a constellation of satellites that could eventually total 12,000.

She expects the company will reach a tipping point at which deploying new satellites will no longer be worth it. For example, the company won't get much benefit out of providing full coverage over the oceans.

"It is crucial to recognize the point where" the costs start to outweigh the benefits, she wrote in a recent report.

(Source: CNN)

## Mysterious surge in dead gray whales concerns scientists



Ocean scientists are concerned about dead gray whales that have washed up on the US West Coast this year at the highest rate in almost two decades.

As of Thursday night, 58 gray whales have landed ashore from California to Alaska, compared to 45 for all of last year, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said. Some were underweight, leading scientists to think they did not have enough food.

"Why these whales are malnourished is the mystery we are trying to unravel," NOAA spokesman Michael Milstein said. "Something is going on."

The last time researchers saw such high numbers was in 2000, when 131 deaths were documented.

Climate change could be contributing, Milstein said. "That's an angle they're investigating," he said. "We don't know anything for sure at this time."

Gray whales spend half the year in Mexico and their summers in the Arctic, where they do most of their eating for the year.

"The waters up there have been very unusually warm for a couple of years," which affects sea ice and potentially the whales' food supply, he said.

Milstein said something out of the ordinary might have happened last year to prevent them from eating enough to sustain them.

"The die was cast last summer," he said.

NOAA puts the overall West Coast gray whale population at 27,000, the highest recorded in recent times. Indeed, researchers wonder if they're running into trouble because there's more competition for food.

The whales can grow as large as 90,000 pounds. They were taken off the Endangered Species List in 1994.

In Washington, 18 of the giants have died this year, said researcher John Calambokidis of Cascadia Research. He recalled just two years like this one. In 1999, the state had 27 deaths; in 2000, it had 23.

He said he is also concerned with so many deaths observed this early. "The majority of the dead animals we've seen are extremely malnourished and emaciated. We have no direct evidence but it's particularly concerning with the changes in the Arctic ecosystem."

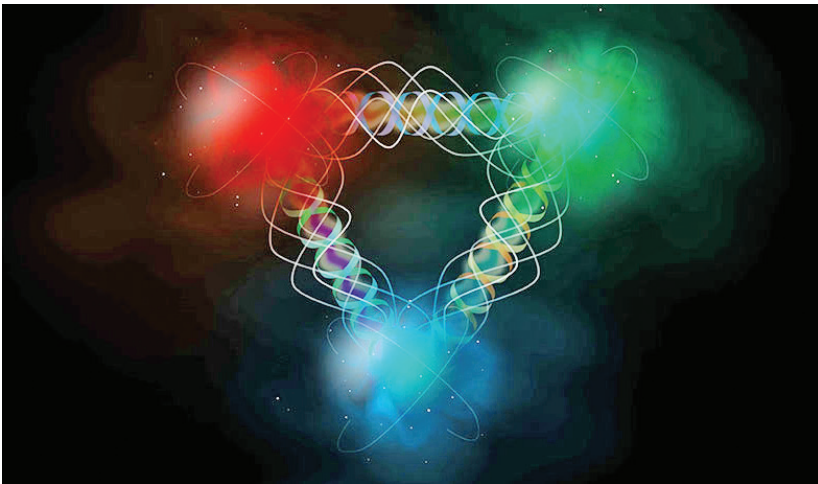
But he said it's still too early for researchers to assign cause.

Ten have beached in the San Francisco Bay Area. The rate is "cause for serious concern," said Dr. Padraig Duignan of the Marine Mammal Center. At least four of those died from malnutrition.

Officials at the center say biologists have observed gray whales "in poor body condition" this year, possibly "due to anomalous oceanic conditions" which have contributed to "shifting food sources."

(Source: CNN)

## An experiment hints at quantum entanglement inside protons



Protons are complicated. The subatomic particles are themselves composed of smaller particles called quarks and gluons. Now, data from the Large Hadron Collider hint that protons' constituents don't behave independently. Instead, they are tethered by quantum links known as entanglement, three physicists report in a paper published April 26 at arXiv.org.

Quantum entanglement has previously been probed on scales much larger than a proton. In experiments, entangled particles seem to instantaneously influence one another, sometimes even when separated by distances as large as thousands of kilometers. Although scientists suspected that entanglement occurs within a proton, signs of that phenomenon hadn't been experimentally demonstrated inside the particle, which is about a trillionth of a millimeter across.

"The idea is, this is a quantum mechanical particle which, if you look inside it, ... it's itself entangled," says theoretical physicist Piet Mulders of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, who was not involved with the research.

In the new study, the team analyzed collisions of protons, which had been accelerated to high speeds and slammed together at the Large Hadron Collider in Geneva. Using data from the CMS experiment there, the researchers studied the entropy resulting from entanglement within the proton. Entropy is a property that depends on the number of possible states a system can take on, on

a microscopic level. An analogy is a deck of cards: A shuffled deck has multiple ways that it could be ordered, whereas an ordered deck has only one, so the scrambled cards have higher entropy.

If entanglement exists within a proton, there will be additional entropy as a result of those linkages. That entropy can be teased out by counting the number of particles produced in each collision. The amount of entropy the researchers found agreed with that expected assuming the quarks and gluons were entangled, the physicists report in their paper, which is now awaiting peer review before publication in a journal.

The indication of entanglement is not yet definitive, says theoretical physicist Stefan Floerchinger of Heidelberg University in Germany, who was not involved in the study. To conclusively confirm entanglement, strict tests are needed to rule out other possible explanations. Instead, he says, the researchers' study is "more of a door opener," and could lead to further research that could clarify the internal physics of protons.

One puzzle that future work could tackle is why quarks are always confined within larger particles, and are never seen on their own. That confinement is "the ultimate example of entanglement," says theoretical physicist Dmitri Khazeev of Stony Brook University in New York, a coauthor of the study.

(Source: sciencenews.org)

## Mars: The box seeking to answer the biggest question

Ever since the Mariner 4 probe made the first successful visit to the Red Planet - a flyby in July 1965 - we've sent a succession of missions that have given us all sorts of fascinating information about Earth's near neighbour - but not the answer to the only question that really matters.

So, take a look at the technology that may finally change the game.

This is the Analytical Laboratory Drawer, or ALD - a sophisticated three-in-one box of instruments that will examine rock samples for the chemical fingerprints of biology.

On Thursday, it was gently lifted by crane and lowered into the ExoMars "Rosalind Franklin" rover, the six-wheeled buggy that will carry it across the Oxia plain of Mars in 2021.

The 300kg robot, which is being developed jointly by the European and Russian space agencies, will have a drill that can dig up to 2m below the planet's dusty surface.

The tailings pulled up by this tool will be handed through a door to the ALD, where the various mechanisms inside will then crush and prepare powders that can be dropped into small cups for analysis.

It will be a forensic examination, looking at all aspects of the samples' composition.

All previous rovers have skirted the big question. They've essentially only asked whether the conditions on Mars today or in the past would have been favourable to life - if ever it had existed. They haven't actually had the necessary equipment to truly detect biomarkers.

Rosalind Franklin will be different. Its 54kg ALD has been built specifically to look for those complex organic molecules that have their origin in life processes.

Thursday's integration was slow and deliberate, understandably: the ALD is in many ways the key element of the Rosalind Franklin mission.

"It is wonderful to see the heart of the rover has now been installed," said Sue Horne, the head of space exploration at the UK Space Agency.

"The Analytical Laboratory Drawer is the key location for Martian sample testing on the rover, allowing us to understand the geology and potentially to identify signatures of life of Mars. I can't wait to see what discoveries lie in store for this British-built rover."

Engineers at Airbus UK are now working three shifts a day to get the rover finished.

Although it doesn't look much like a vehicle at the mo-

ment, virtually all the components have now arrived at the Stevenage factory.

They're sitting on shelves around the edge of the clean-room in bags, waiting their turn in the assembly sequence.

There are one or two outstanding items, however, including the rover's British "eyes".

This is the camera system, or PanCam, which will sit atop a mast and guide the robot on its trail of investigation.

"We've just held the delivery review board this week and PanCam should be coming to us in the next few days," said Chris Draper, the flight model operations manager at Airbus.

"We know everything will go together; that's the beauty of systems engineering. Every single part of the rover has been modelled in 3D, and everyone works to interface control drawings. Assuming we all do that then we know the ALD, for example, will fit perfectly into the rover."

The Stevenage team has a hard deadline of the beginning of August to get the finished Rosalind Franklin rover out the door.

It has to go to the company's Toulouse facility for a series of tests that will ensure the design is robust enough to cope with the severe shaking experienced on a rocket ride to Mars.

(Source: BBC)

## Science Museum plans 200 hectare site to show off lost treasures

A site under development by the Science Museum will give the public a chance to see hundreds of thousands of items that have been in storage for decades.

Among highlights is a 1947 passenger aircraft that was used as an Australia and Asia tour plane by the Rolling Stones in 1973 and a year later was transporting cattle to Libya.

There will also be a column from Europe's first reinforced concrete building, a TV detector van, the world's first amphibious hovercraft, Apollo mission patches, the best microscope collection in the UK, the first examples of plastic, century-old electric vehicles and the type of Remington electric shaver that in 1978 impressed Victor Kiam so much he bought the company.

The Science Museum Group, which has outposts in London, Manchester, Bradford, York and County Durham, on Thursday outlined its plans to move more than 300,000 dizzyingly diverse objects from its stores in west London to a new and truly vast site near Swindon in Wiltshire. It will use £40m it has been given by the government to develop a 220 hectare (545 acre) former RAF base it has owned since 1979.



The centerpiece will be a new building that will be 300 meters long and 90 meters wide, enough to contain 600 double-decker buses.

"We refer to them because we do have actual double-decker buses," said the Science Museum Group's managing director, Jonathan Newby. "Not 600, I don't think, but we do have them as well as tractors, printing presses, medical equipment, bicycles and every aspect of innovation and engineering developed over the last 200 years."

Newby said the project was about more than storage. There would be conservation labs, research facilities and far better public access to its stores. "It will set new standards for collection care."

The museum, along with the V&A and the British Museum, is having to move out of Blythe House, originally the headquarters of the Post Office Savings Bank, in west London.

While the V&A is planning architecturally innovative stores in east London with dramatic 360-degree viewing spaces, the Science Museum is prioritizing functionality. But they still hope to give visitors a wow factor when they enter.

"You know that scene in Raiders of the Lost Ark with the warehouse," said Karen Livingstone, director of masterplan and estate. "We want that sort of exciting experience."

The job of going through and assessing the collection before the move has already started. This week a team of about 50 people had reached about 140,000 objects.

"Interestingly, we are unearthing things that we really didn't know that we had," said Newby. "Our collections are so vast that we are forever finding things that might not have been looked at for over 50 or 60 years."

The new discoveries include important notebooks that once belonged to engineer James Watt and objects that belonged to the chemist and dye pioneer Frances Micklethwait. "Her work now is going to be greater appreciated because of the work we have been doing at Blythe House in understanding our collections."

The plan is for construction to be completed in spring 2020. Moving objects is due to take two years and the site should be finished by 2023.

To mark the beginning of construction, the museum announced a £70,000 art commission seeking creative responses to the new facility. It said community participation should be at the heart of applications.

(Source: Guardian)

## First-ever image of a terrestrial gamma-ray burst shows light exploding out of a thundercloud in Asia

Gamma-rays are the highest-energy form of light in the universe. They burst out of distant galaxies following some of space's most extreme events — massive suns exploding, hyper-dense neutron stars crashing into one another, black holes gobbling up worlds of matter, etc. — and, when they do, their glow briefly outshines every other light in the sky. (That is, if you can catch them with a gamma-ray telescope.)

Sometimes, however, gamma-ray bursts pop up where scientists don't expect to see them — like in Earth's atmosphere, for example. These so-called terrestrial gamma-ray flashes are produced by near-light-speed electron interactions inside giant thunderclouds, but scientists aren't exactly sure how they happen. Lasting only about 1 millisecond long, the mysterious bursts of energy are difficult to pinpoint and study in detail.

Now, after one year of observing Earth from space, researchers have created the first-ever image of a terrestrial gamma-ray flash, which erupted out of a thunderstorm over the island of Borneo, in Southeast Asia, on June 18, 2018. As seen above, the colorful cigarette burn of red-white light on the far right of the image shows the burst's most energetic region.

Astronomers observed the storm from a special observatory aboard the International Space Station, which launched in April 2018 with the purpose of monitoring the entire visible face of Earth for terrestrial gamma-ray activity. Hopefully, this is just the first of many such images. After one year of operations, the observatory has captured more than 200 terrestrial gamma-ray flashes, and was able to pinpoint the exact geographic location of about 30 of them, according to a statement from the European Space Agency (ESA).

When researchers know the precise location of a given gamma-ray burst, according to the statement, they can compare their data with other satellites and even local weather stations to paint a better picture of the forces that coalesce to create the fleeting flash of energy.

(Source: Live Science)



## Iran seeks return of 1,300 stolen artifacts

**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** — Iran earnestly seeks the return of some 1,300 historical relics, which have been previously smuggled out of the country, tourism chief said on Saturday.



Ali-Asghar Mounesan in an undated photo

Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization Director Ali-Asghar Mounesan said that the country is following up on the return of a package containing as many as 1,300 stolen historical items, voicing hope that the process would wrap up by the end of September, Mehr reported.

“Iranian nationals living abroad have done a good job in recognizing stolen Persian artifacts that were about to be sold in auctions, and informing Iranian officials about it in time.”

The process of returning the artifacts home has been on a growing trajectory, he said, adding that as many as 1,540 historical items have [so far] been recovered from the U.S., UK, Belgium and the UAE since the 2000s.

In May 2016, the organization issued a call for assistance, asking Iranians abroad to inform it in case of tracing smuggled artifacts and antiquities of Iranian heritage.

## Dez coastal resort in southwestern Iran

Dez coastal resort, also called Ali Kalleh, is a popular coastal park in Khuzestan, southwestern Iran.

The seafront attracts large numbers of visitors from neighboring cities and provinces per year, especially during spring and summer, Tasnim reported.



A view of Dez coastal resort in southwest Iran

A series of alcoves have been made along the beach for the comfort and convenience of passengers on their journey.

There is also a park and greenery area, along with playground and entertainment facilities, which makes it a place for people to entertain in other seasons. Another attraction of this place, especially for children, is the existence of several types of slides on the riverside.

The resort is situated northward of Dezful, adjacent to the Dez Dam, which is built over a river of the same name originating from the Zagros mountain range.



## ROUND THE GLOBE

### Bryggen

Bryggen is a historic harbor district in Bergen, one of North Europe's oldest port cities on the west coast of Norway which was established as a center for trade by the 12th century.

In 1350 the Hanseatic League established a “Hanseatic Office” in Bergen. They gradually acquired ownership of Bryggen and controlled the trade in stockfish from Northern



Norway through privileges granted by the Crown. The Hanseatic League established a total of four overseas Hanseatic Offices, Bryggen being the only one preserved today.

Bryggen has been damaged by a number of fires through the centuries and has been rebuilt after every fire, closely following the previous property structure and plan as well as building techniques.

Bryggen's appearance today stems from the time after the fire in 1702. The buildings are made of wood in keeping with vernacular building traditions. The original compact medieval urban structure is preserved with its long narrow rows of buildings facing the harbor, separated by narrow wooden passages.

Today, some 62 buildings remain of this former townscape and these contain sufficient elements to demonstrate how this colony of bachelor German merchants lived and worked, and illustrate the use of space in the district.

It is characterized by the construction of buildings along the narrow passages running parallel to the docks. The urban units are rows of two- to three-story buildings signified by the medieval name “gard”.

(Source: UNESCO)

# Fossils, stone tools of enigmatic human species found in Iran

**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** — A team of Archaeologists has recently excavated stone tools and a fragment of a fossilized skull, which are attributed to Homo sapiens, from a cave in western Iran. The cave has also yielded weapon fragments crafted by Neanderthals.

The findings, some of which date from 21,000 to 40,000 years ago, were unveiled during a special ceremony on Saturday at the Kaldar cave in western Lorestan province, Mehr reported.

Kaldar is a key archaeological site that provides evidence of the Middle to Upper Paleolithic transition in Iran.

Excavations at the site in 2014–2015 led to the discovery of cultural remains generally associated with anatomically modern humans (AMHs) and evidence of a probable Neanderthal-made industry in the basal layers.

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

Kaldar is situated in the northern Khorramabad valley and at an elevation of 1,290m above sea level. It measures 162meters long, 17meters wide and seven meters high.

In taxonomy, Homo sapiens is the only extant human species. The name is Latin for “wise man” and was introduced in 1758 by Carl Linnaeus (who is himself also the type specimen). Neanderthals are an extinct species or subspecies of archaic humans in the genus Homo, who lived within Eurasia from circa 400,000 until 40,000 years ago.



New findings at Iran's Kaldar cave were unveiled during a special ceremony on May 18, 2019.

## Iranian arrivals in Turkey drop by 20 percent in 2018: envoy

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** — Iranian visits to Turkey fell some 20 percent in 2018 in comparison to a year earlier, Ankara's ambassador to Tehran has said.

Last year, Iranian arrivals in Turkey dropped by 18 to 20 percent, despite the fact that the Ministry of Culture and Tourism has set a goal to attract 40 million tourists during 2019, CHTN quoted Derya Ors as saying on Sunday.

The envoy made the remarks during a meeting with Ali-Asghar Mounesan, the director of the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization.

Iran holds high potential for investment, and with the reduction of barriers and problems, Turkish investors would certainly be interested in participating in Iran's economic market, he said.

Tourism makes real recognition of nations from each other and clears up misunderstandings, the people of



Ankara's ambassador to Tehran Derya Ors (L) meets Iran's tourism chief Ali-Asghar Mounesan on May 19, 2019.

Turkey do not have enough knowledge of the beauty and attractions of Iran, and this shortcoming must be eliminated through appropriate advertising, the top diplomat explained.

Experts say Iran's rial depreciation is the main reason behind the slump, which started in May when U.S. President Donald Trump pulled out from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, re-imposing new sanctions on Iran's economy.

Rial weakness has also pushed up costs of air travel and accommodation for outbound Iranian passengers. The situation, on the other hand, has opened up a new chapter for travelers to the country, particularly Iraqi nationals.

Iran hosted 7.8 million foreign nationals in the past Iranian calendar year 1397 (ended on March 20), which shows 52.5 percent year-on-year growth.

## Google's combining all its travel planning features under a site called Trips



Google is combining its travel-related products — the mobile Google Trips app, Google Flights, Google hotels search, and more — under a singular landing page aptly called Trips.

Now when you visit google.com/travel, you'll first find Trips which lets users plan their travel by searching a destination to find options for flights, hotels, travel guides, or vacation packages. And once you've booked your trip, whether through the Google tool or not, you can use Trips to see all the booking receipts to outline your itinerary, confirmation codes, and travel information and present them alongside weather reports on your travel dates.

Breadcrumbs of Trips had been scattered through various Google products over the past months but can now be found under a unified site. For example, when you have a reservation for a hotel or a restaurant,

looking that business up on Google Maps will display your reservation time and date, and clicking it displays your confirmation receipt. Maps also offers an Explore tool to show you things to do nearby, and this will also get incorporated into the Trips landing page when you're planning your travel.

Additionally, if you track flight prices on a Google search, the Trips page will also display updates for any changes that occur. According to Google, Trips will soon show hotels you've viewed in case you still need to make booking arrangements.

The new Trips landing page is live now on the web, the company did not specify how this will impact the Google Trips mobile app which is currently used as a competitor to TripIt for displaying travel itineraries offline. It did say, however, that these Trips features will be accessible through Google Maps in the coming months.

(Source: theverge.com)

## Archaeologists find oldest Scandinavian human DNA in ancient chewing gum



A 10,000-year-old piece of chewing gum is offering an insight into Scandinavia's first human settlers.

Archaeologists have extracted DNA belonging to three people — two women and one man — from the tar of a birch bark tree, which ancient settlers both chewed and used to fix arrowheads onto arrows and blades onto axes.

The material was discovered in Huseby-Klev, an early Mesolithic hunter-fisher site on the Swedish west coast, in the early 1990s, but DNA analysis had not been possible until recently.

According to researchers, it is the oldest human DNA sequenced from the area so far.

“Much of our history is visible in the DNA we carry with us,” said Anders Götherstrom from the Archaeological Research Laboratory at Stockholm University, where the work was conducted.

The results revealed the trio's DNA was found to share a close genetic affinity to other

hunter-gatherers in Sweden and to early Mesolithic populations from Ice Age Europe.

However, tools found at the same site where the gum was unearthed were a part of lithic technology brought to Scandinavia from the East European Plain — otherwise known as modern-day Russia.

Researchers now hope the chewing gum will help fill in historical gaps, including who helped make the Stone Age tools, what Scandinavia's first human settlers ate and what bacteria lived in their teeth.

“DNA from these ancient chewing gums have an enormous potential not only for tracing the origin and movement of peoples [a] long time ago, but also for providing insights in their social relations, diseases and food,” said Per Persson at the Museum of Cultural History in Oslo.

The findings have been published in the journal Communications Biology.

(Source: abc.net)

## Ancient mystery: Two-ton, 1,000 year-old ‘jars of the dead’ baffle archaeologists

Ancient stone urns uncovered in Southeast Asia dubbed “jars of the dead” have perplexed archeologists.

The discovery of more than one hundred new stone “jars of the dead” dating more than a thousand years ago has deepened Laos' enduring archaeological enigma. The cup-like carved stones vary in size, range from 10ft (3m) in height and two tons in weight. Exactly how the jars were used remains an enigma, however it has been suggested that they served as burial urns for storing human bodies.

However local legend claims the urns were goblets once used by a drunk horde of giants.

Australian National University (ANU) researchers discovered the new jar sites in a remote forest during a survey beginning in 2015.

The jars were buried with decorated stone discs, strange small clay jars and more conventional stone age artefacts like beads and jewellery.

The latest landmark discoveries suggest the mysterious practices involving the jars were more widely performed than previously thought, and is hoped could help finally interpret their meaning.

Laos' jars of the dead remain one of archaeology's most intriguing enigmas.

Archeologists currently believe the giant stone urns were involved with disposing with the dead.

However almost nothing is known for certain about the jars' original function and where those who originally deposited them are now found.

Archaeologists led by Nicholas Skopal and Dr Dougald O'Reilly from ANU have now catalogued 137 new jars, found across 15 freshly-identified sites, in remote and mountainous forest.

The discoveries show that the ancient burial practices associated with the jars “were more widespread than

previously thought,” said Dr O'Reilly.

Mr Skopal added: “These new sites have really only been visited by the occasional tiger hunter.”

“Now we've rediscovered them, we're hoping to build a clear picture about this culture and how it disposed of its dead.

There is no evidence that the region where the jars were found was occupied.

Dr O'Reilly said: “Why these sites were chosen as the final resting place for the jars is still a mystery.

“It's apparent the jars, some weighing several tonnes, were carved in quarries, and somehow transported, often several kilometers, to their present locations.”

Another hypothesis suggests that the jars were made to capture monsoonal rainwater for later boiling and use by caravans passing through the region.

(Source: Express)



# Iran’s health minister to attend World Health Assembly

**HEALTH** **TEHRAN** – Iran’s Health Minister Saeed Namaki will attend the 72nd World Health Assembly, which will take place from May 20 to 28 in Geneva, Switzerland.

Namaki will give speech in six panels at the assembly, the deputy health minister for international affairs Mohsen Asadi Lari announced in a press release on Sunday, Mehr reported.

Namaki will give speech during meetings at the implementation of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development and primary health care towards universal health coverage, he said.

He will also attend meeting of health ministers of the Non-Aligned Movement and meeting of ministers of health in the Eastern Mediterranean region’s countries, which will be held on the sideline of the assembly, Asadi Lari announced.

The health minister also plans to pay visit



to the ministers of other countries as well as the World Health Organization (WHO) director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

The assembly will be held under the theme

“Universal health coverage, Leaving No-one Behind”.

The World Health Assembly is the decision-making body of the World Health Organization (WHO).

The WHA is attended by delegations from all WHO member states and focuses on a specific health agenda prepared by the Executive Board. The main functions of the World Health Assembly are to determine the policies of the Organization, appoint the Director-General, supervise financial policies, and review and approve the proposed program budget.

The event will serve to determine the policies of the WHO, appoint its director general, supervise financial policies, and review and approve the proposed program budget. The event will be open to delegations from all WHO member states, and will focus on a specific health agenda prepared by WHO’s executive board.

## In commemoration of Parvaneh Vossough, to whom the science of pediatric oncology in Iran owes

**HEALTH** **TEHRAN** —There are not many people in the world who devote their whole life to gaining knowledge and deploying it to support and assist their fellow beings. The late Professor Parvaneh Vossough was one of such people who diminished the pains and ended the sorrows.

She had studied in the best international universities and had quit her jobs in the most creditable hospitals to come to Iran and treat cancer-stricken children, Mahak Charity Organization wrote in a press release.

Professor Vossough inaugurated the first pediatric hemato-oncology ward in Iran at Tehran’s Ali Asghar Hospital and for the same reason she is known as the founder of pediatric oncology in Iran.

Since the first day of Mahak Hospital and Rehabilitation Complex, the Pediatric Cancer Research and Hospital Center built and



organized by Mahak charity, till the end of her life she worked eagerly as a volunteer to save children with cancer.

Born in 1935 in Tafresh, she joined the faculty of Medicine of University of Tehran in 1961 where she received a doctorate degree in

medicine. Subsequently, she completed her specialization in Pediatric Oncology at the Medical Sciences Department of University of Illinois from 1962 to 1964.

Her relationship with Mahak started from the very beginning, initially as a volunteer associate director. After her formal retirement, she became the chairperson of Mahak’s Board of Trustees and later, she assumed the additional responsibility of becoming the chief physician of Mahak hospital. Throughout her many years of service, Vossough functioned as a dedicated volunteer without ever collecting any compensation.

Professor Vossough was an active member of various medical societies, including the International Society of Pediatric Oncology (SIOP), International Network for Cancer Treatment and Research (INCTR) and Middle East Children’s Cancer Alliance (MECCA).

She also published more than 100 papers in different medical journals.

Vossough dedicated her life and career to those in need of her care, expertise and wisdom. She was often called the “guiding light and angel of Mahak.” To many, Vossough was a true, living saint and one of the greatest women of our time. No doubt her legacy and spirit will live forever within the walls of the organization.

Many of us may have not seen professor Vossough but our hearts are replete with love and respect toward a lady who sacrificed and worked so hard for her mission of treating cancer-stricken children.

Professor Parvaneh Vossough, M.D., one of the foremost global authorities in pediatric oncology and the chairperson of Mahak’s Board of Trustees passed away on May 19, 2013 at the age of 78.

## Health ministry launches online self-declaration blood pressure system

**HEALTH** **TEHRAN** – The health ministry has launched an online self-declaration form for blood pressure on its website.

The online system targets citizens with 30 years old and above, pregnant women and patients suffering from kidney failure of all ages.

The form is available on the website [salamat.gov.ir](http://salamat.gov.ir).

Last week, the Health Ministry’s director for non-communicable diseases Afshin Ostovar announced that about 100,000 Iranians lost their life for high blood pressure annually.

Hypertension is a common condition in which the long-term force of the blood against your artery walls is high enough that it may eventually cause health problems, such as heart disease.

The National Campaign for Controlling Hypertension,

which began on May 17, World Hypertension Day, focuses on the issue as one of the most important disease lead to cardiovascular disease, which has about 40 percent share of the death in Iran.

During the campaign, which continues until June 6, people are notified about the campaign, its subject and targets and from June 6 to July 6 the field works are carried out such as taking the blood pressure of target groups, registering their information and referring the patients to specialists.

World Health Organization (WHO) has set a target for a 25% relative reduction in the prevalence of raised blood pressure by 2025.

According to WHO, raised blood pressure caused an estimated 9.4 million deaths in 2010. It is a major cardiovascular risk factor and a leading risk factor for global deaths.



## Processed foods lead to weight gain, but it’s about more than calories

In the first study of its kind, scientists have shown that eating ultra-processed foods leads to weight gain in human volunteers in as little as 2 weeks.

Volunteers put on weight after 2 weeks on an ultra-processed food diet.

There are plenty of studies in mice linking processed foods to problems such as obesity and intestinal inflammation.

But mice are not people, as critics of such studies are quick to point out.

In humans, researchers have reported associations between processed foods and health outcomes, such as an increased risk of developing obesity, cancer, autoimmune conditions, and even death.

Yet, ultra-processed foods make up a staggering 57.9% of energy intake in the United States.

According to the NOVA food classification system, ultra-processed foods include soft drinks, packaged snacks, meat nuggets, frozen meals, and foods high in additives and low in unprocessed ingredients.

“Previous studies have found correlations between ultra-processed food consumption and obesity,” Kevin D. Hall, from the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases in Bethesda, MD, which is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), explained to Medical News Today.

Hall and his colleagues now present the results of a controlled clinical trial, comparing the effects of unprocessed versus ultra-processed foods on humans in the journal *Cell Metabolism*.

### ■ ‘Surprised by the findings’

The research team recruited 10 male and 10 female volunteers who stayed at the NIH Clinical Center for 28 days.

Half of the participants ate ultra-processed food for the first 2 weeks while the others received unprocessed foods. After the 2-week period, the groups switched, allowing each participant to eat both the ultra-processed food and the unprocessed food for 2 weeks.

The volunteers ate three meals per day, and the researchers asked them to eat as much or as little as they wanted. They also



had access to snacks and bottled water all day.

“We hypothesized that ultra-processed foods might lead to increased calorie intake because they are often high in sugar, fat, and salt while being low in fiber,” Hall told MNT. “Therefore, when we matched the ultra-processed and unprocessed diets for these nutrients, we expected the ultra-processed diet to result in similar calorie intake and little differences in body weight.”

When the volunteers were on the ultra-processed diet, however, they ate an average of 508 calories more each day than when they were on the unprocessed diet. As a result, they put on an average of 2 pounds (0.9 kilograms) during this time, mostly in the form of body fat.

“I was surprised by the findings from this study because I thought that if we matched the two diets for components like sugars, fat, carbohydrates, protein, and sodium, there wouldn’t be anything magical about the ultra-processed food that would cause people to eat more.”

Participants in the unprocessed food group lost an average of 0.9 kg during the 2 week study period. This group also saw increases in the gut hormone peptide YY, which suppresses hunger, and decreases in

the hunger hormone ghrelin.

### ■ Speed might be the problem

There are several reasons that Hall and his colleagues think may have led the volunteers in the ultra-processed study group to put on weight.

Although the study participants rated the pleasantness and familiarity of the diets as equal, they ate significantly faster in the ultra-processed group.

In fact, they consumed an extra 17 calories, or 7.4 grams of food per minute, than their counterparts in the unprocessed food group.

“There may be something about the textural or sensory properties of the food that made them eat more quickly,” Hall comments. “If you’re eating very quickly, perhaps you’re not giving your gastrointestinal tract enough time to signal to your brain that you’re full. When this happens, you might easily overeat.”

Despite a close match in the macronutrient composition of both diets, the unprocessed diet contained slightly more protein. “It could be that people ate more because they were trying to reach certain protein targets,” Hall comments.

Yet the team found that the ultra-processed food group actually consumed more carbohydrates and fat than the unprocessed

food group, but not protein.

Finally, the meals in the ultra-processed group had a higher energy density than in the unprocessed group, which Hall proposes “likely contributed to the observed excess energy intake.”

### ■ Are ultra-processed foods a social problem?

The authors identify several limitations in their study, which include that “the inpatient environment of the metabolic ward makes it difficult to generalize our results to free-living conditions.”

They also acknowledge that they did not take into consideration how cost, convenience, and skill influence consumers to choose ultra-processed over unprocessed foods.

“Ultra-processed foods contribute to more than half the calories consumed in the USA, and they are cheap and convenient options,” Hall commented to MNT.

“So, I think it may be difficult to substantially reduce consumption of ultra-processed foods,” he continued, “especially for people in lower socioeconomic brackets who may not have the time, skill, equipment, or resources to purchase and safely store unprocessed food ingredients and then plan and safely prepare tasty, unprocessed meals.”

In the paper, Hall concludes, “However, policies that discourage consumption of ultra-processed foods should be sensitive to the time, skill, expense, and effort required to prepare meals from minimally processed foods — resources that are often in short supply for those who are not members of the upper socioeconomic classes.”

He is not the first to suggest a connection between socioeconomic and food choices.

A recent, large-scale study in the journal *Nature*, suggests that in high-income countries, such as the U.S., rural populations are putting on weight faster than their city counterparts.

The authors in that study comment that this may, in part, be due to “economic and social disadvantage, including lower education and income, lower availability, and higher price of health[ful] and fresh foods.”

(Source: [medicalnewstoday.com](http://medicalnewstoday.com))

## Hepatitis C eradication possible in Iran at low cost: expert

**HEALTH** **TEHRAN** – The Hepatitis C can be eradicated in Iran at the cost of just 2 trillion rials (about \$4.7 million), and the sum is not high for the country, the head of Iran’s Hepatitis Network Seyyed Moayed Alavian announced, IRNA reported.

This is the total expenses should be spent on eradication of the disease, which can be paid in ten years to places like prisons, he explained.

Iran should achieve the goal of Hepacivirus C (HCV) elimination by 2030, he said.

It was planned to treat 20,000 patients suffering from HCV annually, however, the number is 10,000 patients, he lamented.



“Now we have 176 thousands patients suffering from HCV, out of which, 60 to 70 percent were either addicted or prisoned in past,” he said.

According to World Health Organization hepatitis C is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis C virus. The virus can cause both acute and chronic hepatitis, ranging in severity from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a serious, lifelong illness.

The hepatitis C virus is a blood borne virus and the most common modes of infection are through exposure to small quantities of blood. This may happen through injection drug use, unsafe injection practices, unsafe health care, and the transfusion of unscreened blood and blood products.

Globally, an estimated 71 million people have chronic hepatitis C infection and a significant number of those who are chronically infected will develop cirrhosis or liver cancer.

Approximately 399,000 people die each year from hepatitis C, mostly from cirrhosis and hepatocellular carcinoma.

Antiviral medicines can cure more than 95 percent of persons with hepatitis C infection, thereby reducing the risk of death from liver cancer and cirrhosis, but access to diagnosis and treatment is low.

## The advantages of diagnosing autism before age 2

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.

(Source: [healthline.com](http://healthline.com))



## \$2.3m earmarked for fighting locusts in southeastern Iran

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — Iranian parliament, known as Majlis, has allocated a total budget of 100 billion rials (nearly \$2.3 million) to fight desert locusts which have penetrated into 6 provinces in southern and southeastern Iran, head of agriculture committee of Majlis has said.

Desert locusts have infested the provinces of Bushehr, Fars, Hormozgan, Kerman, Khuzestan, and Sistan–Baluchestan, which resulted in major losses on farming lands and gardens, Ahamd Ali Keikha said.



Not fighting them would result in their spread through the whole country, he warned, IRNA reported on Saturday.

Pest-control measures require special equipment and fund, he said, adding, since early March, the related organizations have been overburdened due to flooding, therefore, locusts' breakout has not been considered a priority.

Currently, some 100 billion rials (nearly \$2.3 million) is earmarked to control the pests outbreak, he further highlighted, adding, another budget amounting to 200 billion rials (nearly \$4.6 million) is also needed to completely eradicate them.

So far, substantial aerial and ground pest control operations have been carried out by national authorities, while more operations are essential to overcome the issue, he concluded.

Earlier in April, Behnam Sa'edi, Iran's Crisis Management Organization spokesperson said that some 300,000 hectares of farming lands are threatened by desert locusts' breakout.

Desert locusts are short-horned grasshoppers that can form large swarms and pose a major threat to agricultural production, livelihoods, food security and the environment and economic development.

FAO explains that adult locust swarms can fly up to 150 km a day with the wind. Female locusts can lay 300 eggs within their lifetime while an adult insect can consume roughly its own weight in fresh food per day - about two grams every day. A very small swarm eats the same amount of food in one day as about 35,000 people and the devastating impact locusts can have on crops poses a major threat to food security, especially in already vulnerable areas.

During quiet periods (known as recessions) desert locusts are usually restricted to the semi-arid and arid deserts of Africa, the Near East and South-West Asia that receive less than 200 mm of rain annually. This is an area of about 16 million square kilometers, consisting of about 30 countries.

According to a report updated on May 3, FAO announced that during the past few weeks, the desert locust situation has intensified in the traditional spring breeding areas of Iran and Saudi Arabia.

## WORDS IN THE NEWS

### Nuclear Power

(October 14, 1999)

Scientists from around the world are talking about building a nuclear power plant which will transform dangerous **radioactive** waste into something much less hazardous.

Many countries rely on nuclear power to provide electricity. But nuclear plants produce dangerous, radioactive waste, and there's **controversy** over how to deal with this. Now scientists from all over the world are **to pool their resources** - both money and **brain power** - to build a kind of nuclear **incinerator**. This will take the highly radioactive waste from other nuclear power stations and turn it into a safer, less radioactive form.

The site of Japan's worst nuclear accident in Tokaimura, north east of Tokyo is still too dangerous to enter, so it's unclear how close the team from the International Atomic Energy Agency will get. Three workers at the **plant** who were following an illegal **manual** caused a nuclear reaction late last month by pouring too much uranium from a metal bucket into a settling tank. At least forty nine people were exposed to dangerous levels of **radiation**.

■ **Words**  
**radioactive:** the quality that some substances have of giving out energy by the breaking up of atoms. Uranium is a radioactive substance  
**controversy:** if there is controversy over something then there is much disagreement about it  
**to pool their resources:** to share or combine something  
**pool...brain power:** to pool brain power is to share thoughts and ideas  
**incinerator:** a machine or building for burning things  
**plant :** a factory  
**manual:** a book of technical instructions or information  
**radiation:** very small particles of a radioactive substance: they can cause illness or death

(Source: BBC)



# Iran facing population decline; is it possible to reverse the trend?

➡ Several socioeconomic factors led to fertility rate decrease and reproductive behavior in the country, including urbanization, education, financial issues, first marriage age, as well as increased access to family planning services along with increased time gap between the first born and marriage.

Between the Iranian calendar years of 1376 (March 1996-March 1997) to 1395 (March 2016- March 2017), the average age at first marriage for females increased from 19.8 to 23.0 and for males increased from 23.6 to 27.4.

Mohammad Baqer Abbasi, an official with National Organization for Civil Registration said in July 2018 that in the Iranian calendar year 1396 (March 2017-March 2018), some 146,000 babies were born a year or less after their parents' marriage, which constitute 10 percent. While some 18 percent of births occurred up to two years after the date of the marriage.

■ **Iran's elderly population growth**  
Reduction in the fertility level results not only in a slower pace of population growth but also in an older population.

Higher life expectancy has also contributed to the country's population growth and survival rates of older age groups, as life expectancy at birth for males was 51 years reported 50 years ago which increased to 75 years in the Iranian calendar year 1394 (March 2015- March 2016), while that of females raise from 51 to 77 years.

Average life expectancy at birth increases largely due to rapid declines in infant and



child mortality; since 50 years ago, the mortality rate for children aging 5 or younger, dropped from 188 to 17 deaths per 1,000 live births.

The age dependency ratio, which is the proportion of children (younger than 15) and elderly (65 and older) to the working age population (15 to 65), experienced a drop from 0.95 in 1370s to 0.45 in 1390s," Mahzoon noted.

In June 2018, Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey, the then caretaker of cooperatives, labor and welfare ministry, said that some 7.3 million people in Iran are ageing. 3.7 million of them are women and 3.6 million are men.

Also, First Vice-President Es'haq Jahangiri said that the population of senior citizens

standing at 7.3 million in Iran is projected to increase to 30 million by 2050.

■ **Iran's population growth rate to decline dramatically**

Elsewhere in his remarks, Mahzoon said that declining trend of the whole population growth rate raises the question of whether this trend can reach zero or negative levels; demographic answer to this question is positive.

"The astonishing fertility decline in Iran began around the Iranian calendar year 1363 (March 1984- March 1985) four years before the inauguration of the national family planning program by the government, counseling and services were provided to rural couples through the country's rural

## Housing foundation, Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam join hands in rebuilding flood-hit houses

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam also known as Setad-e Ejrai-e Farman-e Hazrat-e Imam and Islamic Revolution Housing Foundation have agreed upon collaborating to reconstruct and rehabilitate flood-stricken houses, Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam announced in a press release on Sunday.

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, houses, infrastructure, livestock and crops, especially in provinces of Khuzestan, Golestan and Lorestan.

As per a memorandum of understanding signed between the two entities Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam has committed to pay some 300 billion rials (nearly \$7 million) within a year for repair



and reconstruction of the houses damaged by the floods.

According to Mohammad Mokhber, director of the Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam, they

have so far made various efforts to address issues caused in the aftermath of the floods including distribution of house appliances and livestock, as well as creating employment and reconstruction of houses.

So far some 30,000 packages of house appliances valued at 1.5 trillion rials (nearly \$35 million) are dispatched to flood hit provinces, Mokhber explained.

He went on to say that some 10,000 livestock are donated to the flood victims.

Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam has also pledged to create some 100,000 employment opportunities in the current year (March 2019-March 2020) of which 14,000 will be generated in the flood-hit regions, he said, highlighting that some 5.5 trillion rials (nearly \$131 million) is allocated to job creation.

Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam, also known as Setad-e Ejraiye Farman-e Hazrat-e Imam, was founded in 1989.

## 130,000 trees to be planted across England to combat climate change

More than 130,000 trees will be planted across England's towns and cities to help combat climate change, the government has said.

Ten million pounds in grants will be made available through the Urban Tree Challenge Fund over the next two years.

The scheme, which will be administered by the Forestry Commission, will be open to individuals, local authorities, charities and NGOs. Grants will cover the planting of trees and the first three years of their care.

"Trees are vital in the fight against climate change, which is why we must go further and faster to increase planting rates," Michael

Gove, the Environment Secretary, said in a statement.

Planting trees helps limit the damage caused by climate change because trees store carbon. In addition they improve health and wellbeing, connect people with the outdoors, absorb noise, reduce flood risk, provide shade, and create green spaces to help communities come together.

"This allows us to plant more trees much closer to where people live and work, and where the many benefits of trees make the most difference," Sir Harry Studholme, chair of the Forestry Commission, says. "We look

forward to lots of new planting happening this Autumn."

The new trees will be planted just in towns and cities.

"There is an increasing understanding of the role that trees and woodlands play in helping to make our towns and cities better places for people and nature to thrive," Paul Nolan, Chair of England's Community Forests and Director of The Mersey Forest, says.

A grant for planting a tree will be delivered as a challenge fund, which means that it will require matched funding from those who

apply. The scheme will support projects which can provide the greatest environmental and social benefits, and a map will be available to check eligibility before applying.

Sir William Worsley, who was last year appointed the government's Tree Champion with the task of growing green spaces, said the benefits of planting trees are "endless". "Trees are the lifeblood of our nation, and it is more important than ever to ensure they are rooted not only in our countryside, but in our towns and cities too," he said.

(Source: The Independent)

### ENGLISH IN USE

#### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → €

## SDSs mitigation plan to take effect next year

Sand and dust storm (SDS) mitigation plan will be implemented in the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan as of the next Iranian calendar year (beginning March 21), Department of Environment (DOE) chief has announced.

A total fund of \$150 million from the National Development Fund has been proposed to counter dust storms in Sistan-Baluchestan province, IRNA quoted Issa Kalantari as saying on Tuesday.

Referring to the SDSs hitting southeastern part of the country causing the residents severe health problems, he noted that the president is pursuing the issue and as long as the fund is provided the plan will go into effect.

### PREFIX/SUFFIX

#### “-bound”

■ **Meaning:** a word ending shows that something is restricted by or confined to  
■ **For example:** **Deskbound** executives can't grasp production problems.

### PHRASAL VERB

#### Hammer away

■ **Meaning:** to keep saying something because you want people to understand or accept it  
■ **For example:** I keep hammering away at this point because it's important.

### IDIOM

#### Bring someone to heel

■ **Explanation:** if you force someone to behave in a disciplined manner, you bring them to heel  
■ **For example:** The boy had always behaved badly, but the new headmaster managed to bring him to heel.



# Sudan dispatched 600 militiamen, mostly minors, to Yemen in April

**TEHRAN** — Sudan has dispatched scores of militiamen, most of them under the age of 18, to fight alongside Saudi-led military forces against Yemen's Houthi Ansarullah fighters, a report says.

The Arabic-language Sout al-Hamish daily newspaper, citing an unnamed informed source, reported on Saturday that 600 Sudanese fighters had been flown late last month from Nyala Airport in south-western Sudan to Yemen.

The source added that the Sudanese fighters had received training for only four months at the Dumaya camp in Nyala, the paratrooper training camp in the capital Khartoum as well as the al-Jili camp north of Khartoum before being sent to battle fronts in Yemen.

Even though Sudan's long-time President Omar al-Bashir was toppled in April after months of public protests, the military council that runs the country follows suit and continues to dispatch



soldiers to fight at the front line of war in Yemen.

According to Press TV, almost all the Sudanese fighters appear to come from

the battle-scarred and impoverished region of Darfur, where some 300,000 people were apparently killed and 1.2 million displaced during a dozen years of conflict over diminishing arable land and other scarce resources.

Most of the militia belong to paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, a tribal militia previously known as the Janjaweed.

There are reports that Sudanese fighters are sent to battles in the Midi Desert of the northwestern Yemeni province of Hajjah, the Khalid bin Walid camp in Ta'izz, or around Aden and Hudaydah.

All of those interviewed by foreign media outlets confirm that they have fought in Yemen only for money, as they were paid in Saudi riyals. Payments to the mercenaries are said to be deposited directly into the Faisal Islamic Bank of Sudan, which is partly owned by Saudis.

## First Republican lawmaker says Trump engaged in impeachable conduct

**TEHRAN** — U.S. Representative Justin Amash, a frequent critic of President Donald Trump, became the first Republican lawmaker to say the president has engaged in impeachable behavior.

Special Counsel Robert Mueller's report on the investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election reveals that Trump "engaged in specific actions and a pattern of behavior that meet the threshold for impeachment," Amash, who has signaled he would consider running as a libertarian against Trump in the 2020 election, wrote on Twitter.

According to Press TV, Mueller's report "identifies multiple examples of conduct satisfying all the elements of obstruction of justice, and undoubtedly any person who is not the president of the United States would be indicted based on such evidence," Amash wrote.

Trump has said Mueller's report concluded there was no obstruction of justice. Mueller's report made no formal finding on that question, leaving the matter up to Congress.

Amash also wrote that "it is clear" that Attorney General William Barr intended to mislead the public about Mueller's report in his conclusions and congressional testimony about it.

In his letter to Congress, Barr said he and his deputy Rod

Rosenstein determined there was insufficient evidence to establish that the president committed criminal obstruction of justice, or acted unlawfully to impede the investigation.

Amash's comments echoed the conclusions of many Democrats. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said on May 8 that Trump was moving closer to impeachment with his efforts to thwart congressional subpoenas and obstruct lawmakers' efforts to oversee his administration.

Still, Democrats are divided about impeachment and Pelosi also said impeachment proceedings would be "divisive" for the country.

The White House and the Department of Justice did not immediately respond to requests for comments about Amash's tweets.

Ronna McDaniel, the chairwoman of the Republican National Committee wrote on Twitter "it's sad to see ... Amash parroting the Democrats' talking points on Russia." She said the only people still concerned about the Russia investigation are Trump's political foes "hoping to defeat him in 2020 by any desperate means possible."

Amash, who represents Michigan's 3rd congressional district, wrote that he had read Mueller's full redacted report, but that few members of Congress had.

In February Amash became the lone Republican to co-spon-



sor a resolution in the U.S. House of Representatives to reject the emergency Trump declared at the U.S.-Mexico border to build a wall there, in a stinging rebuke to the president..

Impeachment should be undertaken only in extraordinary circumstances, Amash wrote on Saturday. But the risk during a time of extreme partisanship "is not that Congress will employ it as a remedy too often but rather that Congress will employ it so rarely that it cannot deter misconduct."

## At campaign rally, Biden decries Democratic 'anger' and pledges unity

**TEHRAN** — Seeking to build on early momentum in his 2020 presidential bid, former U.S. Vice President Joe Biden condemned "anger" within his own Democratic Party and pledged to work to unify the country in the wake of Donald Trump's presidency.

At a rally in downtown Philadelphia, Biden, as he has done throughout the beginning stages of his campaign, made Trump his central target, blasting him as "the divider-in-chief," Reuters reported.

But he also chided other Democratic pres-

idential candidates in the field, suggesting that anger toward Trump within his party was not enough to win next year's presidential election.

His message, Biden said, was expressly aimed at Democratic, Republican and independent voters alike.

"Some of the really smart folks say Democrats don't want to hear about unity," he said. "They say Democrats are so angry, and that the angrier your campaign will be, the better chance you have to win the

Democratic nomination. Well, I don't believe it."

About 6,000 people attended the rally, which had, by design, the feel of a general-election event. With his poll numbers currently swamping the rest of the Democratic field, Biden has often acted as if his current opponent is Trump and not the other 23 Democrats vying for the party's nomination.

"If the American people want a president to add to our division, to lead with a

clenched fist, closed hand, a hard heart, to demonize the opponents and spew hatred - they don't need me, they've got President Donald Trump," Biden told the crowd, which was bookended by large video monitors.

Democratic nominating contests begin next February, giving the dynamics of the race plenty of time to shift. But Biden, 76, has opened up a more than 20-point lead over his nearest rival, U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders, in several public opinion polls.

## Venezuela army awaiting U.S. 'with weapons in hands'

**TEHRAN** — Venezuelan military forces have expressed support for the government of President Nicolas Maduro against any U.S. military intervention, saying they are waiting with weapons in their hands.

Venezuela's military personnel issued the warning on Saturday as they took part in what was dubbed a "march of loyalty" to pledge their allegiance to President Maduro.

"Only the ones who fight have a right to be. You will never invade my country. Listen to us small gringo," the troops shouted during the parade in the central state of Aragua, using a derogatory term for Americans.

"We are ready. With weapons in our hands ... we are waiting for you."

Maduro marched more than a mile alongside the personnel and military equipment before delivering a speech to slam U.S. imperialism.

According to Press TV, Washington and its allies have backed the Venezuelan opposition and ramped up pressure on Maduro to step down. Moreover, U.S. officials have repeatedly stated that all options remain on the table with regard to the Venezuelan crisis, including military action.

As part of a pressure campaign to push Maduro out of power, U.S. Vice President Mike Pence has offered incentives to the Venezuelan military personnel to entice them to defect and join the opposition.

Venezuela has been shaken by political unrest in the past several months. In January, tensions worsened after opposition figure Juan Guaido, who is also president of the National Assembly, unilaterally declared himself "interim president" of Venezuela.

The United States quickly accepted that self-proclamation and has since been working with Guaido.

On April 30, a small group of armed troops accompanying Guaido clashed with soldiers at an anti-government rally in Caracas in an attempted coup that soon petered out even though it was backed by the Trump administration.

Maduro announced in a televised speech that the group of military personnel supporting Guaido had been defeated, and 25 renegade soldiers had sought refuge at the Brazilian embassy in Caracas.

Washington has a long record of sponsoring "regime change" campaigns in Venezuela and other countries. In



2002, former president Hugo Chavez was ousted for two days in a U.S.-backed coup that was ultimately defeated.

Maduro has repeatedly accused Washington of masterminding a "coup" against his government, blaming the U.S. for the economic crisis in Venezuela.

## Russia holds Baltic drills amid rising tensions with NATO

**TEHRAN** — Russian troops serving in the Baltic fleet in Kaliningrad have staged military drills as the strategic region is becoming an increasingly contested space between Russia and NATO.

The servicemen held a security operation and demonstrated their martial arts training in front of military officials and civilians on Saturday, celebrating 316 years since the founding of the Baltic fleet.

The Baltic fleet, which has gained more

importance recently due to Russia's renewed claims to a large swathe of the nearby Arctic, is historically linked to the Victory of Russia's Peter the Great fleet over Sweden in 1703.

According to Press TV, the fleet was strengthened this year by a Karakurt-class corvette warship equipped with Kalibr missiles and Msta self-propelled howitzers added to its warships.

The reinforcement highlights the strategic importance of the Baltic, an economically important trading zone for 90 million people,

still littered with mines from two world wars.

The region is drawing the biggest military presence, with a daily game of Cold War cat-and-mouse and eye-to-eye encounters of combat jets and reports of submarines ratcheting up tensions.

Moscow says NATO has dramatically increased reconnaissance flights near its borders.

Jets from NATO nations and non-NATO allies like Sweden often scramble to confront

what Western officials deem as stepped-up probing flights and mock bomb runs near their borders by Russia.

Deeper and more clandestine rivalries are being played out under the Baltic Sea, a harsh and complex environment for underwater warfare.

Nearby, global warming and the rapid melting of the Arctic ice has opened up new shipping routes and access to natural mineral resources.

## At least 16 people injured in Egypt blast targeting tourist bus

**TEHRAN** — At least 16 people were wounded Sunday in a blast targeting a tourist bus near the new Egyptian museum close to the Giza pyramids, Egyptian medical and security sources said.

They said that most of the wounded were foreign tourists. One security source told Reuters they included South African nationals.

There were no reports of deaths. A witness, Mohamed al-Mandouh, told Reuters he heard a "very loud explosion"

while sitting in traffic near the site of the blast.

Pictures posted on social media showed a bus with some of its windows blown out or shattered, and debris in the road next to a low wall with a hole in it.

According to Daily Star, Egypt has battled militants for years in the Sinai Peninsula in an insurgency that has occasionally spilled over to the mainland, hitting minority Christians or tourists.

The attack comes as Egypt's vital tourism industry is

showing signs of recovery after years in the doldrums because of the political turmoil and violence that followed a 2011 uprising that toppled former leader Hosni Mubarak. It is the second to target foreign tourists near the famed pyramids in less than six months.

In December, three Vietnamese tourists and an Egyptian guide were killed and at least 10 others injured when a roadside bomb hit their tour bus less than 4 kilometers from the Giza pyramids.

## Capturing Al-Baghdadi: West new pretext to plunder Libya oil

**1→** And the same scheme was carried out in Iraq.

Libya National Oil Corporation (NOC) Chairman Abdallah al-Badri has recently announced that new conflicts are posing a serious threat to oil production in Libya.

In 2016, Haftar troops took hold of the majority of Libya oil fields by seizing the fields controlled by ISIS. Most Libya oil infrastructures are located in the east that is majorly controlled by Haftar forces.

Clearly, U.S. and President Donald Trump are supporting Haftar to get their hands on Libya oil since Haftar is their puppet. If an army rose from among the people and ousted Haftar, U.S. could not grab hold of the country's oil.

Subsequently, Trump thanked Haftar for safeguarding the oil sources over a phone conversation.

In near future, west might substantially expand its military presence in Libya. On the one hand, they want to support Haftar troops and put him into power. On the other, they want to take hold of Libyan oil fields under the pretext of protecting the country from ISIS and capturing Al-Baghdadi.

The current turmoil in Libya give them the best opportunity to run this plan.

## Erdogan says will jointly produce S-500s with Russia after purchase of S-400s

**TEHRAN** — Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said that the purchase of S-400 defense systems from Russia was a done deal, adding that Ankara would also jointly produce S-500 defense systems with Moscow.

U.S. officials have called Turkey's planned purchase of the S-400 missile defense system "deeply problematic," saying it would risk Ankara's partnership in the joint strike fighter F-35 program because it would compromise the jets, made by Lockheed Martin Corp.

However, Erdogan told a televised question and answer session with university students in Istanbul that Turkey had carried out technical work and found that such a problem did not exist < Reuters reported.

"They (the U.S.) are passing the ball around in the midfield now, showing some reluctance. But sooner or later, we will receive the F-35s. (The U.S.) not delivering them is not an option."

## Kremlin waiting for U.S. decision on Putin-Trump meeting

**TEHRAN** — The Kremlin said on Sunday it hopes a meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and his U.S. counterpart Donald Trump takes place, but that it has not received a definitive decision from Washington on the matter, Interfax news agency reported.

"We know that Trump has spoken of his desire for a meeting, but unfortunately we also know that (U.S. Secretary of State Mike) Pompeo did not bring any concrete proposals about organizing such a meeting on the sidelines of the G20 meeting in Osaka," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was cited as saying.

## Austria heading for September election after far-right video scandal

**TEHRAN** — Austria's president on Sunday recommended a new election be held in early September, saying he wanted to restore trust in the government after a video scandal led to the resignation of the vice chancellor.

According to Press TV, Chancellor Sebastian Kurz pulled the plug on the coalition and called for a snap election on Saturday after his deputy, Heinz-Christian Strache, the leader of the far-right Freedom Party, quit over a video showed him discussing fixing state contracts in return for favors.

It is most important that Austrians are given the chance of a new start to rebuild trust in its government, President Alexander van der Bellen said in a statement at his Hofburg residence in Vienna.

"This new beginning should take place quickly, as quickly as the provisions of the Federal Constitution permit, so I plead for elections... in September, if possible at the beginning of September," the president said.

Strache has described the video sting as a "targeted political assassination" and said it never led to any money changing hands. He insisted the only crime that took place was illegally videotaping a private dinner party.

Van der Bellen and Kurz said at their joint news conference that stability was a main priority for them for the coming months.

## UK's opposition will not back 'fundamentally' unchanged Brexit bill

**TEHRAN** — The leader of Britain's opposition said he would not support Prime Minister Theresa May's new attempt to push through her Brexit bill if it was fundamentally the same as the bill that had been defeated three times before.

"We haven't seen whatever the new bill is going to be yet but nothing I've heard leads me to believe it is fundamentally any different from the previous bill that has been put forward so as of now we are not supporting it," Jeremy Corbyn told the BBC's Andrew Marr show on Sunday.

May said in the Sunday Times she would present a "new bold offer" to lawmakers with "an improved package of measures" in a final attempt to get the Brexit Withdrawal Agreement Bill through parliament before she leaves office.



## Emotional Allegri insists the time was right to leave Juventus

Coach Massimiliano Allegri said a discussion with Juventus directors about the best way forward for the Serie A champions resulted in the club's decision to part ways with him at the end of the season. Juventus announced on Friday that the 51-year-old's five-year spell in charge will come to an end.

The former AC Milan coach has enjoyed great success in Turin, leading Juve to five consecutive Serie A titles, four Coppa Italias and two Champions League runner-up finishes.

"I leave a winning group that has the potential to repeat its success in Italy and have another great Champions League campaign," an emotional Allegri told a news conference on the eve of the team's final home match of the season against Atalanta on Sunday. "Unfortunately, some situations meant we couldn't go all the way this season. We talked, expressed our ideas on what was best for Juventus and the future of Juventus.

"After that, the club evaluated it and decided it was best that I wouldn't be the coach next season.

"The rapport with President Agnelli, directors (Pavel) Nedved and (Fabio) Paratici remains excellent. We've all grown together and the right moment has come to leave on the best terms.

He added: "Some things were written that were not correct, suggesting I asked for a long contract, for a squad revolution and different players, but we never got to that. We simply realised it was best not to continue together."

Allegri said he was unsure about what he would do next.

(Source: Eurosport)

## UEFA adopts 'fan-first' ticketing policy for Euro 2020

UEFA has adopted a "fan-first" ticketing policy for Euro 2020 with a record three million tickets available to supporters, European soccer's governing body announced on Sunday.

Almost 2.5 million tickets, more than the total available for the whole of the 2016 edition, have already been reserved for fans of participating teams and the general public.

One million tickets will be available for 50 euros (\$55.78) or less across 44 games of next year's tournament, which runs from June 12-July 12 and will be played across 12 cities for the first time to mark the 60th anniversary of the competition.

A total of 40,000 tickets under 100 euros will be available for the semi-finals and final at London's Wembley Stadium, while UEFA will reserve tickets at every game for disabled fans at the lowest prices regardless of their location in stadiums.

Tickets will be sold on euro2020.com/tickets in the month-long first phase of sales beginning June 12, where 1.5 million tickets will be made available to the public.

The second phase of sales will begin in December after the final tournament draw takes place on Nov. 30, with 1 million tickets on offer for fans of participating nations.

Another phase will follow in April 2020 as the remaining four teams to qualify for the 24-team tournament will be determined after the European qualifying playoffs.

(Source: Reuters)

## Kompany to leave Man City and join Anderlecht as player-manager

Belgian defender Vincent Kompany said on Sunday he would be leaving Manchester City and joining Anderlecht as player-manager after helping the Premier League club to become the first team to win the English domestic treble.

"We've just seen the close of an incredible season. My 11th as a Blue. And I cannot believe I'm writing this but ... also my last as a Blue," the City captain wrote in an open letter to fans on his Facebook page (www.facebook.com/pg/vincentkompany/).

"Man City has given me everything. I've tried to give back as much as I possibly could. How often does someone get the chance to end such an important chapter, representing a club with such great history and tradition, in such a great fashion?" "The time has come for me to go now."

The 33-year-old central defender said in the second part of his letter released shortly afterwards that he would take up the role of player-manager at Belgian club Anderlecht.

"I choose to be grateful for the past but remain ambitious and driven for the future. For the next three years, I will take up the role of player-manager of RSC Anderlecht," he added.

"I want to share my knowledge with the next purple generations. With that, I will also put a bit of Manchester in the heart of Belgium."

(Source: Mirror)

## Wilder retains WBC heavyweight title with brutal first round KO

Undefeated Deontay Wilder brutally knocked out Dominic Breazeale in the first round of their grudge match Saturday night to retain his World Boxing Council heavyweight world title.

Wilder, who has one of the most destructive right hands in heavyweight history, floored the challenger with a one-punch knockout with 43 seconds left in the opening round.

Wilder swarmed Breazeale from the opening bell, hurting him with a straight right hand then finishing him off later in the round with the devastating right to the chin that was set up by a left jab.

Breazeale lay on his back, then got up at the count of 10 as the referee waved it off. Wilder, 33, improved to 41-0-1 with 40 KOs in making the ninth defence of his title against heavy underdog Breazeale at the Barclays Center arena in Brooklyn, New York.

Breazeale, who had lost just one previous fight to Anthony Joshua, dropped to 20-2 with 18 KOs.

There was bad blood between the two heading into the fight with the buildup marked by a series of macabre threats from Wilder, who had spoken of his willingness to cause a fatality in the ring.

Threats of violence are a stock-in-trade part of promoting fights, but Wilder's gruesome pre-fight comments were condemned by many in the sport as going too far.

(Source: AFP)

# 'It's a sky blue world': City hailed as England's best ever

Manchester City's treble winners have been hailed as English football's greatest ever team after their FA Cup final demolition of Watford completed an historic campaign.

Pep Guardiola's side became the first English club to win the Premier League, FA Cup and League Cup in the same season thanks to their staggering 6-0 success at Wembley on Saturday.

Equalling the record margin of victory for an FA Cup final was the perfect way to cap a remarkable year for City, who followed their record-breaking Premier League triumph in 2017-18 with an even more astonishing run this term.

They are the first English top-flight side to register 50 wins in all competitions in a single season. Guardiola's men also scored a record 169 goals in 61 games this season, beating their own previous best of 156.

City now rank high on the list of the greatest English teams of all-time.

Only a select few can claim to be on a par with City, an elite group that includes Arsenal's 2004 'Invincibles', Manchester United's 1999 vintage, who won the Premier League, Champions League and FA Cup, and the Liverpool team of 1984, who lifted the old First Division, the European Cup and the League Cup.

The world's media were united in their praise for Guardiola's men, who have won five of the last six domestic trophies.

BBC Sport's Phil McNulty wrote: "The club once loftily dismissed as 'noisy neighbours' by then-Manchester United manager



Sir Alex Ferguson confirmed they now exert a domestic dominance that speaks eloquently on their behalf with a crushing, brutal 6-0 dismissal of Watford.

"This may have been a victory lap completed with embarrassing ease, with early Watford body blows parried in comfort before a form of footballing torture ensued, but this was arguably the greatest day in City's history as this treble was won ruthlessly, spectacularly."

Eurosport labelled City as the country's greatest ever, writing: "They may not have won the Champions League but the cold hard

facts don't lie: Manchester City are the best team to ever grace English football."

The Guardian's Barney Ronay summed up City's majestic form over the last year.

"Manchester City's historic FA Cup final win was almost swamped by the glowing list of statistics piling up around them - but nothing can disguise the scale of this achievement and the brilliance of Pep Guardiola's team," he wrote. "Welcome to the new order. Domestic games: played 51, won 43. Domestic trophies: three out of three. Five-goal hauls: 11. Defeats since Christmas: one.

"Scan the history books, fan back to the

big city clubs of Victorian times, linger on the red-shirted eras of the last 50 years.

"English domestic football has never seen anything quite like this single-season hit from Manchester City. It turns out we really do all live in a sky blue world now."

■ 'Enjoy the moment' -

City midfielder Kevin De Bruyne came off the bench to score in the FA Cup final, ending an injury-plagued season on a high for the Belgian.

De Bruyne insisted it is hard to compare different eras when it comes to rating the all-time greats.

But he was happy to reflect on a truly breathtaking campaign for the treble winners.

"It has been an unbelievable season to win three titles. It says enough," De Bruyne said.

"To compare generations is very difficult. We are happy to be in the conversation but we should just enjoy the moment because it doesn't happen very often."

De Bruyne says it is "already an honour" to be considered one of the best teams in English football history, but he won't indulge talk of going one better by winning next season's Champions League.

"It is not about topping it, it is about being consistent and trying to achieve the best," he said. "We are not starting the season saying we want to win three titles or four titles, we want to play the way we play and do our best.

"It is not all about the end product, it is about the journey and you appreciate it even more."

(Source: AFP)

## Ozil dines with president again on trip to Turkey



Mesut Ozil has risked a backlash once again after sitting down for dinner with Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The Arsenal playmaker was pictured with his fiancé Amine Gulse at the Dolmabahce Palace in Istanbul alongside the Turkish ruler for an Iftar - the break of fasting for an evening meal during Ramadan.

Erdogan is a highly controversial figure. Since a failed coup attempt in 2016, Erdogan has increased his presidential powers and clamped down on freedom of expression.

According to Reporters Without Borders, Turkey is now the biggest jailer of journalists in the world.

Ozil, who is a third-generation Turkish-German, has been criticised in Germany for his interactions with Erdogan in the past.

He caused controversy for presenting him with a signed Arsenal shirt at a meeting in London in May last year, which led national team manager Oliver Bierhoff to suggest he should have been dropped from the World Cup squad as a result.

Ozil defended the meeting in a statement: 'For me, having a picture with President Erdogan wasn't about politics or elections, it was about me respecting the highest office of my family's country,' he said. 'My job is

a football player and not a politician, and our meeting was not an endorsement of any policies.'

The 30-year-old retired after the World Cup having earned 92 caps for Die Mannschaft and led them to World Cup success in 2014. Ozil hit out at racism in the German FA and for making him a 'scapegoat' for Germany's miserable 2018 World Cup performance in the wake of that initial controversy.

Bild wrote that local reports suggest Ozil has invited Erdogan to his wedding as a witness on June 7.

The Gunners midfielder is likely to feature in Arsenal's Europa League final showdown with Chelsea in Baku later this month, which takes place on May 29.

Ozil had been linked with a move away from Arsenal but he dismissed speculation about his future after starring in the Gunners' semi-final victory over Valencia.

'I don't think there's a chance of that to be honest,' Ozil told DAZN Dach.

'I've got two more years here and what happens afterwards is not in my hands. We'll see then, but I'm proud to be at this club and really happy at this club.'

(Source: Daily Mail)

## Bayern Munich win Bundesliga title for seventh successive season



Bayern Munich won a record-extending seventh consecutive Bundesliga title on Saturday after crushing Eintracht Frankfurt 5-1 to finish two points ahead of Borussia Dortmund.

The Bavarians, who will secure a domestic double if they beat RB Leipzig in the German Cup final on May 25, have now won the German league title a record 29 times.

"It was no easy season by any means. What the team managed to achieve after a lot of criticism is significant. That is why I would like to thank them all," Bayern coach Niko Kovac said as his team topped the standings with 78 points.

With veterans Franck Ribery and Arjen Robben scoring in their last league game for the club and the Frenchman becoming the first player to win nine Bundesliga titles, victory was also sweet for Kovac.

He spent much of his first season at Bayern under pressure while his future in Munich, despite a contract to 2021, is still in doubt. "I am convinced that it will continue (here)," Kovac said. "I have first-hand information.

"We managed to do something big. We were nine points behind in the autumn so congratulations to my players. I am totally happy but also totally exhausted. Now I

hope that we can also win the Cup and celebrate the double," he said.

With two points separating Bayern and Dortmund going into the final matchday, the Bavarians were in no mood for any mishaps considering they had squandered a chance to wrap up the title last week when they drew at Leipzig.

In a dominant first half they went ahead through Kingsley Coman after four minutes and missed a bagful of chances to score again. Frankfurt briefly levelled when Sebastian Haller stabbed in on the rebound in the 50th but their hopes of a top-four finish lasted only minutes with David Alaba and Renato Sanches netting for the hosts in the 53rd and 58th.

Ribery, who joined back in 2007, and Robben, who arrived two years later, came on as substitutes and scored Bayern's fourth and fifth goals for a perfect farewell.

Ribery overtook Bayern greats Philipp Lahm, Bastian Schweinsteiger, Oliver Kahn and Mehmet Scholl, among others, who have eight league crowns to their names.

Bayern's Robert Lewandowski was crowned the league's top scorer for the fourth time with 22 goals.

(Source: Goal)

## Bale bows out on bench as Madrid blow season finale

Real Madrid delivered a suitably dreadful end to their miserable season, and Gareth Bale was not even given the chance to say a likely goodbye, as Zinedine Zidane's side were beaten 2-0 at home to Real Betis on Sunday.

Zidane had indicated this could be Bale's final game ahead of an expected summer departure but the Welshman was left on the bench, made to watch on as three substitutes came on ahead of him at the Santiago Bernabeu.

None were able to revive another dreary and disjointed Madrid performance, which concluded both the season and first phase of Zidane's much-hailed return as coach.

As the players saluted the fans at the end, they were greeted by a chorus of whistles.

By then, Bale was already off down the tunnel, perhaps aware that any attempt at a farewell could be given an even colder reception.

When the referee's final whistle blew, Bale received a hug from Betis coach Quique Setien and strode off.

Zidane will rightly not be held culpable for most of Madrid's failings this season, including finishing third in La Liga, 18 points behind Barcelona and eight adrift of Atletico Madrid, not to mention crashing out of the Champions League in the last 16.

He will also not be blamed for their league total of 68 points, their lowest in 17 years, nor the 12 defeats. Real Madrid have not had more in a single league campaign since 1974.

But even if few expected the deep-rooted problems to



vanish after Zidane's arrival in March, most Madrid fans would have hoped at least for signs of improvement.

Instead, they have now won five of his 11 games in charge this season and out of the last five have won one and lost three. Some of the displays, including this one, were as bad as anything seen under either Julen Lopetegui or Santiago Solari.

Zidane has promised change over the summer and many in his squad here could be elsewhere next season including goalkeeper Keylor Navas, who was the subject of several affectionate chants during the game, as well as Nacho, Sergio Reguilon, Isco, Marcos Llorente and Bale.

If this was to be Bale's last appearance after six seasons,

in which there have been numerous injuries but several trophies too, including four in the Champions League, it seemed a sorry way not to say goodbye.

Setien could be on his way too this summer, after a turbulent season in charge of Betis, who were in contention for Europe but instead finish 10th.

Marcelo flashed an early shot inches wide but the best chance fell to Karim Benzema, who hit the post after Raphael Varane's harmless cross was skewed straight to him by Francis Guerrero.

Navas' fingertips pushed over a lob from the excellent Giovanni Lo Celso before an uneventful half was ended by a smattering of whistles from the home fans.

It would get worse after half-time. Benzema passed up two good openings in the box and Vinicius turned Aissa Mandi inside-out but was denied by the feet of Pau Lopez.

Betis looked dangerous in behind Madrid's defence, with Dani Carvajal lucky only to be cautioned for preventing Junior Firpo from sprinting clear.

But the warning went unheeded as Andres Guardado was next to race through and he provided the perfect pass to the back post where Loren could hardly miss.

Lo Celso might have made it two before Jesse, once of Real Madrid and a product of their youth system, finally did. For the last time this season, the home fans made their feelings known at the final whistle.

(Source: AFP)



# Marco Octavio quits Iran beach soccer team

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Brazilian coach Marco Octavio left Iran beach soccer national team due to personal reasons.

He led Iran to two titles in Beach Soccer Intercontinental Cup in 2013 and 2018 and also won two AFC Beach Soccer Championship title in 2013 and 2017.

The Brazilian coach has led Team Melli in four stints and is gong to leave Iran once again to be with his family.

In 2019 AFC Beach Soccer Championship, Iran failed to qualify their title after losing to eventual champion Japan 3-2 in quarter-finals.

The federation also said that it has started the process or appointing a new coach for the first-ranked Asian team, noting that there are both Iranian and foreign coaches among candidates.

Octavio sent an open letter to Tehran Times.

“Dear friend  
Unfortunately, I have to go. My family needs me close this moment. Almost seven years together and 10 championships. many happiness!

Not easy to reach Number 2 in the World for many years! All my love, my respect special for my Players. Gratitude for Iranian Football Federation to trust on me. My love for all my friends and all Iranian People. I miss you so much.

Inshala we will be together in the near future. Keeping cooperation to develop of Iranian Football and Beach Soccer. Love you so much

**Marco Octavio**”



## Iran’s Mehrdad Mohammadi reaches agreement with Aves: report



**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iranian winger Mehrdad Mohammadi has been reportedly linked with a move to Portuguese top-flight football team Aves.

The 25-year-old player’s contract with Sepahan runs out at the end of the current season and he can join Aves on a free transfer.

The Portuguese newspaper Record reports that the Iranian player has reached an agreement with Aves to join the team on a three-year contract.

His twin brother, Milad, is playing in Russian football club Akhmat Grozny.

Mehrdad Mohammadi joined Iranian football club Sepahan in 2016 from Rah Ahan and has scored 13 goals in 82 matches for the Isfahan based football team.

He helped Sepahan come second in Iran Professional League and will be playing a key role in his team’s semi-final match against Persepolis in Hazfi Cup, slated for May 29.

## Yahya Golmohammadi extends contract with Padideh



**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Yahya Golmohammad, who had accepted to lead Iran U23 football team, changed his mind and extended his contract with Padideh.

Mehdi Taj, the president of the Football Federation of Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI), had announced that Golmohammadi will replace Zlatko Kranjcar in Iran’s Olympic football team.

Golmohammadi made history this season, sending Padideh to the 2020 AFC Champions League for the first time.

Golmohammadi also confirmed that he has reached an agreement with Iran football federation to take charge of Iran U23 football team.

Hours later, Golmohammadi extended his contract with Padideh for two more years.

Under guidance of Croatian coach Kranjcar, Iran booked a place at the AFC U23 Championship Thailand 2020 Final in late March.

Iran, a powerhouse of the Asian football, have not been in the Olympics since the 1976 games in Munich.

## Daniel Dias takes on Tokyo 2020 manga style!

Daniel Dias will travel to Tokyo for the Paralympic Games next year in full Japanese style. The 14-time Paralympic champion swimmer has received a special prosthetic leg from Ottobock featuring a manga version of himself.

Dias is one of the ambassadors of the Worldwide Paralympic Partner, which is the world-leading supplier of innovative solutions for people with limited mobility. He received the new gift last week in Sao Paulo, Brazil, from manga artist Michel Borges.

“I have a very particular relationship with my prosthesis. It is literally part of me. What a better way to get support for the Tokyo Paralympics than this?” said the Brazilian swimmer.

“I would like to thank Ottobock for the partnership and to give me such a beautiful prosthesis. It is cool and comfortable. This technology makes a lot of difference in my quality of life. I’m flattered by the affection they had to design it.”

Sao Paulo is home to the largest Japanese community outside of Japan and Borges is one of Brazil’s main illustrators of manga, the comic style born in the Asian country.

Borges said his inspiration to draw the prosthetic leg came from Dias’ sport and a famous Japanese print.



“I got inspired by Daniel’s sport, swimming, and a well-known piece from the 19th century called the Great Wave of Kanagawa. It is very traditional and iconic. As the Games will be in Japan, it also refers to the battle athletes face – especially Daniel, who faces different challenges,” Borges explained.

It was the first time the artist had the chance to create an illustration for a prosthesis.

“I like to get out of the basics and it was very new to me to make an artistic intervention on a prosthesis of a Paralympic athlete like Daniel. I was excited when Ottobock contacted me and said yes immediately,” he added.

Ricardo Oliveira, Ottobock Brazil Managing Director, said the company wanted to create a symbol of the desire for success of the athlete in preparation for the Games in Tokyo next year.

“Daniel Dias represents our essence: high performance and excellence. Ottobock is celebrating 100 years in the world market. An industry that brings high-tech prosthesis and orthosis so that not only athletes, but also anyone else can seek independence,” Oliveira said.

For Dias, the new challenge ahead will be the London 2019 World Para Swimming Championships in September, a step further in the preparation to his fourth Paralympics.

“I am already in the mood for the Games. Congratulations to Michel for the design. I loved my manga version. I look prettier and younger!”

*(Source: Paralympic)*

## Preview - Group D: Persepolis FC (IRN) v Al Sadd SC (QAT)

The famous Azadi Stadium will be home to the last match in the career of Spanish football legend Xavi as Al Sadd face Persepolis on Matchday Six of the 2019 AFC Champions League Group D on Monday.

The former Barcelona midfielder brings to an end a four-year stay in Doha as he prepares to hang his boots following the Persepolis clash, closing the curtains on the final act of a 22-year career which saw him win 32 titles, the last of which was the 2018-19 Qatar Stars League.

In Tehran, a repeat of the 2018 AFC Champions League semi-final between Persepolis and Al Sadd comes under contrasting circumstances, with Al Sadd already qualified and Persepolis eliminated from Group D.

On Monday, the two sides meet for the sixth time in just over a year. Persepolis and Al Sadd were pitted together in Group C last time around. A brace from Baghdad Bounedjah helped Al Sadd to a 3-1 win in Doha on Matchday Two.

In April 2018, it was Iranian international



defender Morteza Pouraliganji who scored, albeit in his own net, gifting Persepolis a 1-0 win in Tehran. The same scoreline was replicated six months later at Jassim bin Hamad Stadium when the two sides met in the semi-finals first leg.

Bounedjah’s goal was cancelled out by Siamak Nemati as Persepolis snatched the 2018 AFC Champions League final ticket with a 1-1 draw in Azadi Stadium. Al Sadd’s Algerian forward continued his impressive scoring record against Alireza Beiranvand, scoring the only goal in his side’s 1-0 win on Matchday Two of this year’s group stage.

*(Source: the-afc)*

## Preview - Group C: Al Ain FC (UAE) v Esteghlal FC (IRN)

Eliminated pair Al Ain and Esteghlal will aim to change their season on a positive note when they clash at Hazza bin Zayed Stadium on Matchday Six of the 2019 AFC Champions League Group C on Monday.

The two teams suffered a disappointing season both domestically and in Asia. Esteghlal watched their arch-rivals Persepolis walk away with the Iranian Pro League title for a third year running while they finished third.

Al Ain, meanwhile, are also third but have a crucial game next week against fifth-placed Al Wahda with a place in the 2020 AFC Champions League at stake.

Monday’s encounter is the ninth between the two Continental giants. In the previous eight match-ups, Esteghlal hold a marginal advantage with three wins, to two Al Ain victories. The last three clashes between the two teams ended in draws.



Key for Al Ain will be Japanese utility player Tsukasa Shiotani who was on the scoresheet in each of the last three games against Esteghlal.

The match is a special occasion for Esteghlal coach Farhad Majidi who was a key member of the Al Ain side that won the inaugural AFC Champions League title in 2003. The former IR Iran international striker scored in the semi-final as Al Ain overcame China PR’s Dalian Shide en route to Continental glory.

*(Source: the-afc)*

## AFC provides financial aid to Iran’s flood victims

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Asian Football Confederation (AFC) donated \$100,000 to the Iranian football federation for reconstruction of stadiums in the flood-stricken provinces.

Mehdi Taj, the president of the Football Federation of Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI), has announced that AFC has donated \$100,000 cash to help the victims of the floods.

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

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

## Branko Ivankovic reach agreement with Egypt’s Al-Ahli: report

Persepolis coach Branko Ivankovic have reportedly reached an initial agreement with Egyptian giant Al-Ahli.

The Croatian coach will replace Uruguayan coach Martin Lasarte in Al-Ahli.

Ivankovic helped Iranian popular football team Persepolis win three successive Iran Professional League titles.

He also led the Iranian team to the AFC Champions League final for the first time.

Ivankovic served as an assistant coach of the Croatian national team in the 1998 World Cup and led the Iranian team at the 2006 World Cup in Germany. He has also worked at Croatian club Dinamo Zagreb, Shandong Luneng from China, Saudi Arabian Ettifaq and Al-Wahda of the UAE.

*(Source: Erem News)*

## Iran’s Gucci likens A-League to Championship

Sydney FC forward Reza Ghoochannejhad has likened A-League to English Championship.

Reza Ghoochannejhad has had a stellar football career, having played nationally for the Netherlands underage sides as well as scoring goals for Iran. With stints in the Belgium Pro League, Eredivisie in the Netherlands, and the EFL Championship he brings along an abundance of experience to our national competition.

“I didn’t know what to expect when I arrived here in Sydney. But I have to be honest with you, it’s a very competitive game, a very competitive league,” Gucci said.

The 31-year-old Iranian international striker gave high praise to the A-League as a whole.

“You have similarities (with the English Championship), it’s very physical... and there’s not one easy game,” he stated.

Moving onto the A-League Grand Final, Reza reflects on the ‘crazy’ semi-final 6-1 thrashing over Melbourne Victory.

“Everything we hoped and wished for came true that night,” former Iran striker added.

Looking towards the future and of a possible stay with the Sky Blues Reza had some cheeky words.

“My main concern right now is the game ahead... the club is way bigger than Reza Ghoochannejhad,” Gucci concluded.

*(Source: sportsradio.com.au)*

## Iran karate team earn bronze in Istanbul league

**IRNA** — Iranian karate kata team defeated Serbia and received a bronze medal in Karate1 Premier League in Istanbul, Turkey.

The event was held with the attendance of 1,813 athletes from 102 countries.

Iranian squad participated in the event in two sections of kata and kumite.

Participants will also be granted points to receive 2020 Olympic quota. The 2020 Summer Olympics, officially known as the Games of the XXXII Olympiad and commonly known as Tokyo 2020, is an upcoming international multi-sport event that is scheduled to take place from July 24 to August 9, 2020 in Tokyo, Japan.

## Sydney win A-League Grand Final on penalties

Andrew Redmayne was the penalty shootout hero for A-League 2019 Champions Sydney FC, who beat Perth Glory 4-1 on penalties to win Sunday’s Grand Final.

Redmayne made two shootout saves from Perth’s Andy Keogh and Brendon Santalab after a tense, scoreless 120 minutes, leaving Reza Ghoochannejhad to dispatch the winning penalty for Steve Corica’s men.

It is the third time the Sky Blues have beaten Premiers Perth this season, and is Sydney’s fourth Grand Final win.

A Grand Final battle of attrition in WA was set in stone early on, and neither side could land an early blow despite Glory threatening via the aerial route, which saw Sky Blues goalkeeper Andrew Redmayne tip Dino Djulbic’s header over the bar.

Sydney had worked the best opening of the encounter midway through the first half and had the ball in the net when Adam Le Fondre tucked Michael Zullo’s centre past Perth shot stopper Liam Reddy after a near-post dart – only for the offside flag to rescue the hosts, much to the delight of the boisterous home crowd.

Another great Redmayne save kept another Glory header out following the interval, this time from Diego Castro, who forced the Sydney custodian into a smart reflex stop after an unmarked header at the near post.

The diminutive former La Liga veteran found himself the recipient of Perth’s ongoing aerial assault shortly after, but this time, Castro’s header was tame and comfortably gathered by Redmayne.

Popovic and Corica introduced attacking spark from the bench in the form of Keogh and Ghoochannejhad, but neither Perth’s top scorer or Sydney’s Islamic Republic of Iran attacker could break the deadlock over the 90, or indeed 120 minutes.

Both teams have sealed their tickets to the 2020 AFC Champions League.

*(Source: www.a-league.com.au)*



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GUIDE TO  
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Be generous but not to excess, and calculating  
but not to excess.

Imam Ali (AS)

## Iranian Quran reciter Karim Mansuri visits Ghana

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — World-renowned Iranian Quran reciter Karim Mansuri is currently in Ghana to recite at several meetings in the West African country, in which Islam is one of the major religions practiced widely.

He attended the Friday prayer in Accra and recited verses of the Holy Quran. He also gave recitations during several religious meetings in Tamale and at a number Ghanaian universities, the



Iranian Quran reciter Karim Mansuri performs at the Islamic University College in Ghana.

Embassy of Iran announced in a press released on Sunday.

Mansuri who arrived in Ghana on May 14 also gave several performances on Ghanaian TV channels. His visit will come to end on Friday.

## National Orchestra conductor Shahbazian quits over retirees' employment ban law

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Fereidun Shahbazian, the permanent conductor and artistic director of Iran's National Orchestra, has resigned from his job in compliance with a law that bans the re-employment of retirees, the Rudaki Foundation announced on Sunday.



Fereidun Shahbazian conducts Iran's National Orchestra during a concert at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on April 22, 2017. (Iran Art/Mojtaba Arabzadeh)

"Conductor Shahbazian is one of the veteran musicians of the country who has collaborated with the foundation over the past few years," the foundation's Managing Director Ali-Akbar Safipur said in a press release.

"However, due to the law which bans hiring retired employees, Shahbazian has to leave his job, since he was a retired employee of IRIB," he said.

Safipur added that Shahbazian will be cooperating with the foundation as an advisor, and will accompany the orchestra as a guest conductor.

The orchestra will be led by a guest conductor until a permanent conductor is selected, he concluded.

## Schwarzenegger struck by flying kick at South Africa sports event

**JOHANNESBURG (Reuters)** — A man struck Arnold Schwarzenegger with a flying kick at a sports event in South Africa on Saturday, though the actor and former California governor later reassured fans that they needn't worry about him.

Schwarzenegger, 71, was chatting with fans at the Arnold Classic Africa, an event showcasing body-building and other sports, in Johannesburg when he was kicked from behind.

"There is nothing to worry about. I thought I was just jostled by the crowd, which happens a lot," the star of the "Terminator" films wrote on Twitter, thanking fans for their concern.

# Art Bureau to display new productions at Cannes Film Market

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — The Art Bureau of the Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization is displaying a lineup of its latest movie productions at the Cannes Film Market.

Director Azita Mugui's "Main Idea" about the serious attempt made by people and companies to win a tender for a joint project between Iran and Spain is among the movies.

"Once Upon a Time a Woman", Jalil Akbari-Sehat's directorial debut is also on view at the market, which will run until May 23.

The lineup also includes four documentary films, one of which is "A House for You" by Mehdi Bakhshi-Moqaddam about Davud who has been diagnosed with lung cancer, and his dream is to build a house for his beloved wife.

"Dilag" by Abbas Rafiei and Safiollah Hosseini is in praise of an old man in an Iranian village for his joie de vivre.

"The 40th Day" by Hamid Kuhpai revolves around the Arbaeen pilgrimage.

"Captain 22" by Arman Qolipur Dashtaki is about a drug addict who begins to encourage youth to play sports after he can complete a drug rehab program.

The animated movies "Lopeto" by Abbas Askari and "The Last Fish" by Masud Saemin are also on display at the business counterpart of the Cannes Film Festival and the largest film market in the world.



Bahram Radan (L) and Andrea Machallekidou act in a scene from director Azita Mugui's "Main Idea".

## Canadian center to review movies by Iranian director Masud Kimiai



A poster for a meeting the Parya Trillium Foundation plans to organize in Toronto, Canada on May 25 to review Iranian director Masud Kimiai's films.

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — The Parya Trillium Foundation in the Canadian city of Toronto plans to review films by veteran Iranian filmmaker Masud Kimiai during a meeting on May 25.

Producer Mohammad-Mehdi Dadgu, critic Hossein Moazzezinia and documentarian Aref Mohammadi are scheduled to deliver speeches at the meeting, which is organized by the New Wave Artistic Group, a Canada-based

Iranian organization.

"The Last Champion", a documentary on Kimiai by Iranian critic Javad Tusi, will also go on screen during the meeting.

Kimiai has started filmmaking by "Come Stranger" in 1968. His second film "Qeisar" produced in 1969 became very popular among critics and audiences.

His credits also include "Reza, the Motorcyclist", "Dash Akol", "The Soil" and "The Deer".

## Shorts from Iran line up for River Film Festival



A scene from "The Fox" by Sadeq Javadi Nikkeh.

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — A lineup of 13 Iranian movies will go on screen in the various sections of the 13th River Film Festival, which will be held in the Italian city of Padova during June.

"Short Wave" by Mohammad Esmaeili, "America" by Mehrnush Fetrat, "The Hunt" by Masud Kazeruni and "Flight 655" by Saeid Mayahy are among the films.

The lineup also includes "Rejhan" by Sara Moallem, "Fish" by Mohammad

Rahimian, "Brake" by Majid Salimi, "A Girl from Persian" by Parinaz Hashemi and "Cut" by Mehrdad Bakhshi.

Short animations "Starvation" by Zahra Rostampur, "Father" by Abedin Ramezani, "Balance" by Barzan Rostami and "The Fox" by Sadeq Javadi Nikkeh will also go on screen.

The festival, which is dedicated to short films, will be held from June 4 to 30.

## Crazy Body seeks to help flood-hit families by drama

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Crazy Body, an Iranian theater troupe led by director Yasser Khaseb, implemented a drama therapy project in the flood-stricken regions to keep people's spirits up.

All members of the troupe covered themselves with mud to perform "Mud Face" in villages across Khuzestan Province, Iran Theater, a Persian website for theater news, announced.

"Concurrent with the performances, relief aids were also dispatched to the regions raising additional hope among the flood-impacted families," Khaseb said.

"Children and young adults were our main concerns to help boost their spirits," he added.

The troupe next went to Shiraz in Fars Province and later to the Pol-e Dokhtar in Lorestan Province, which was hit heavily by the floods.



Crazy Body performs "Mud Face" in Aq-Qala on May 18, 2019. (Iran Theater)

## Lions Gate offered to sell Starz to CBS for \$5.5 billion: sources

**NEW YORK (Reuters)** — Lions Gates Entertainment offered to sell cable channel Starz to CBS Corp for \$5.5 billion after rebuffing a lower offer, two sources familiar with the matter told Reuters.

The counter offer was made by the film studio behind the Hunger Games movies after CBS made an informal \$5 billion bid for the cable network, the sources said.

CBS's informal offer was made by Joseph Ianniello, the interim chief executive officer of CBS, about six weeks ago and Lions Gate Entertainment sought a higher valuation, the sources said.

Both companies declined to comment. The approach underscores the scope of CBS's ambitions to compete more aggressively in a world in which it is squeezed by deep-pocketed tech companies on one side and rapidly consolidating peers on the other.

The news lands 12 days before a board meeting where it will review its options that is believed to include initiating merger discussions with Viacom Inc. Both companies are controlled by National Amusements, which is owned by the Redstone family.



The CBS "eye" and logo are seen outside the CBS Broadcast Center on West 57th St. in Manhattan, New York, U.S., April 29, 2016. (Reuters/Brendan McDermaid)

CBS's approach was first reported by the Information on Friday, citing four people familiar with the situation.

Lions Gate bought Starz for \$4.4 billion in a cash-and-stock deal in 2016.

CBS, home to popular shows such as the "The Late Show with Stephen Colbert" and "The Big Bang Theory" has been looking at the deal as a possible complement to Viacom Inc, which CBS also is considering purchasing, the report said.

While media majors Walt Disney Co and AT&T Inc are tapping into their extensive film and TV libraries to launch streaming rivals to Netflix and Amazon.

## Almodovar's ode to filmmaking hits the right notes at Cannes

**CANNES, France (Reuters)** — Pedro Almodovar is used to a good reception from what he called "faithful" audiences in France - so much so, the director joked on Saturday that he was "Franco-Spanish".

His latest movie, a loosely autobiographical portrait of a tormented filmmaker, could up the ante for the Oscar winner after an enthusiastic response from critics at the Cannes Film Festival, where it is a contender for the top Palme d'Or award.

"Pain and Glory" reunites Almodovar long-time collaborators Antonio Banderas and Penelope Cruz in a wistful dive into the world of cinema and the highs and lows of creativity.

As ageing director Salvador, played by Banderas, looks back on his life, other themes dear to Almodovar take hold too, including the character's relationship with his mother and his explorations of desire and love.

"I project myself in this film, but it's not to be taken literally," Almodovar, wearing dark glasses, told a news conference following the movie's Cannes premiere the night before, where it received a standing



Director Pedro Almodovar poses during a photocall for the film "Pain and Glory" (Dolor y Gloria) in competition at the 72nd Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, France, May 18, 2019. (Reuters/Eric Gaillard)

ovation. From a scene about Salvador's awakening to a tense discussion with his mother, many episodes were invented, he said, adding though his experiences had informed the fiction.

"I did live through a love that was broken off at a moment when the flame was very much still alive, because of a set of circumstances," Almodovar said.

"That's a very painful thing. It's not natural to have to end it...it's like cutting off your own arm."