TERNATIONAL DAILY

16 Pages | Price 40,000 Rials | 1.00 EURO | 4.00 AED | 39th year | No.13394 | Tuesday | MAY 21, 2019 | Ordibehesht 31, 1398 | Ramadan 15, 1440



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Images show major damage to Saudi oil sites



CBI issues directive on re-injection of export income

TEHRAN — Central Bank of Iran (CBI) has issued a directive which provides exporters with guidelines about how they should re-inject their foreign currency incomes into the country's economy, Tasnim news agency reported on Monday.

According to the CBI office of public relations, based on the new directive, for the petrochemical sector, the exporters should present at least 60 percent of their foreign currency incomes into the domestic Forex Management Integrated System (locally known as NIMA), and a maximum 10 percent could be injected into the financial system in the form of hard currency and the rest could be used for importing necessary goods. →4

Iran makes bids for UNESCO intangible cultural heritage registration

TEHRAN — Iran has submitted five separate dossiers to the UNESCO for possible inscription on the Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

The proposals present celebration of Yalda night; the oud, which is a short-neck lute-type, pear-shaped stringed instrument; Mehregan celebration; miniature painting; and annual pilgrimage to St. Thaddeus and

its associated rituals, a senior cultural heritage official said on Monday, Mehr

We are waiting to correct the dossiers if there is a problem. And Four out of five proposals would jointly be inscribed by other nations. Mohammad-Hassan Tale bian, a deputy for the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, addressing a press conference. →10

Russia: Syrian army declares unilateral truce in Idlib

TEHRAN— Russia says Syrian government forces have suspended their operations against foreign-backed Takfiri militants in the northwestern province of Idlib as part of a "unilateral" ceasefire.

"From 00:00 on May 18, Syrian armed forces unilaterally ceased fire in the Idlib de-escalation zone," Russian Defense Ministry's Center for Syrian Reconciliation said in a statement on Sunday.

The demilitarized zone surrounds Idlib and also includes parts of the adjacent provinces of Aleppo and Hama.

The statement said despite the ceasefire, "firing targeting government forces' positions and civilians in the provinces of Hama, Latakia and Aleppo continues." →13

PERSPECTIVE Head of the Politics Desk of Who is to blame in

Europe?

That has been happening today in Austria has led to concerns among EU leaders. Vice Chancellor of Austria, Heinz-Christian Strache, head of the far-right, anti-immigrant Freedom Party which is in Kurz's ruling coalition, had resigned earlier Saturday, a day after the video was published. The video hit a nerve amid broader concerns about ties between Russia and right-wing populist parties critical of the European Union.

Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz has called for an early election after his vice chancellor resigned over a covertly shot video that showed him apparently promising government contracts to a prospective Russian investor. Kurz said he would ask President Alexander Van der Bellen to set a date for a new election "as soon as possible."

The holding of an early election in Austria and the collapse of the coalition government show that nationalist currents in Europe have a tremendous political destruction! În recent days, European leaders have blamed the Austrian Grand Duke for a coalition with a radical right wing. But the main question $% \left\{ \mathbf{r}_{1}^{2},\mathbf{r}_{2}^{2}\right\} =\mathbf{r}_{1}^{2}$ here is who is to blame?!

Undoubtedly, people like the German Chancellor Angela Merkel and other European officials have played a prominent role in the presence and activity of nationalist and extremist groups throughout Europe. The main question here is which of the politicians and security institutions in Europe have been allowed to operate in extreme and nationalist circles over the past two decades?

This social excitement has now become a "political demand" in the West. The dissatisfaction of European citizens with their governments has caused them to explicitly demand the return to the twentieth century and the time before the formation of the United Europe.

Obviously, in this situation "crossing the traditional parties" would become a general demand in the West. Under such circumstances, Merkel's and other European leaders' warnings about the return to the twentieth century and the time before the formation of the United Europe simply means the inability of the Eurozone authorities in preventing the Right-extremism in the West.

Ultimately, European security and political authorities must respond to the free-riding of nationalist, extremist, anti-Islam and anti-immigration groups. European officials should be responsive to the extreme activity of these extremist groups over the past decades.

'U.S. decision to drive Iran's oil export to zero biggest supply risk to markets'

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW By Payman Yazdani

Part 1 TEHRAN — Commenting on Saudi Arabia and UAE capabilities to make up for any shortfalls in energy supply, Dr. Albert Bininachvili says the U.S. decision to drive Iran's oil export to zero is the biggest risk to global energy markets.

The Trump administration sharply accelerated its goal of driving Iran's oil exports to zero, ending sanctions exemptions that it previously granted to some of the Islamic Republic's biggest

The market widely expected Washington to extend the waivers for five of the countries. However, the administration says that any country still importing oil from Iran will be subject to U.S. sanctions beginning on May 2.

"Saudi Arabia and others in OPEC will more than make up the Oil Flow difference in our now Full Sanctions on Iranian Oil," Trump said in a tweet on 22nd of April after he ordered a tightening of sanctions on Iran's oil exports.

To shed more light on the issue we reached out to Dr. Albert Bininachvili, a professor of political science at the Columbia University for an interview.

Here is the first part of the interview:

Answering our question on the possibility of the driving of Iran's oil export to zero and the Saudi Arabia and the UAE's capabilities to make up for any shortfalls in oil supply, he said, "The US decision to strictly re-im-

pose secondary sanctions on Iran by denying waiver extensions to eight countries that had been buying Iranian crude makes the future of Iran's oil exports (which amounted to up to 2.4m bpd before sanctions were imposed) the biggest supply risk to the global energy markets, especially against the backdrop of political turbulence and output losses in Libya and Venezuela. The ability of other oil producers to bridge this impending supply shortfall is about to be tested.

Most energy experts believe the Trump administration's decision can only work with the backing and cooperation of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and other Persian Gulf producers to avoid an undersupplied oil market and spiking crude prices. →6

Journalist from Nigeria How Sheikh

Zakzaky distributes foodstuffs to the needy for fasting for the past 20 years

¬he leader of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria has distributed foodstuffs worth millions of naira to the needy on the occasion of this year's fasting season to help mitigate the suffering of the poor and the needy in Zaria as it have been his tradition. The distribution started on Saturday the 29 Sha'aban 1440, which is equivalent to 4/5/2019 and ended on 1st Ramadan.

The food items, which included Sugar, Rice, Wheat, Sorghum and so on, were distributed as has been the practice all these years, including the years he has been in illegal detention, as instructed by him last week when a section of his family members were allowed a rare visit to him.

Many people have benefited from the humanitarian gesture, including victims of the Zaria massacre perpetrated by the Nigerian president Buhari using the chief

of the army Tukur Burutai.
In 2017, the same gesture was rendered by Sheikh Zakzaky despite being in illegal detention. At that time, a brother to Sheikh Zakzaky, Sayyid Badamasi Yakub Zakzaky led the distribution. Were foodstuff were distributed to the residents of Gyallesu in a bid to assuage their economic hardship. The food items includes; maize, corn, sugar and rice which are annually distributed to the needy among the Sheikh's neighbors in Gyallesu and other places in Zaria at the inception of every month of Ramadan.

But despite the fact that Zakzaky is still in detention since Zaria Massacre years ago, but he has given the nod for the foodstuff to be distributed and a lot of poor residents of the area benefitted from the humanitarian gesture including the victims of the massacre engineered by Buhari's led government. The arrival of the food was greeted with cheer by the residents which added credence to the fact that they appreciated the gesture. Visible even in the face of the current economic hardship in the country, especially during this holy month of Ramadan. However, the distribution of the Foodstuff continued the next day. \rightarrow 7

Palestinian cabinet not consulted on U.S.-led Bahrain summit, PM says

TEHRAN— Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh says his government has not been consulted about an economic conference that the United Stated will hold in Bahrain next month.

The White House announced on Sunday that the first part of President Donald Trump's socalled "peace plan," which is spearheaded by his son-in-law Jared Kushner, will be unveiled in Bahrain's capital, Manama.

The U.S. will host the economic conference on June 25 and 26 to purportedly encourage investment in the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip.

"The cabinet wasn't consulted about the reported workshop, neither over the content, nor the outcome, nor timing," Shtayyed told Palestinian ministers in the presence of reporters on Monday.

Relations between the Palestinian Authority and the U.S. took an unprecedented dip in late 2017, when Washington recognized Jerusalem al-Quds as Israel's "capital."

The Trump administration has said that its secret plan, which has been dismissed by Palestinian authorities even before being unveiled, would require compromise by both sides.

'We don't trade our political rights' The Palestinian Authority is facing steep aid cuts. Since being shunned by Palestinians, Trump's administration has slashed hundreds of millions of dollars to humanitarian organizations.

The financial crisis the Palestinian Authority is living through today is a result of the financial war that is being launched against us in order to win political concessions," Shtayyeh said.

"We do not submit to blackmail and we don't trade our political rights for money," he added. Palestinians want the West Bank as part of a future independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem al-Quds as its capital. However, Israel insist on maintaining the occupation of Palestinian territories.

'High treason'

Also reacting to news of the upcoming conference, Bahrain's main opposition group, the al-Wefaq National Islamic Society, has described the U.S. "deal of the century" as a plan to sell Jerusalem al-Quds and Palestine, slamming it as "high treason," the Arabic-language Lualua television network reported. \rightarrow 13



Tehran exhibit features embossing collection

TEHRAN — A man tours embossing works in a special exhibition, which opened to the public at Tehran's Negarestan Garden on May

The embossing operation is commonly accomplished with a combination of heat and pressure on a metal piece, depending on what type of embossing is required.

Poets, literary, and cultural figures meet Ayatollah Khamenei

POLITICAL TEHRAN — A number of poets as well as cultural and literary figures held a meeting with Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei late on Monday.

The meeting took place on the 14th of the fasting month of Ramadan and on the eve of the birth anniversary of Imam Hassan (AS), the second Shia Imam.

Ayatollah Khamenei, in addition to being a politician and religious scholar, is also considered a literary figure.

The content of the meeting will be published on Wednesday.

Omani foreign minister visits Tehran

POLITICAL TEHRAN – Omani Foreign Minister Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah visited Tehran on Monday.

He held a meeting with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif, discussing the most important regional and international developments, the Foreign Ministry said in a press release.

The visit by the Omani chief diplomat comes as tension between Iran and the United States has been escalating.

Oman, which is considered the Switzerland of the region, acted as mediator between Tehran and Washington during the Obama administration.

Iran testing cyber defense shield

POLITICAL TEHRAN—An Iranian minister has said that a cyber-defense shield, which can stop malware attacks on the country's power grid, including nuclear facilities, has been successfully tested.

"The country's young scientists have successfully tested a cyber-defense shield for the country's automated industrial systems," Information and Communications Technology Minister Azari Jahromi said, Entekhab reported on Sunday.

According to the minister, the shield "can practically stop industrial sabotage malware such as Stuxnet in systems including Iran's power grid.'

In late 2007 or early 2008, the U.S. and Israel reportedly launched a sophisticated digital weapon called Stuxnet against control systems in Iran, sabotaging centrifuges at a uranium enrichment plant. The two countries are suspected of deploying the Stuxnet malware, uncovered in 2010, that sabotaged components of Iran's nuclear program.

That event put cyber security on the top of the priority list for Tehran, considering that the Stuxnet computer virus destroyed thousands of centrifuges involved in Iran's nuclear program. Iran's civil defense chief Gholamreza Jalali said in 2018 that up to 50,000 cyber-attacks target computers in

On April 28, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei highlighted the necessity for efforts to ensure the security of cyber space, saying, "The virtual space has greatly pervaded the lives of people today, and apart from the advantages and possibilities, it entails major threats as well.'

More recently, Jahromi said his ministry has developed initiatives to counter the U.S. government's acts of cyber terrorism and hostile measures, such as removing Iranian mobile phone applications from Apple iPhones.

"In order to counter those threats, we have set up a task force in the National Center of Virtual Space since a year ago, which has studied various scenarios, threats and sanctions, and the necessary approaches have been adopted," the Fars news agency cited the minister as saying on May 13.

Over the last decade, the U.S. has repeatedly accused Iran of carrying out cyber-attacks against it and its allies.

Iran starts increasing stockpile of uranium enriched to 3.67 percent by four times

POLITICAL NATANZ — Behrouz Kamalvandi, the spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), announced on Monday that from today, May 30, Iran is starting to increase its stockpile of nuclear fuel enriched to 3.67 percent by four times at the Natanz nuclear plant.



He said the decision is based on the Articles 26 and 36 of JCPOA, the official name for the 2015 nuclear deal.

He said the decision for increase of the stockpile followed after Iran gave an ultimatum to the European side on May 8 that it is taking these steps in response to an inaction by Europe to compensate for the reimposition of sanctions effect on Iran by the United States

Kamalvandi said the decision to increase the stockpile of enriched uranium has already been announced to the Ûnited Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Talking to reporters at the Natanz nuclear site, Kamalvandi said this move by Iran is an "opportunity" for the other sides to change their policies and "return the JCPOA to its original place".

The United States withdrew from the nuclear deal in May 2018 and ordered sanctions against Iran.

Kamalvandi, who also acts the deputy chairman of the AEOI, said Iran waited for one year that the remaining parties to the JCPOA to offset sanctions but they did nothing and now nobody in the world can criticize Iran for such a move.

"The Islamic Republic waited long enough and the step that it is taking is based on its rights."

He reiterated the position by the Islamic Republic that Tehran

has no intention to violate the JCPOA or quit it. The nuclear official added the next step will be based on the

Zarif warns Trump 'never threaten an Iranian', advises him that only 'respect works'

TEHRAN – After U.S. President Donald Trump on Sunday ratcheted up his rhetoric against Tehran, threatening to "end" Iran if it wants to fight, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Monday warned Trump "never threaten and Iranian" and advised the president to "try respect and it works".

"If Iran wants to fight, that will be the official end of Iran," Trump said in a tweet. "Never threaten the United States again!"

Reminding about history, Zarif said the B-team and Trump want to achieve something that Alexander the Great and Genghis Khan (the founder and first Great Khan of the Mongol Empire) "failed to do".

Responding via Twitter, Zarif also said. "Iranians have stood tall for millennia while aggressors all gone.

The Trump administration has introduced the harshest ever sanctions against Tehran in line with the policy of "maximum pressure" on Iran, a policy that Iran has called "economic

 $Zarif\,said\, "economic\,terrorism"\, and\, threat$ of genocide won't "end" Iran.

Goaded by #B_Team, @realDonaldTrump hopes to achieve what Alexander, Genghis & other aggressors failed to do. Iranians have stood tall for millennia while aggressors all gone. #EconomicTerrorism & genocidal taunts



won't 'end Iran'," Zarif tweeted.

The B-Team includes Trump's National Security Advisor John Bolton, Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel (known as bibi), Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed (MBZ).

"Never threaten an Iranian. Try respect—it works," he added.

The tweets come amid rising fears over potential military confrontation between

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

"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.

In an interview with Fox News aired Sunday evening, Trump took a seemingly more subdued tone toward Iran.

"I just don't want them to have nuclear weapons, and they can't be threatening us. And with all of everything that's going on, and I'm not one that believes - you know, I'm not somebody that wants to go into war, because war hurts economies, war kills people most importantly - by far most importantly,

"I don't want to fight. But you do have situations like Iran, you can't let them have nuclear weapons — you just can't let that happen," he added.

Recently, Zarif ruled out prospect of talks with the United States, calling Washington a "bully" who is trying to force all others into acting illegally.

In early May, the U.S. deployed warships and warplanes to the Middle East.

Tensions escalated even further after an incident with four tankers off the United Arab Emirates on May 12.

Iran has condemned the attack as "dreadful" and a lawmaker said Iranian suspicions fell

Rouhani orders facilitating investment

POLITICS TEHRAN – President e s k Hassan Rouhani has ordered executive bodies to take immediate steps to remove obstacles to domestic and foreign investment in the country, ISNA reported on Monday.

In line with the purpose, Rouhani ordered removal of obstacles, especially unnecessary and excessive regulations, for investment.

Among other things, the president asked the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization to pave the grounds for attracting more tourists, ordered the Ministry of Agriculture to take steps in line with self-sufficiency in agricultural crops and if necessary leasing land abroad for farming.

Rouhani also ordered the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology to focus on practical skills rather than just

The decisions come as U.S. has introduced the harshest ever sanctions against Iran in line with the Trump administration's "maximum pressure" on Iran, a policy that analysts and politicians say is intended to strangulate Iran.

Ebrahim Raeisi, the Judiciary chief, said on Sunday that all officials are duty bound to support businessmen and en-

During a meeting with a number of businessmen, Raeisi 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 entre-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 was drawn up to facilitate production process and removing obsta- $The \, session, \, headed \, by \, President \, Hassan \,$ Rouhani, brought together Raisi, Majlis

Speaker Ali Larijani, Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri and some economic officials. It was also decided to facilitate repay-

ment 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 ad-

visor 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."

Nuclear deal collapse will affect European security: Heiko Maas

POLITICAL TEHRAN — German e s k Foreign Minister Heiko Maas has said that a collapse of the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, will have negative effect on European security.

"Situation will worsen without the JCPOA which will affect Europe's security. We seek dialogue with all sides," Maas said in an interview with Tagesschau German television program, IRNA reported on Monday. He noted that Iran's stay in the JCPOA

since the U.S. withdrew from the multilateral agreement in May 2018 shows that Tehran is interested in keeping the deal. "So, we will spare no action to keep Iran in

the deal," the German chief diplomat added. The remaining signatories to the JCPOA are

Germany, France, Britain, Russia and China. Maas said on May 13 that it is essential to implement the JCPOA. 'We in Europe agree that this deal is crucial

quoted Maas as saying upon his arrival at the Foreign Affairs Council of EU ministers After the reimposition of sanctions on Iran by the Trump administration and a failure by the European Union to offset the effects sanctions, Iran officially announced on May

for our security... We are conducting negotia-

tions again exactly for this purpose," Sputnik

commitments under the JCPOA. Iran stated that it would no longer observe limits for its stockpile of low enriched uranium (currently capped at 300kg under

8 that it will partially suspend some of its



the JCPOA) and heavy water reserve (capped Iran said the ultimatum is for 60 days.

However, it warned if a conclusion is not reached in this time period, it will take other measures step by step including accelerating its uranium enrichment activities.

"This announcement is for 60 days. We have announced to the other side, the five countries [Germany, France, UK, Russia and China], that if they come to the negotiating table in 60 days and we reach a conclusion and safeguard our main interests which are oil [sale] and banking relations, we will return to the previous situation of May 7, 2019," President Hassan Rouhani told a cabinet meeting on May 8.

Under the JCPOA, endorsed by the UN Security Council Resolution 2231, Iran was tasked to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions. However, since Trump pulled the U.S. out of the JCPOA, the European countries cut banking ties with Iran, stopped purchasing Iranian oil, annulled agreements, and their companies left Iran one after another.

Iraqi cleric says Baghdad can mediate between Iran, U.S.

POLITICAL TEHRAN—A top Iraqi Shia cleric has warned of the ramifications of the ongoing tensions between Tehran and Washington for the region, saying his country can mediate between the two countries to calm the situation.

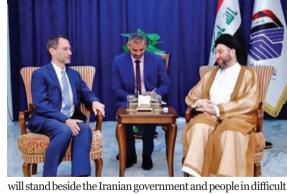
 $Ammar\,al\text{-}Hakim, the \,leader\,of\,the\,National\,Wisdom\,Movement,$ made the remarks in a Sunday meeting with Joey Hood, the chargé d'affaires of the U.S. Mission in Iraq, Tasnim reported.

Describing the escalation of tensions between Tehran and Washington as "worrisome", he said the tensions threaten the stability and security of all regional nations.

He also welcomed U.S. calls for bilateral talks with Iran, saying these statements should be a prelude to appropriate solutions to help regional nations stay away from wars and

Pointing to Iraq's warm ties with both Iran and the U.S., the senior cleric said Baghdad can play the role of a mediator to get the two sides' stances closer to one another and end the current crisis.

On Saturday, Iraqi President Barham Salih said that Baghdad



"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.

The meeting came against the backdrop of increased tensions between Iran and the U.S., with Washington imposing the harshest ever sanctions on Iran

The U.S. has ratcheted up pressure on Iran since last year after withdrawing from the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Since then, the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump is trying to reduce Iran's oil exports to "zero," and has sent an aircraft carrier strike group, a bomber squad, an amphibious assault ship, and a Patriot missile battery to the Middle East to try to stack up pressure on Tehran.

Iranian officials, however, have dismissed such moves as psychological warfare, saying the country has its own ways of circumventing the American bans and selling crude oil.

Princeton researcher enumerates Bolton-Netanyahu misinformation and gradual approaches against Iran

POLITICAL TEHRAN—Seyyed Hossein Mousavian, a former Iranian nuclear negotiator who currently acts as a Princeton University researcher, has said that there will be no war between Iran and the U.S. in the current situation.

"Controversies in recent weeks, including dispatch of U.S. warship is more of a psychological warfare and Bolton-Netanyahu team is not planning to begin any war in the current situation," he told ISNA in an interview published on Monday.

"Netanyahu [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu] and [U.S. National Security Advisor John] Bolton, have a two-phase plan with eight parts in their agenda to be implemented until the end of U.S. President Donald Trump's first tenure to bring him into a war," he commented.

He said that the first phase is "maximum pressure" with four parts: first "economic war", second "political war", third "psychological-advertising war and public diplomacy" and the fourth part is "security war". He described the second phase as "the trap of military action".

They will assess the outcome of the first phase, before the main election competitions begin. If the result of the 'maximum pressure' operation was desirable, there will be

no need for the next phase. Their priority is the collapse of Iran's political regime without military war' He said, "Some economic consequences following U.S. withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal have made them hopeful about

the outcome of this scenario." He added, "In the second part, during the upcoming months, they will try to display U.S. actions as a 'defensive, not aggressive operation'. Netanyahu will handle the part with misinformation. With a calculated plan,

he will send fake information to the intelligence and security institutions of the U.S. and other Western countries, demonstrating that Iran intends to invade U.S. and its allies' troops or facilities in the region through Tehran's allies, such as Hezbollah, Popular Mobilization Forces or Houthi movement." He noted that the third part of the second

phase is "preparing U.S. troops and military pases for air and maritime operations in the

"In the fourth part, they will try to do one or more terrorist operations against their own troops by their own forces," he predicted.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif predicted on Saturday that there would be no war between the U.S. and Iran, however he said Washington should explain to the American people about its "dangerous moves" in the region.

"I am sure, as Leader of the Islamic

Revolution has said, there will be no war, because neither we seek a war nor anyone can imagine any confrontation with Iran in the region. However, it is essential to clarify the U.S. dangerous moves for the people of this country," he told IRNA before leaving Beijing for Tehran.

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.

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

Speaking at a large gathering of officials last Tuesday, the Leader said Washington knows that engaging in such a conflict would not be in its interest.

General: Any aggression against Iran will face 'crushing response'

POLITICAL TEHRAN—A top comdes k mander of the Iranian Army Ground Force has warned that any aggression against the Islamic Republic will be followed by a "crushing response".

Iran has not invaded any country and will not do so "but we will give a crushing response to (any) aggression by enemies," General Ali Hajilou said on Monday, Tasnim reported.

Hajilou described Washington's anti-Iran rhetoric as "media warfare", reiterating that Iran does not seek war but is fully prepared to counter the enemy's threats.

Since enemies are incapable of carrying out operations against Iran they have resorted to media warfare instead, he remarked.

The remarks came amid increasing tensions between Iran and the U.S., with Washington imposing new harsh economic sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

However, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif predicted on Saturday that there would be no war between the U.S. and Iran. "I am sure, as Leader of the Islamic Revolution has said, there will be no war, because neither we seek a war nor anyone can imagine any confrontation with Iran in



the region. However, it is essential to clarify the U.S. dangerous moves for the people of

this country," he told IRNA.

He added, "The reality is that Trump has said and reiterated recently that he does not

seek war. However, there are people around him who push him towards war under the pretext that they want to make the U.S. powerful."

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

Speaking at a large gathering of officials last week, the Leader said Washington knows that engaging in such a conflict would not be in its interest.

Writing an article in the New York Times on May 15, Wendy Sherman, the former under secretary of state for political affairs during the Obama administration, said as it has been clarified over the nearly past two decades the U.S. wars on Afghanistan and Iraq have failed to achieve the "purpose".

failed to achieve the "purpose".

"War in the Middle East, as we should have learned by now, is neither swift to end nor sure to achieve its purpose," said Sherman who served as a senior nuclear negotiator with Iran. After nearly 18 years since the U.S. invaded Afghanistan, Taliban has emerged stronger to the extent that it now controls most of territory in the country.

The U.S. invasion of Iraq in March 2003 also led to indescribably disastrous results. About a million Iraqis, mostly civilians, lost their lives to the spread of terrorism in the country.

'There will be no war due to Iran's power'

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Abbasali Kadkhodaei, de s k spokesman of the Guardian Council, has said there will be no war between Iran and the United States because Iran is much stronger than before.

"There will be no war because while the eight-year war against Iran caused damage, it secured Iran's security against the enemy's military aggression for years and increased our defense power a hundred times," Kadkhodaei said in a tweet on Sunday.

The eight-year war is a reference to Saddam Hussein's attack on Iran in 1980 that lasted until 1988.

He also referred to a tweet by Richard Haass, president of the Council on Foreign Relations, say-

ing, "Richard Haass knows this well, as he said: war would bolster Iran."

In a post on his Twitter account, Haass said, "Disagree w @TomCottonAR on war w Iran. Would not be quick, easy, or confined to Iranian territory. Iran could take war to much of region and even globally with cyber, militias, etc. Oil prices would spike. And rather than weaken regime war could bolster it."

He was responding to U.S. Senator Tom Cotton, who said in an interview with Firing Line that if it comes to war with Iran, he is confident the United States would win, and would win swiftly. "Two strikes, the first strike and the last strike," Cotton added.



U.S. congressman: Our allies are isolating us and not Iran



POLITICAL TEHRAN – U.S. Congressman Adam Schiff has said that due to Washington's escalation

has said that due to Washington's escalation of tensions with Tehran and its withdrawal from the international nuclear agreement, U.S. allies are increasingly isolating the U.S. and not Iran.

In an interview with CBS news' "Face the Nation" aired on Sunday, he chastised National Security Advisor John Bolton and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo for their "belligerent rhetoric" against Iran.

Schiff criticized the steps taken by the Trump administration "to renege on the Iran agreement, to try to force Europe to renege on the Iran agreement, to try to force Iran to withdraw from the agreement to go back to the path of enrichment, the designation of the IRGC as a terrorist group, the belligerent rhetoric from the administration

from Pompeo, from Bolton."

"All of these policy decisions have led us to a state where confrontation is far more likely and that cannot be ignored," he added. "When you take a series of steps that, yes, ratchet up tensions, you shouldn't be surprised when the intelligence tells you, 'Hey tensions have been ratcheted up. It's now more a risk of confrontation."

Schiff pointed out that this is why "our allies are departing from us. This is why our allies increasingly are isolating us and not Iran." He added that the Trump administration's policies have not made the United States any safer.

"The problem is that this ratcheting up of tensions was all too predictable, all too calculated by people like Bolton and Pompeo and it has led us to the precipice of potential catastrophe," he remarked.

Son of former deputy minister to serve time in jail for fraud



political TEHRAN — A court de s k in Tehran on Sunday sentenced Yasin Ramin, a well-connected businessman and an importer of medicine and medical equipment, to seven years in jail, local sources reported.

His lawyer told reporters that his client's conviction is related to financial dispute with the Iranian Red Crescent Society, Fars reported. However, he declined to give more, saying, "Details of the case may do harm to his client's interests."

Other sources, such as Tabnak, quoted Tehran Prosecutor General Abbas Jafari Dolatabadi as having said that the convict was charged with importing expired baby formula which on occasions had caused death and blindness in infants.

Yassin Ramin is the son of Mohammad

Ali Ramin, who served as deputy culture minister during Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's presidency.

Yasin Řamin is married to Iranian superstar Mahnaz Afshar.

Fars reported that Yasin Ramin has been sentenced to 17 years in jail, but he has to spend only seven years based on Islamic laws. He also has to return up to two million euros to the government.

Ramin is entitled to appeal the verdict, the report said.

Ramin was jailed in 2016 based on a complaint made by the Red Crescent Society and spent about six months in jail before being released on bail. A Red Crescent official told the press that the case was about funds Ramin had received from the Society to import medical equipment, but he did not pay the seller.

U.S. cannot weaken Iranian youths by arresting famous scientist: academic

(Press TV) — A senior Iranian academic has criticized the attitude of the United States government toward young Iranians, particularly university students and researchers, saying the U.S. will not be able to weaken the "iron will" of the youths through such measures as the recent arrest of an Iranian stem cell researcher.

"Iran's researchers and intelligent youth have found their way. They know what to do and how to solve their country's problems, how to develop their universities and how to realize their revolutionary goals," Vice-Chancellor of Tehran's Tarbiat Modares University Yaqoub Fat'hollahi said in an exclusive interview with Press TV.

Media reports said on Saturday that Masoud Soleimani, a top Iranian stem cell scientist, has been put behind bars in the United States without trial for the past eight months.

In October 2018, 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 arrival in the U.S.

weaken the iron will of Iranian youth and Iranian universities, and they will resolutely pursue their goals," the interviewee said.

He warned about the damage such behavior would do to

"Such methods [used by the United States] will not

He warned about the damage such behavior would do to the image of the people and government of the United States.



Yaqoub Fat'hollahi

Leonard Franco, the detained scientist's attorney in Atlanta, says his client has been held in jail there without bail. Soleimani had been invited by the Mayo Clinic in Min-

Soleimani had been invited by the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota to lead 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.

Elsewhere in his interview, Fat'hollahi said those Iranians who, like the jailed scientist, are working for the independence of their country are subject to such treatment by the U.S. government "at any time" and "and it would be wise for them to be cautious in the face of such behavior."

Washington, he said, has been intolerant of Iran's progress toward scientific independence since the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

Fat'hollahi called on the FBI to come clean about the circumstances under which the Iranian scientist was arrested, saying, "I urge the FBI to tell the world's public opinion why they have arrested him and say what illegal measure he has taken."

He also urged "scientific circles in the United States and other developed countries, including Europeans, to help put an end to this unjust behavior and secure the Iranian researcher's release," adding, "Such behavior harms U.S. people and government more than us."

According to TMU authorities, the hearing in Soleimani's case has been adjourned for at least three times since October and his family and the TMU have so far paid \$70,000 to his lawyers to prove his innocence, but all to no avail.

Almost 50 Iranian nationals are currently imprisoned in the United States under various pretexts, the most important of which being bypassing the U.S. sanctions.

Civil defense chief says U.S. policy is not to enter war with Iran



POLITICAL
TEHRAN – The head of Iran's Civil Defense
Organization believes it is not the policy of the
United States to enter a war with Iran

United States to enter a war with Iran.

"This is because by entering that stage, the White House will lose the chance to influence Iran's society and economy through social networks," Qolamreza Jalali said on Monday.

"The Americans believe that pressure is being pursued through social networks and the country's public spaces," he said. "They are trying to present a visage of war and concentrate on economic pressure to leave their desired negative impact on the country."

pressure to leave their desired negative impact on the country."
On April 27, Jalali said conducting practices and maneuvers to promote the preparedness of the country to deal with threats in special circumstances is a priority for his organization in the current year, which started on March 21, 2019.

He further added that his organization had conducted as many as 60 maneuvers in banking, transportation and other fields last year.

Salehi Amiri urges unity to pass through current difficult situation



POLITICAL TEHRAN – Reza Salehi Amiri, president of des k Iran's National Olympic Committee (NOC), has underlined the necessity of unity in order to pass through the current critical situation.

In an interview with the Arman newspaper published on Monday, Salehi Amiri said the reformists along with other political factions, including the principlists, can show their unity to the growy.

The remarks by Salehi Amir comes as Iran has come under unprecedented economic pressure coupled with repeated threats of military action against the country by the Trump administration.

"In the current circumstances and in order to survive politically, we need to show political unity among different political factions," said Salehi Amiri, who also served as minister of culture and Islamic guidance in President Hassan Rouhani's first administration.

He explained that there are three major political factions inside Iran today under the name of reformists, principlists and moderates.

Asked about the threats posed to the moderates, he said radicalism is the main threat against the discourse of the moderates.

"I believe that radicalism rejects the political system in any situation," he said, adding, "Radicalism survives through chaotic atmospheres."

Air Force commander: Iran ready to counter misadventures



POLITICAL TEHRAN – Commander of the Islamic Reduce of the Islamic Republic of Iran Air Force (IRIAF) says Iran is ready to counter any misadventures by enemies.

Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh also called on armed forces to have faith in their path in order to defeat the enemy as has been promised by Allah in the Quran, Mehr reported. Nasirzadeh made the remarks while visiting the Bushehr,

Bandar Abbas and Isfahan air bases.

The IRIAF is active in "defending the people and national security and always enjoys mental and martial readiness," he added.

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	211871.7
IFX	2623.1

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,851 rials
GBP	53,468 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$72.61/b
WTI	\$63.17/b
OPEC Basket	\$72.61/b
Gold	\$1,277.10/oz
Silver	\$14.45/oz
Platinium	\$822.00/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Iranian trade delegation to visit Austria in June

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran-Austria Joint Chamber of Commerce is going to dispatch a trade delegation to Austria in June, the portal of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) reported.

The Iranian delegation's visit will be concurrent with a business forum which is due to explore ways of expanding trade ties through cooperation between the two countries' small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

The delegation will be comprised of the representatives of Iranian companies active in a variety of fields including food and medicine, renewable energy, transportation, mines, tourism, building and construction materials, new technologies, startups and resource management.

CBI issues directive on re-injection of export income

1 -> As for other exporters, at least 50 percent of the total earnings should be presented at the NIMA system and a maximum 20 percent could be distributed in form of hard currency and the

rest can be used for imports.

Earlier this month, the CBI Governor Abdolnaser Hemmati said that so far the country's exporters have re-injected 60 percent of their total exports revenues in the form of foreign currency into the country's financial system.

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

Iran provides foreign currency for the country's exporters with significantly low exchange

rates and the exporters are obliged to return the equivalent of the supplied fund in the form of foreign currency.

Russia's GDP disappoints in 1Q19 with 0.5% growth

Russia's GDP growth slowed notably to 0.5% year-on-year in 1Q19, down from the strong 2.7% y/y seen in 4Q18 and 1.9% y/y in 1Q18, according to the preliminary data by Rosstat statistics bureau.

According to intellinews.com, the 0.5% growth is well below the 0.8% expected by the Ministry of Economic Development and 1%-1.5% by the Central Bank of Russia (CBR) in the reporting quarter, and is the slowest quarterly growth since 4Q17.

Slow GDP growth reinforces the first-quarter base sector statistics, which showed rather moderate results and had analysts hoping for a fiscal spending stimulus later in 2019 supporting

Analysts surveyed by Vedomosti daily note that economic growth in the reporting quarter has alarmingly underperformed even the most pessimistic forecasts, while pointing that for an emerging economy 0.5% growth is close to recession.

The economics ministry attributed the slowdown to weak domestic demand with consumer demand compromised by shrinking real income (down by 2.4% in 1Q19) and the VAT hike. Overall in 2019 the ministry forecasts 1.3% GDP growth versus 2.3% seen in 2018, the CBR forecasts 1.2%-1.7% growth, which is conditioned by the launch of 13 national investment project and the inflow of public spending.

As analyzed by bne IntelliNews last month, the Kremlin is launching into a six-year long RUB27 trillion (\$400b) spending bonanza that is intended to transform the economy by spending a third of the money on infrastructure, and if the money is well spent it could lead to a boom.

Chief economist of BCS Global Markets Vladimir Tikhomirov attributed the 1Q19 underperformance to Vedomosti to three factors: weak consumption as consumers had to absorb the pension age increase and higher taxes, as well as much more unpredictable warmer winters that lower utilities output, and slower growth of state military orders.

Tikhomirov warns that as state investment has de-facto remained the main driver of economic growth, the national projects could fail to accelerate GDP this year as there are no signs that the large projects are close to being launched.

At the same time, underperforming economic growth in the first quarter increases the likelihood and the possible scope of the monetary easing expected to be launched by the CBR already starting with the second quarter of 2019.

Fishery output anticipated to reach 455,000 tons by March 2020

TEHRAN—Iran's annual fishery output is anticipated to reach 455,000 tons in the current Iranian calendaryear (ends on March 19, 2020), according

to a deputy at Iran's Fishery Organization. Hossein Ali Abdolhay said the figure excludes the fishes bred through fish farming, IRNA re-

The official also said that the country's Sixth Five-Year National Development Plan (20162021) has envisaged production of 237,000 tons of warm-water fishes for the current Iranian year, but regarding the recent flood in the country, the figure is estimated to fall to 200,000 tons.

Damages caused by the flood are also estimated to reduce production of cold-water fishes to 150,000 tons, fishes bred in the lakes and dam waters to 70,000 tons, saltwater fishes to 50,000 tons and sturgeons to 3,400 tons, he added.

The deputy head of Fishery Organization



further announced that some 12 aquatic species are already bred in Iran and the figure is planned to reach 17 by the end of the Sixth Plan

Mentioning the recent flood in the country, the official said that fish farms have incurred 5.3 trillion rials (over \$126 million) loss during

Iran, Czech Republic ink MOU on industrial co-op

ECONOMY TEHRAN – Iran's Industrial Development and Renovation Organization (IDRO) and the Czech Republic's ministry of industry and trade signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on industrial cooperation between the two countries.

The MOU was signed by Eduard Muricky, the Czech deputy minister of industry and trade, and Mohammad-Baqer Aali, the chairman of IDRO executive board, during an Iran-Czech joint industrial meeting in Tehran, according to ISNA.

Based on the MOU, a working group will be established

between Iran and Czech Republic to facilitate developing industrial cooperation, especially between the two sides private sectors.

On the sidelines of the signing ceremony, the officials also agreed to take all necessary measures to expand cooperation between the two sides' automotive, rail transport, new technologies as well as energy industries.

Establishing Iran-Czech joint venture companies in order to expand industrial investments and renovate the industrial and manufacturing process, as well as shipbuilding were also among the provisions of the agreement.

In the event, Mohammad-Baqer Aali urged the two governments to facilitate effective communications between the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Muricky for his part expressed his country's willingness for implementing the provisions of the MOU as soon as possible.

On Sunday, Muricky also met with the acting head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) and discussed the potentials of the Iranian and Czech private companies for expanding mutual trade.

U.S.-China trade war and crumbling Italian economy sparks fears of new euro crisis

Germany's economic expansion is predicted to be just 0.5% this year, down from 1.8% a few months ago - a massive decrease likely caused by the 25 per cent tariffs Trump slapped on steel and aluminum imports from the EU.

The tariffs imposed by Trump are part of his "America First" campaign policy to revive U.S. metal industries and reduce the country's trade deficit. He reportedly told the French president

Emmanuel Macron that he wants to keep the tariffs in place until German cars are eradicated from the U.S. Now, Dr. Lars Feld, of the German

Council of Economic Experts, has warned of a slowdown in Europe's economy, citing the above figures and Germany's financial situation. Speaking to the BBC, he said Trump's

tariffs in combination with Italy's crumbling financial economy have the potential to plunge Europe into a new financial crisis. The German car manufacturing industry

has taken a few hits over the past year that have affected sales and brought profits down.

Trump's tough tariffs

 $A side from \, Trump's \, tough \, tariffs, \, new$ emissions standards for air pollution affected the industry's ability to manufacture its cars.

Last summer, a drought in Germany also caused severe disruption to the transport of goods on the Rhine.

Manufacturing accounts for about one fifth of Germany's annual income, so any cause significant damage to the country's financial health.

Since the U.S.-China trade war began, there has been far less demand from China for German products like cars.

And the country is struggling to keep up in the face of global manufacturing competition.

The issues affecting Germany and Italy recently prompted the European Commission to reduce its forecast for growth across the EU to 1.4% this year - just a touch above what it expects for the UK.

Last week, a single tweet from President Trump about the U.S.-China trade wars knocked £1.5 trillion off the global markets.

He threatened to double the tough tariffs already imposed on China, part of a spate of tariffs and laws the president has been imposing on countries around the world.

Staying out of recession Dr. Feld also said that Italy is struggling

to stay out of recession while grappling with a banking crisis and high government debt. Reckless spending by the Italian govern-

ment has placed it in over £2 trillion worth of debt - a figure that means they are close to breaching rules set by the European Com-

Dr. Feld says that Italy's crumbling financial economy has the potential to plunge

Europe into a new financial crisis. He said: The "banking system in Italy is not as safe as we might hope for.

"There is the potential for contagion, in particular, from the Italian banking system to other banking systems.

"This might look like a new euro crisis." Several Italian leaders have needed to

(Source: thesun.co.uk)

inflow winning streak since 2013

Philippines now in longest dollar

Net dollar inflows into the Philippine economy surged to their highest level in almost six years due to a trifecta of substantial remittances from overseas Filipino workers, and a surge of both short- and long-term investments

into the country.

More importantly, the strong performance of the country's balance of payments (BOP) — the aggregate net value of all transactions for goods and services with the rest of the world - in the first four months of the year marks the longest streak of foreign currency

According to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, the BOP position for the January-April 2019 period posted a surplus of \$4.27 billion. This represents a turnaround from the \$1.5-billion BOP deficit recorded in the first four months of 2018.

inflows outdoing outflows since 2014.

The "surplus may be attributed partly to remittance inflows from overseas Filipinos and net inflows of foreign portfolio investments during the first quarter of the year, and net inflows of foreign direct investments in first two months of 2019," the central bank said. The turnaround is significant in light of

the end-2018 record of a net outflow of \$2.3 billion from the local economy caused the by country's yawning trade gap with other nations as the Duterte administration buys more goods and services from overseas to accelerate its infrastructure buildup.

Balance of payments

The last time the Philippines ended a year with a balance of payments surplus was the ows recorded in 2012 For April alone, the country's overall balance of payments position posted a surplus of \$467 million, marking a reversal from the \$270-million deficit recorded in the same month last year.

The central bank said that April inflows stemmed mainly from the BSP's foreign exchange operations and income from its investments abroad, and the national government's net foreign currency deposits. These were offset partially, however, by the payments made by the government for its foreign exchange obligations during the month in review.

ING Bank Manila senior economist Nicholas Mapa said the country would likely see months more of surpluses with the external position less vulnerable in 2019. Going forward, the Philippines will also see heavier reliance on the financial account even as the current account remains in deficit, he said.

"Meanwhile, we also expect the current account to narrow, on sustained growth in overseas Filipino remittances and business process outsourcing receipts which are seen to counter a slightly narrower trade deficit on the back of slowing imports with capital goods seeing only single-digit growth of late," he added.

The latest BOP position reflected the final gross international reserves level of \$83.88 billion as of end-April 2019. At this level, the GIR is equivalent to 7.4 months? worth of imports of goods and payments of services and primary income. It is also equal to 5 times the country's short-term external debt based on original maturity and a fitimes based on residual matur

(Source: business.inquirer.net)

In a surprise, Japan's economy grew in the first quarter, despite a slowdown in China

Japan reported a surprising economic upswing in the first three months of the year, but the sunny figures belied continuing weaknesses that threaten the country's prospects.

Japan's economy, the third-largest in the world behind the United States and China, grew at an annualized rate of 2.1 percent in the first quarter of 2019, according to data released on Monday by Japan's Cabinet Office. Economists had expected the economy to shrink because of weakened demand from China as that economy slows

A closer reading of the Japanese figures gave economists little reason to cheer. Private consumption and exports fell. Japan's surprise performance stemmed in large part from a sharp drop in imports, which fell more dramatically than exports. That wider trade surplus enhanced Japan's bottom line, even as it signaled that Japanese businesses and consumers are reluctant to spend.

"As weak imports should signify weak domestic demand, it is definitely not a reason to rejoice," said Takuji Okubo, chief economist for Japan Macro Advisors, a research firm.

The surprise expansion comes despite an increasingly gloomy global outlook. China, a major contributor to global growth, has been hit by its trade war with the United States and by its efforts to contain its debt problems. Though China has taken steps to stimulate growth, further slowdowns could ripple through Asia and the rest of the world. Japanese companies across a wide range of industries, especially in sectors that supply unfinished components to Chinese manufacturers, have already made huge downward revisions to their earnings forecasts.

Reinvigorating Japan's economy

The report offers a mixed bag for the country's Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, who has made reinvigorating Japan's economy a centerpiece of his appeal to voters. While the headline figure could give him political cover to push his policies past lawmakers, it does little to change Japan's difficult position.

"In terms of policy implications, the seemingly positive



growth is unlikely to convince policymakers all is well," Mr. Okubo said.

For decades, Japan has been struggling to find its way out of the economic doldrums that began in the 1990s. Mr. Abe came to office in 2012 pledging to turn things around with a package of economic reforms, known as Abenomics. They included loose monetary policy, heavy government investment and reforms to sclerotic social and corporate structures that have suppressed the country's economic performance.

Since then, Japan has largely experienced modest growth, except for a brief fall into recession in 2014 following an increase in the country's consumption tax. But much of that success coincided with China's remarkable economic rise.

Japan's Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, has made reinvigorating the country's economy a centerpiece of his appeal to voters.

Japanese voters are increasingly concerned about the country's economy, said Tobias Harris, a Japan analyst at the New York-based political consulting firm Teneo Intelligence, adding that the new data "suggest that there is something to the pessimism that has been captured both by government surveys and by leading indicators." Now that China's economy is also slowing, Mr. Abe's poli-

cies look set to face a difficult test.

He has committed to once again increasing the country's

consumption tax in October, this time to 10 percent from 8 percent. He says the increase is necessary to pay down the country's huge debt and fund social programs that are expanding as the country's population ages. Japan's debt ratio is the highest among developed nations at roughly two and a half times the country's annual economic output.

Mr. Abe has already delayed the tax raise twice. His insistence on sticking to the October deadline has drawn condemnation from across the political spectrum, including from members of his own party, who argue that raising the tax now could push

the country into recession. An economic shock

Nevertheless, the Abe administration has said it will take an economic shock on the scale of the 2008 financial crisis to derail its plans.

Speaking to reporters following the data release, Toshimitsu Motegi, the minister in charge of carrying out Japan's economic policies, focused on the positive, saying that "we believe the

rends in demand have not deteriorated. The plans to implement the consumption tax "remain

unchanged," he said. Though Monday's report was mixed, the strong headline figure may also open some space for Mr. Abe in his negotiations with the United States over a trade deal between the two countries

 $President\,Trump\,has\,frequently\,complained\,about\,the\,trade$ deficit between the United States and Japan and is using the threat of auto tariffs as leverage in trade negotiations with Tokyo that kicked off in Washington last month.

Mr. Trump arrives in Tokyo on Saturday to meet Japan's new emperor, Naruhito. During the visit, he is expected to talk trade with Mr. Abe. Both sides have said they hope to come to an agreement quickly.

But with Japanese upper house elections coming in July, Mr. Abe may be leery of making any concessions to the American president that could be seen as potentially damaging Japan's economic situation.

(Source: nytimes.com)

'Foreign investors still interested in Iran's petchem industry'

ENERGY TEHRAN — Iranian
National Petrochemical Company (NPC)'s director for investment said despite U.S. pressures, foreign investors are still eager for participation in Iran's lucrative petrochemical industry, IRIB reported.

"Despite all the current negative propaganda since the withdrawal of the United States from the nuclear deal, foreign companies, especially Asians, are still willing to cooperate with us considering advantages of the Iranian petrochemical industry," Hossein Alimorad said.

The official noted that currently a consortium comprising foreign partners is in talks with NPC for investment in some significant projects.

"The government is also taking all the necessary measures to facilitate the process of such investments and the companies which are going to invest in Iran surely have their own mechanisms for countering U.S. sanctions," he said.



After withdrawing from the nuclear deal in November 2018, the U.S. has been pressuring Iran's trade partners to cut of ties with the Islamic Republic.

In late April, General Secretary of Iran's Association of Petrochemical Industry Corporation (APIC) Ahmad Mahdavi Abhari said that U.S. sanctions were not going to have any significant impact on Iran's petrochemical industry.

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 petrochemcal 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.

4 South Pars platforms go through overhaul operations

ENERGY TEHRAN – Platforms of phases 4 and 5 as well as 10 and 16 of the South Pars gas field (which Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf) have

gone through overhaul operation successfully, Shana reported According to the Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC) public

relations office, the operations took 7 days and were aimed at ensuring sustainable and secure gas production, preventing potential production decline especially in the winter, and maximizing productivity of the platforms.

Each of the platforms are developed for 28 mcm/d of natural gas production capacity.

Earlier this month, Mohammad Meshkinfam, the POGC managing director, announced that daily gas production in South Pars gas field will be increased by 60 million cubic meters (mcm) by the end of current Iranian calendar year (March 19, 2020).

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

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

OPEC, allies reaffirm commitment to balanced oil markets

OPEC and its allies on Sunday reaffirmed their commitment to achieving a balanced market and working towards oil market stability on a sustainable basis with solid fundamentals.

As per gulfnews.com, a statement issued by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) after the conclusion of the Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMMC) meeting in Jeddah said the average conformity for the production cut agreement also known as the Declaration of Cooperation reached 120 percent since January 2019.

OPEC and its allies including Russia are cutting output by 1.2 million barrels per day since January 1 in order to reduce global oil inventories for rebalancing of oil markets.

OPEC also noted that critical uncertainties for remain for oil markets including ongoing trade negotiations, monetary policy developments and geopolitical challenges.

The "JMMC requested that the Joint Technical Committee and the OPEC Secretariat continue to monitor and analyze oil market developments and, particularly, oil inventory projections in the coming weeks with a view to the next JMMC meeting making a recommendation to the OPEC Conference and OPEC and non-OPEC Ministerial Meeting, which are scheduled to meet in June 2019, regarding appropriate actions on the part of participating countries for the second half of 2019," OPEC statement added.

Earlier, Saudi Arabia's Oil Minister Khalid Al Falih hinted about continuation of the production cut agreement and said oil inventories still remain high with plentiful supplies.

Oil rises after OPEC indicates it will maintain output cuts

Oil rose to multi-week highs on Monday after OPEC indicated it would probably maintain production cuts that have helped support prices this year, while tension continued to escalate in the

According to af.reuters.com, Brent crude was up by 90 cents. or 1.3%, at \$73.11 a barrel by 0604 GMT, having earlier touched \$73.40, the highest since April 26.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude was up 71 cents, or 1.1% higher, at \$63.47 a barrel. The U.S. benchmark reached \$63.81 earlier, the highest since May 1.

Saudi Energy Minister Khalid al-Falih said on Sunday there was consensus among the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and allied oil producers to drive down crude inventories "gently" but he would remain responsive to the needs of a "fragile market".

United Arab Emirates (UAE) Energy Minister Suhail al-Maz-

rouei earlier told reporters that producers were capable of filling any market gap and that relaxing supply cuts was not the right decision.

U.S. President Donald Trump threatened Tehran on Sunday, tweeting that a conflict would be the "official end" of Iran, while Saudi Arabia said it was ready to respond with "all strength" and it was up to Iran to avoid war.

The rhetoric follows last week's attacks on Saudi oil assets and the firing of a rocket on Sunday into Baghdad's heavily fortified "Green Zone" that exploded near the U.S. Embassy.

"Al-Falih and the UAE both put paid to suggestions of increasing production over the weekend and then President Trump essentially telling Iran to bring it on was a perfect short-term storm for oil prices," Greg McKenna, strategist at McKenna Macro, told Reuters by email.

OPEC, Russia and other non-member producers, an alliance known as OPEC+, agreed to cut output by 1.2 million barrels per day (bpd) from Jan. 1 for six months to prevent inventories from increasing and weakening prices. "Taken together with the technical setups in both WTI and

Brent, which held support in the past week or so, there is every chance we see a run toward the highs before this move is over," McKenna said, referring to this year's highs. Brent touched \$75.60 on April 25, while the WTI high for 2019

is \$66.60, reached on April 23. As of Monday, Brent is up more than 35 percent, while WTI has gained nearly 40 percent. Another bullish signal was a second week of declines in U.S. drilling operations, with energy companies cutting oil rigs to the

lowest since March 2018. The rig count, RIG-OL-USA-BHI an early indicator of future output, fell by 3 to 802, General Electric Co's Baker Hughes energy services unit said on Friday.



Water and Wastewater company

Call for identification of investors for

Completion of a section of wastewater system in Taibad through Buyback contract (Auction) According to Article 37 of the sixth development plan, Article 2 of the law on establishment of water and wastewater companies approved in 1990, the Khorasan razavi Water and Wastewater company intends to concede the completion of a section of the wastewater collection and treatment system in Taibad against the allocation of the determined volume of treated effluent for specific use for a limited and predetermined period through Buyback contract according to the following conditions to a qualified investor.

A- Brief description of the project:

- Subject: completion of a section of the wastewater system in Taibad, including: WWTP and sewer
- Concessioner: The Khorasan razavi Water and Wastewater Company
- Construction period: maximum 3 years
- Commercial operation period: Financial model to be submitted
- Treatment efficiency: Surface water discharge
- Population coverage: 95800 person
- Project site: City Taibad Province Khorasan razavi

B- General conditions for investment:

- The investor must be a real or legal entity in possession of acceptable management experience to ensure and allocate the required investment.
- Date, deadline and address to collect the qualification documents: Qualified investors may submit their letter of intent for investment in the plan and collect the qualification documents from 22/05/2019 until the end of office hours on 29/05/2019 from: mashhad-sadaf-vakil abad blvd- The Khorasan razavi Water and Wastewater Company- the technical support unit (TSU)
- Address and deadline for submission of the required documents: The completed

evaluation forms should be submitted at 12.00 on wednesday dated 19/06/2019 to: The Khorasan razavi Water and Wastewater Company Secretariat

- Following the review of the evaluation documents submitted by the interested parties, the qualified investors shall be invited for contract negotiations.
- The concessioner has the right to accept or reject the technical or financial proposals of the investors at any stage of the proceedings.

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Khorasan razavi

Call for identification of investors for

Water and Wastewater company

Completion of a section of wastewater system in sabzevar through Buyback contract (Auction) According to Article 37 of the sixth development plan, Article 2 of the law on establishment of water and wastewater companies approved in 1990, Note 19 of the single article of the budget law of 2018 of the whole country and And the Executive Order of Note 19 to No. 33989/55341 dated 2018, the Khorasan razavi Water and Wastewater company intends to concede the completion of a section of the wastewater collection and treatment system in sabzevar against the allocation of the determined volume of treated effluent for specific use for a limited and predetermined period through Buyback contract according to the following conditions to a qualified investor.

A- Brief description of the project:

- Subject: completion of a section of the wastewater system in sabzevar, including: WWTP and sewer
- Concessioner: The Khorasan razavi Water and Wastewater Company
- Construction period: 3 years
- Commercial operation period: Financial model to be submitted
- Treatment efficiency: Surface water discharge
- Population coverage: 356202 person
- Project site: City sabzevar Province Khorasan razavi

B- General conditions for investment:

- The investor must be a real or legal entity in possession of acceptable management experience to ensure and allocate the required investment.
- Date, deadline and address to collect the qualification documents: Qualified investors may submit their letter of intent for investment in the plan and collect the qualification documents from 22/05/2019 until the end of office hours on 29/05/2019 from: mashhad-sadaf-vakil abad blvd- The Khorasan razavi Water and Wastewater Company- the technical support unit (TSU)
- Address and deadline for submission of the required documents: The completed evaluation forms should be submitted at 12.00 on wednesday dated 19/06/2019 to: The Khorasan razavi Water and Wastewater Company Secretariat
- Following the review of the evaluation documents submitted by the interested parties, the qualified investors shall be invited for contract negotiations.
- The concessioner has the right to accept or reject the technical or financial proposals of the investors at any stage of the proceedings.

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Obama's role in the upcoming U.S. presidential election

By Saeed Sobhani

TEHRAN — Barack Obama will undoubtedly play a big role in the presidential elections of 2020. During the congressional elections in 2018, Obama also played a significant role in the Democrats' victory in the House of Representatives. The former president of the United States intends to officially announce his support for Biden in the final round of the upcoming US presidential election race. While Biden will have to go through the Democratic primaries for the first time in the final stages of the election.

Polls show that Joe Biden has a lot of chances to win over people like Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren. Obama will officially announce his support for his deputy Joe Biden in the final round of the upcoming presidential election race.

Overcoming the current president of the United States has turned into the main goal of the Democrats in the United States. American Democrats who have been isolated in the last two years, and lost the White House , the Senate, and many governorates, are now planning to win the presidential election(2020).On the other hand, the public dissatisfaction raised over the performance of the US President has given hope to the Democrats for winning the next election.

Moreover, former US President Barack Obama challenged the existing policies in the United States during John McCain's funeral, without naming Trump. Delivering his eulogy, Obama said: "So much of our politics, our public life, our public discourse can seem small and mean and petty, trafficking in bombast and insult and phony controversies and manufactured outrage."

In recent mounts, many of the American Democrats have intensified their verbal and political attacks on President Donald Trump. Former Secretary of State John Kerry implicitly stated that he would not rule out running for president in 2020. Kerry was the Democratic nominee for president in 2004 but ultimately lost the election to former US President George W. Bush. He had also emphasized on the critical situation of the United States following the presence of Trump at the White House. Also Al Gore, the former vice president and Democratic presidential candidate, publicly called for President Donald Trump to resign.

As NPR reported, Many Democrats are angry. They're angry with President Trump's election and what it represents. And they're angry about the direction of the country, and the inequities in American life. So it would make sense that the person running for the Democratic nomination for president would channel that anger. President Trump did it to win over the Republican base in 2016, saying he gladly carries the "mantle of anger." Not Joe Biden.

The Democrat tried to put forward a message of unity Saturday at a major campaign rally in Philadelphia before 6,000 people, according to a security official with the campaign, capping off his presidential campaign kickoff."Some say Democrats don't want to hear about unity," Biden said. "That they are angry— and the angrier you are—the better. That's what they are saying you to have to do to win the Democratic nomination. Well, I don't believe it. I believe Democrats want to unify this nation. That's what we've always been about. Unity."

He spoke of choosing "hope over fear, truth over lies and, yes, unity over fear." He called it a "different path" that can bring together "Democrats, Republicans and independents."

For Barack Obama's vice president, it made senseBut lots of liberals aren't buying it.Rebecca Traister, who authored the book Good and Mad: The Revolutionary Power of Women's Anger, tweeted that Biden is "deeply wrong" that "Anger at injustice has catalyzed transformative change; 'unity' has not."

Anyway, Biden will face the opportunities and challenges of the upcoming presidential election. But what's the main constellation of how Barack Obama will play in the presidential election of 2020? Rachel O'Neill wrote in FOXBusiness that Twenty-one Democrats are vying for the chance to face-off against President Trump in the 2020 fight for the White House Opens a New Window., but it's a former president who could help determine who gets that chance.

"Obama is gold to Democrats right now," Democratic strategist and head of research at Bustle Digital Group, Jessica Tarlov, told "WSJ at Large" Opens a New Window. host Gerry Baker. "Going into the midterms it was the number one thing people were looking for in their candidates... that they had served with Obama in some way or another."

The Obama connection is seemingly giving former Vice President Joe Biden a leg-up in the race with a recent Hill-HarrisX poll Opens a New Window. showing Biden with a 32-point lead against other Democrats. "Joe Biden presents such an interesting potential threat because he still does seem to be able to speak the language of that Obama-Trump voter," says Kristen Soltis Anderson, a Republican pollster and founder of research firm Ecehlon Insights. "I think Biden is formidable," she concluded.

But with Biden having been in politics for a half of century, "there's certainly a lot of footage of [him] making mistakes on the trail" argued Tarlov. "He's lost running for president twice before." Biden came out swinging in his presidential campaign, attacking President Trump's character in his first ad. That is the "smartest way for Joe Biden to have entered this race," Tarlov said. "Make [the race] squarely about him versus Donald Trump... But [Biden] is definitely beatable."

But the question every Democrat wants to know is, is President Trump beatable? Despite the declining unemployment, accelerating economic growth Opens a New Window., and rising wages under President Trump, there is "plenty of reason to think this president will be defeated" in the 2020 elections, Tarlov said. "It's not 'just the economy, stupid'," she argued. "It's healthcare, stupid."

The latest NBC/Wall Street Journal poll Opens a New Window. showed healthcare ranking as the number one issue for voters heading in to the next election at 24 percent. Immigration coming in second at 18 percent. And the economy and jobs in third place with 14 percent. "There are people that don't love [Trump] as president but give him credit for the economy," said Anderson. The NBC/WSJ poll showed President Trump at an overall approval rating of 46 percent, but that number jumps to 51 percent in his dealing with the economy.

However Anderson warned: "you can be a victim of your own success...the economy is no longer the number one issue." Republicans have now owned some of the healthcare mess with the actions that they've taken over the last 2 1/2 years. And that remains a really big politician liability for the GOP," she explained.

Ultimately, Barack Obama will play an active role in the final stages of the presidential election in the United States. This may not be good for Republican politicians, and especially for Trump!

U.S. decision to drive Iran's oil export to zero biggest supply risk to global energy markets: Prof. Bininachvili

1 → However, the circumstances are different than the lead-up to Washington renewing sanctions on Iran in November 2018 when the two leading Gulf producers and other crude suppliers, including Russia, turned up their oil taps only to find themselves outwitted by learning that the Trump administration had granted waivers — significant reduction exceptions (SREs) — to Tehran's top crude buyers.

Riyadh and Abu Dhabi are making it clear that cooperation in replacing Iranian oil exports will now be on their terms.

oil exports will now be on their terms.
Saudi Oil Minister Khalid al-Falih struck
a cautious tone in comments regarding the
end of the waivers, saying: "In the next
few weeks, the kingdom will be consulting
closely with other producing countries and
key oil-consuming nations to ensure a wellbalanced and stable oil market." Riyadh
evidently is not interested in another oil
price crash.

Falih later stressed that, because the oil market is "well-supplied," Riyadh didn't perceive urgency in boosting production in May, when SREs to eight nations expire. "We will be responsive and we think there will be an uptick in real demand but certainly we are not going to be pre-emptive and increase production," he said.

UAE Oil Minister Suhail al-Mazrouei made a similar point earlier in April at a conference in Abu Dhabi, saying "I think we have learned the lesson... We will not jump the gun, pre-produce the volumes that are not required yet."

The two Gulf oil powerhouses seem politically committed to doing their part to undermine Iran's economy and ideally marginalize its influence in the greater Middle East. But Riyadh and Abu Dhabi know the oil market is tighter and more vulnerable than six months ago, the result of slowing global demand, rising crude inventories, less Venezuelan and Libyan oil available due to internal strife in these countries.

Given that Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are being tasked with replacing Iranian oil and preventing a major oil market disruption, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi tend nevertheless to avoid reckless and hasty steps on moving precipitously while they assess market conditions, determine their best course of action and protect their financial self-interests.

Energy executives familiar with Saudi decision-making process are certain that Riyadh would only respond after it thoroughly assessed the impact on the oil market from the expiration of sanctions. In other words, they may let the oil market continue to tighten before they add supply.

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have been instrumental in the OPEC+ alliance that has withdrawn as much as 1.2 million barrels per day (bpd) of crude from the market over the last year, a major contributor to a tightening of global oil supply. Saudi Arabia has assumed the lion's share of the cuts agreed to by the alliance, pumping well below its assigned quota of 10.31 million bpd at 9.79 million bpd in March.

Technically, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates could collectively boost oil output by as much as 1.5 million bpd reasonably quickly. As the biggest OPEC producer Saudi Arabia produced 9.82 million barrels a day in March and can pump an additional 1 million barrels a day within a short period.

The U.A.E. can increase output to 3.5 million barrels a day from a current level

of 3.045 million.

That volume would handily accommo-



Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have been instrumental in the OPEC+ alliance that has withdrawn as much as 1.2 million barrels per day (bpd) of crude from the market over the last year, a major contributor to a tightening of global oil supply.

date the loss of Iran's remaining 1 million bpd of exports, although the United States is unlikely to see Iranian crude sales drop to its "zero" target goal.

Interestingly, to cover the first 1million bpd of the lost Iran's share, Saudi Arabia and UAE do not need to transcend their respective OPEC allocated quotas as both countries are still underperforming. Saudi Arabia can lift output and still abide by the deal because it is currently pumping about 500,000 bpd below its quota. UAE also stays 400.000 bpd below.

They are unlikely to increase output over the existing quota before the OPEC+ summit in June, where new ceilings may most probably be reserved for the spare capacity holders.

However, the two Gulf producers would be unable to maintain that higher output indefinitely and what is particularly important, it would greatly diminish global spare production capacity, a critical factor should unexpected crises arise.

OPEC and allied suppliers including Russia agreed to limit their production until the end of June to buttress crude prices and avert a glut. They are due to meet in June to decide whether to extend the cuts.

June to decide whether to extend the cuts. Russia's crude and condensate output increasing slightly in 2019 to 558 million tons, or 11.21 million barrels a day.

That, on the surface, would suggest that the impact on oil prices from the expiration of Iran sanctions waivers could be limited. Saudi Arabia could replace lost Iranian supply barrel-for-barrel, at least in short term perspective. However, while Riyadh could ramp up production, it would also need to do so at a cost to its spare capacity. Buyers won't have trouble finding enough supply, but the loss of a big chunk of spare capacity has historically been a driver of higher prices and higher volatility.

If the United States succeeds in reducing Iran's crude exports close to zero, in line with its stated policy, Saudi Arabia would have to raise its production to unprecedented levels to cover the loss.

vels to cover the loss.

And it would leave the global market

tighter than at any time since the oil shocks of 1973/74 and 1979/80, with resulting upward pressure on prices.

The question is where exactly will the replacement barrels come from?

The estimates of the International En-

ergy Agency show that OPEC members held 3.4 million bpd of spare capacity, while their non-OPEC allies had no more than 330,000 bpd.

Saudi Arabia accounted for almost two-thirds of the reported OPEC spare capacity (2.02 million bpd), with smaller volumes held by Iraq (330,000 bpd), United Arab Emirates (330,000 bpd) and Kuwait (220,000 bpd).

Russia accounted for most of the non-OPEC spare capacity (roughly 250,000 bpd) with little or no available spare capacity in the other non-OPEC allies.

But using the IEA's figures, it is clear Saudi Arabia would need to increase production and exports by at least 1 million bpd to cover the total loss of Iranian barrels.

The Saudis claim that their spare production capacity is between 1.5 million bpd and 2 million bpd. The EIA defines spare capacity as the volume of oil production that can be brought online within 30 days and sustained for at least 90 days.

The problem with this estimate is that it has never been tested. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the kingdom has never produced more than 10.42 million bpd on an annual basis (2016) or 10.63 million bpd in a single month (July 2016) in the last 20 years.

Although, in theory, it may seem there is sufficient spare capacity in Saudi Arabia and other countries, to compensate for the loss of Iranian export, but it would leave the global market with less than 1 million bpd of capacity left to meet all other contingencies.

In practice, the market could become much tighter, with sanctions essentially using up all the spare capacity worldwide and eliminating this vitally important "shock-absorber".

Maximum production would require

opening the chokes on existing wells and bringing previously shut-in wells back into service. Boosting production this way might risk a decline in oilfield pressure that could result in long-term damage to the reservoirs.

And it is not clear whether the midstream infrastructure, i.e. pipelines, processing plants and export terminals have enough capacity to handle 12 million bpd because such high flow rates have never been tested.

The Saudis and their OPEC allies seem aware that using their spare capacity is a now a double-edged sword: it may cool down prices, but the impact could be limited by the risk-premium as the market worries about what's left.

Spare capacity is a fluid concept. For some, it means extra output that can flow at the flick of a switch. Realistically, most industry executives define it as production that can be brought on stream in 30 days, and then sustained for a at least three months. Beyond that, some of the spare capacity is simply oil on the ground that can be pumped by drilling new wells, requiring more time.

Over the years, Saudi Arabia has been traditionally secretive about how much of its spare capacity falls in each bucket. But Ali Al-Naimi, who was oil minister for nearly 25 years until 2016, offered a glimpse in 2012.

"I believe we can easily get up to 11.4, 11.8, almost immediately in a few day," Al-Naimi told CNN in 2012. "All we need is to turn valves," he added. The other 700,000 barrels a day to reach about 12.5 million requires three months of work, however. "And the 90 days is for one thing: to mobilize additional drilling," he said.

There's one more complication: of the 12.5 million barrels a day, only 12 million is controlled directly by state-owned company Saudi Arabian Oil Co, or Aramco. The other 500,000 barrels a day lies in the so-called Neutral Zone shared with Kuwait. But the region hasn't produced a single barrel for nearly two years due to a dispute between Kuwait and Riyadh.

Beyond production, Riyadh has another line of defense to meet a supply outage like Iran: a vast network of storage facilities, both in the kingdom and overseas, that can be drawn down temporarily.

As well as domestic storage, Saudi Arabia has filled up its strategic storage in Okinawa, Japan; Sidi Kerir in the Mediterranean coast of Egypt; and in the European oil hub of Rotterdam.

Moreover, Riyadh and the rest of OPEC are taking measures to reinforce its production machine: it has brought on stream 300,000 barrels a day of new production from the Khurais oilfied. The expansion was meant to compensate declines elsewhere, but over the short-term it could help to boost spare capacity.

Others within OPEC are also trying to follow suit. The United Arab Emirates is bringing forward the expansion of the offshore Umm Lulu and SARB fields, which will pump 129,000 barrels a day by the end of the year, up from 50,000 barrels a day now.

Iraq is bringing on stream the expansion of its Halfaya oilfield, doubling output to 400,000 barrels a day."

400,000 barrels a day."

In conclusion Albert Bininachvili noted, "Yet, despite the efforts, the Saudis and OPEC face a huge challenge to replace Iran. It is hard to disagree with Patrick Pouyanne, the CEO of Total, who puts it in simple terms: "You need to mobilize the wells, the rigs... It's not immediate. In our industry, you don't push a button and then oil flows. It's more complex!""

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 US 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 US, 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 fue.

Then there is Trump's executive order on blocking citizens of six Muslim countries from entering the US. 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 farright 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 recommitted 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 of 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 US. 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.

- 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

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.

to forge an alliance of nationalist European

 $parties. The \, Freedom \, Party, \, once \, seen \, as \, an \,$

example to be emulated, could now serve

with Freedom Party!

happens next."

Austrian chancellor defends coalition

As Politico reported, Austria's disgraced ex-Vice Chancellor Heinz-Christian Strache could face criminal prosecution in connection

with statements he made in a secretly taped

video that led to his resignation, according

to Chancellor Sebastian Kurz. "There could

be criminal liability," Kurz told the German

daily Bild in an interview published Sun-

day. "The investigations will determine what

Kurz withdrew from the governing coalition with Strache's far-right Freedom Party

in the wake of the video's release, triggering

new elections in September.In the video,

Strache discusses how his conversation part-

ner - a woman he believes to be the wealthy

niece of a Russian oligarch — could secretly

funnel money to his campaign. The footage

was recorded in 2017, a few months before

the election that vaulted Strache into power

alongside Kurz's People's Party. He tells the

woman she should set up a nonprofit organi-

zation as a conduit for the funds, a strategy he

says other wealthy donors have used to help

his party. In the interview, Kurz said he had

no choice but to end the coalition, given the

gravity of Strache's comments. In the video,

lucrative public contracts in exchange for

financial support and other favors.

trache also offered to help the woman score

The video appears to have been part of

U.S. occupying forces should be evicted from Iraq and Syria ASAP



TEHRAN (FNA) — Iraq's parliament is once again trying to vote on a bill to expel all foreign occupying troops from the country, and has singled out U.S. troops in particular as needing to leave.

The bill is expected to pass fairly easily. The argument is that the war on terror is over and the U.S. can't use Iraq to launch a war on Iran or any other country in the region.

The bill by the legislature in Baghdad comes as Washington has plans to set up military bases and increasing its troops in the country, and is currently engaged in expanding its Ain al-Assad

military base in Western al-Anbar province.
"The U.S. troops stationed in U.S.' Ain al-Assad air base in Heet city to west of al-Anbar province have already started operations to expand the air base," the Arabic-language al-Malou'ma news website reported. It noted that the operations to expand Ain al-Assad air base has taken place concurrent with arrival of U.S. military vehicles and equipment to the base, and said that the expansion of Ain al-Assad will include some major sectors of airport to the South of the base.

Meantime, the Saudi Okaz newspaper quoted some Iraqi parliamentary sources as also saying that Washington intends to increase the number of its troops in Iraq. It said Washington has informed Baghdad that it is going to set a new military base for its new troops.

This was all expected. Unlike what Washington would like to claim, the withdrawal of American troops from Iraq – or Syria won't allow ISIL to rise again, despite the many alarm bells from status quo establishment thinkers. There is even less likelihood ISIL will ever gain any particular advantage from the withdrawal of U.S. troops for several key reasons.

First, the Iraqi army continues hunting them down. Second, people hate ISIL - along with their Qaeda offshoots - and will continue hating them. And finally, Iraq wants to rebuild itself and this could only happen if occupying troops leave the wartorn country. However, Trump appears to be signaling to Iraq that he does not intend on leaving the region. That does not mean, however, that he needs to leave any ground troops in Iraq fighting the remnants of ISIL. There is no reason to remain active in the country, and so long as there are members of the U.S. armed force on the ground there, there will be chaos and concern for everyone.

Also hope burns eternal in Washington that by effectively dismantling Syria - illegally occupying Syria's territory along with much of its oil resources - Washington can pressure President Bashar Assad to step down. However, the government in Damascus is equally more secure today than at any other point since the war erupted. Meaning, all U.S. occupying forces should also leave Syria; something that should have never taken place as it is completely illegal since the U.S. army is in the country neither at the invitation of the Damascus government nor under any UN mandate.

As is, a continuing American presence in Iraq goes against international law and what the international civil society wants, which is troop withdrawal. The decision by Trump and the Pentagon to stay the course means there will be plenty more violence, and not just because of the seemingly permanent U.S. military presence there.

The U.S. plans to create a string of bases as staging areas for a permanent occupation of the region on the pretext of fighting terror. And there is no end in sight to the U.S. at war, both because the War Party has found the permanent enemy (terror), and because except for the Iraqis and their lawmakers no one at

the United Nations is willing to stand up to it. This is while the botched Iraq war and the bogus war on terror only brought immense, atrocious, sustained loss of life and chaos to the people of Iraq and the rest of the region. From their standpoint, all foreign occupying troops must leave. Permanent occupation only advances the aims of those who profit from the circumstances – U.S. military contractors and their regional proxies.

No doubt democratic Iraq is in peace with itself and its neighbors. So it is past time for the Iraqi community to robustly push for an end to the U.S. occupation since security and stability are crucial for the development of the war-torn country and for the advancement of regional peace and security.

The world is witnessing that Washington's cynical militarism is a threat upon the Middle East where the Military-Industrial Complex profits and innocent civilians die. As long as this continues, the endless war on terror which justifies permanent occupation will never end.

Many years of occupation and terror have taught us that permanent occupation of Iraq will make things worse. It is evident that these forces have been desperately trying to maintain America's supremacy in the chessboard of regional politics with little success and many lost lives. All this suggests that only when foreign occupying forces are gone, will peace and security return

to Iraq and the greater region. The same argument could be made about Syria. The real problem is the deeply flawed strategy the U.S. has had from the very beginning of its unwarranted intervention and occupation. The strategy is based on the illusion that the U.S. can send in troops and occupy a nation to allegedly fight terrorism and dictate orders to the central government or topple it, when in reality the United States' allies created, sponsored, trained, armed and funded the ISIL (also known as ISIS or DAESH) in the words of former U.S. Vice-President Joe Biden.

Plus, there are the usual geo-political and economic motivations at work. We see where that strategy led in Iraq - to nothing but disaster. If anything, things will equally grow worse in Syria. It is a disaster now and will continue to be a disaster for as long as American occupying troops stay there.

Political scandal in the capital of European music!

By Saeed Sobhani

TEHRAN — The recent political scandal in Austria has caused a lot of shock to the citizens of this country. The holding of an early election in Austria, shortly before the European Parliamentary elections, has a clear message for Europeans: that the extreme Right has a lot of political and social destruction in Europe!

What has just happened in Austria has raised questions about the political future of the European Union. In such a situation, people like the French President and German Chancellor are worried about the future of the eurozone and the European Union. This concern increases over time. The occurrence of a variety of security, political, economic and social crises has created many challenges in the European Union and the eurozone.

The emergence of these challenges has led to a sharp decline in the popularity of traditional parties in Europe. In such a way, nationalist parties have been able to increase their popularity with the public. Which side are the European Union and the eurozone really heading to? Will the future of Europe finally be clear these are the questions that concern the mentally ill, such as Merkel and

As The Economist reported,. On May 18th Heinz-Christian Strache, the leader of Austria's hard-right Freedom Party (FP?), resigned as the country's vice-chancellor after a stunning exposé published overnight by German media suggested that he had been prepared to manipulate the Austrian state to help his party's fortunes. "Enough is enough," declared Sebastian Kurz, the chancellor, a few hours later, calling time on the government and announcing an early general election.

During a boozy evening at a rented villa on the Spanish island in July 2017, three months before an Austrian general election, Mr Strache and Johann Gudenus, an ally, met "Alyona Makarova", a young woman who claimed to be the niece of a Russian oligarch, and a companion. Over champagne, sushi and copious amounts of Red Bull, Mr Strache appears to have offered to help his interlocutor gain access to juicy state highway contracts once he joined the government. In exchange, Ms Makarova would take a 50% stake in the Kronen Zeitung, a popular Austrian tabloid, and help reinvent it as an FP? mouthpiece. Such a turn, enthused Mr Strache, could lift his party's support from 27% to 34%. On several occasions during the conversation Mr Strache vowed not to do anything illegal. But seven hours of foot-



Kurz withdrew from the governing coalition with Strache's far-right Freedom Party in the wake of the video's release, triggering new elections in September. In the video, Strache discusses how his conversation partner — a woman he believes to be the wealthy niece of a Russian oligarch — could secretly funnel money to his campaign.

age, some of which has been made public, finds the FP? pair musing on the possibility of building a media landscape modelled on Hungary's, thinking about ways to circumvent party-donation rules, and lamenting the West's "decadence"—before decamping to a nightclub.

Also BBC reported that Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz has called a snap election following the collapse of his coalition government over a corruption scandal. The move came after Vice-Chancellor Heinz-Christian Strache resigned after secret footage emerged showing him talking to an alleged Russian investor.as mentioned,Mr Kurz's centre-right People's Party has been in government with Mr Strache's far-right Freedom Party.Austria's president recommended that elections should be held in September.

This new beginning should take place quickly, as quickly as the provisions of the Federal Constitution permit, so I plead for elections... in September," President Alexander van der Bellen said on Sunday.
On Saturday Mr Kurz said this was not

the first time he had had difficulties with the party."Even if I didn't express myself publicly at the time, there were many situations that I found difficult to swallow," he said. "After yesterday's video, I must say quite honestly: Enough is enough."The serious part of this [video] was the attitude towards abuse of power, towards dealing with taxpayers' money, towards the media in this country, Mr Kurz said, adding that he had been personally insulted in the footage.

The Freedom Party is one of Europe's best-established populist, nationalist parties. But while it is skilled in opposition, frequently gaining over 20% of the vote, its record is much more patchy when it comes to staying in power.In 2002, early elections had to be called when its coalition with the conservatives fell apart. In 2005, the party

split over internal disagreements.

Other European populist parties will be watching the Freedom Party's next steps closely. This scandal, which comes just a week before the EU elections, is likely to be a blow to attempts by Italy's Matteo Šalvini

an elaborate sting by unknown individuals, but no deals followed. Nonetheless, Strache's apparent eagerness to circumvent the law pens the door for prosecutors to explore his other dealings, in particular the possibility that he and his party received secret donations. Kurz defended his decision to enter into a coalition with the Freedom Party in the first

> "In order to pursue our agenda and bring about change, I had to be willing to endure quite a lot," he said, a reference to a string of provocations by officials in the far-right party, including attacks on the media and the use of extremist rhetoric. Kurz said he had no doubt that the scandal would damage Austria's reputation abroad. But he suggested the more lasting impact would be elsewhere. "The Freedom Party has destroyed itself," he said.

place, despite their long track record as a volatile,

racist force. He said that during the 17 months

the government lasted, it had managed to bal-

ance the budget and push through important

reforms, including a tax overhaul.

How Sheikh Zakzaky distributes foodstuffs to the needy for fasting for the past 20 years

I could remember, in 2016, in the course of the same gesture to the needy, thugs attacked recipients of Ramadan food gifts from Sheikh Zakzaky which the alleged that it was poisoned after Wahhabi sect ignited the drum of sectarianism. And clearly stated; 'Not accept food from Shiites because it is poisoned'

Then, there was report that the recipients of the annual gifts of Ramadan food items from Sheikh Ibraheem Zakzaky in Gyallesu, Zaria were attacked by thugs which carried machetes, sharp object and sticks where they seed the items and litter the streets with them. This gesture for distributing food items at the inception of Ramadan by the Sheikh has done for the past 20 years and more with the number of recipients rising annually due to persistent rising economic difficulties in the country

One of the members of the IMN committee that distributes the food items annually, Musa Muhammad Tahir explained that on Tuesday the thugs attacked those distributing the food items pelting them with stones and shouting "bamu so" meaning "we don't want" and they left the two vans containing food items for safety. The thugs came with their machetes and sticks and litter the whole place with the food item on the vans and forced the recipients to submit the items they received to them or risk being harmed which they did and the entire food was scattered everywhere along

As if it was not enough, the thugs attacked the residence of the Sheikh's sister, Hajiya Maimuna Yakubu along Sarkin Yaki Street where they threatened and beat her, trespass the house and brought out all her food items and litter the street with them as well. Islamic Movement members immediately alerted the police Assistant Commissioner in Zaria and the Police Commissioner in Kaduna. The police escorted them and watched while they took Hajiya Maimiuna away to safety. The Police Public Relations Officer of the Kaduna Police Command SP Abubakar said in a telephone conversation that he needs to confirm from the Zaria Area Command before he could say anything on the matter at that time.

The Police were said to have made some arrests at the Gyallesu area but the suspects were immediately released without any investigation into the incident which suggests government's likely involvement. Further investigation into the matter revealed that the incident was incited from two Izala sect mosques (Wahhabi sect) close to Gyallesu who announced that the Islamic Movement members were sharing poisoned food items to avenge the killing of their members by the Army and thugs in December 2015.

Haruna Danja Mosque near Kongo in Zaria was said to be the venue of the meeting that organized the thugs into action in order not to allow the people receive food assis-



Malam Abdullahi an Islamic teacher with students was one of the recipients attacked by the thugs who insulted and threaten describing him as a hypocrite for collecting food items from Sheikh Zakzaky. **Malam Umar residing along** Sarkin Yaki Street suffered the same fate with Mallam Abdullahi as the thugs seized the food items and litter the road with them.

tance from Sheikh Zakzaky lest they support or incline to him. A cleric speaking in another Izala sect mosque along Mangwaron Andi Street in Gyallesu was heard calling on the people through the mosque's loudspeakers not to accept the food items from the Shi'ites because it is poisoned and intended to kill people in revenge of the December killing of their members.

The same messages were seen on the social media being posted by members of the Izala sect without mentioning their sources of information as to the food items being poisoned by the Islamic movement. The sharing of the food item had been on since Monday before it was attacked on Tuesday with no reports of anyone dying after eating the food.

It would be recalled that the same thugs were used by the soldiers to scavenge heap of corpses of Islamic movement members killed by soldiers during the December attack where they stole personal possessions from the dead bodies.

Malam Abdullahi an Islamic teacher with students was one of the recipients attacked by the thugs who insulted and threaten describing him as a hypocrite for collecting food items from Sheikh Zakzaky. Malam Umar residing along Sarkin Yaki Street suffered the same fate with Mallam Abdullahi as the thugs seized the food items and litter the road with them. With recipients getting between two to four bags each depending on the numbers of their family members, those that are yet to receive the items are still calling on the committee to give them and if they could not come

they should tell them where to go and receive their own. Generality of people have condemned the uncivilized act by the thugs and their sponsors as precious food items were left scattered on the streets while the needy are left in hunger and hardship that has overlapped the entire country

under the current regime. Meanwhile distribution of food items to the needy has continued for the third day in a row and more people are begging to receive the food assistance to alleviate the diffi-

culties in these hard times. On 11/06/16, Ibrahim Musa President, Media Forum of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria accused the Kaduna state government for sponsoring thugs to disturb the peace of the public. Which he stated; "we wish to draw public attention to the fact that Kaduna state government is desperate to portray the Islamic movement in bad light, especially with regards to our relationship with other people in general and the Gyallesu residents in particular. Their extreme anxiety that this gesture by the leadership of the IMN would further expose their lies pushed them to this latest show of shame. That they stooped this low to assault indigent residents of Gyallesu simply because they graciously collected food items from the leader of Islamic Movement as they have done every month of Ramadan in the past, when the government is not bothered about them, is yet another public low for the government."

"Finally, we challenge the Kaduna State government to refute its involvement in this indignity by arresting and punishing those involved in the assault, disturbance of public peace, trespass and willful destruction of people's foodstuff, and to pay these poor citizens damages as well.'

On a last note, the distribution of the foodstuffs for fasting in the month of Ramadan in 2017, 2018 and this year 2019 is hitch-free. No reports of attacks or disruption of the foodstuffs by the thugs. May be it happened due to the economic situation in the country or the gullible minds are tired of being deceived by the government or their stooge.

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Who was Omar Khayyam? Google Doodle celebrates pioneering Persian astronomer and poet

Omar Khayyam, a celebrated Persian mathematician, astronomer, philosopher and poet, is being remembered with a Google Doodle on his 971st birthday.

Born in the town of Neishabur in what is now Iran in 1048, Khayyam is most commonly recognized for both his astronomical expertise, which led to the reform of the calendar, and his poetry.

Having studied under scholars including Sheik Muhammand Mansuri and then the imam Mowaffaq Nishapuri, Khayyam made great strides in both mathematics and astronomy during his lifetime.

At the age of 22, Khayyam was already making a name for himself in the field of mathematics through the publication of Treatise on Demonstration of Problems of Algebra and Balancing.

In the text, Khayyam explained his observation that cubic equations can have multiple solutions, as well as his methods for solving quadratic equations.

Shortly after, Khayyam's astronomical knowledge was requested by Malik Shah, Sultan of the Seljuq Empire, in helping to reform the calendar.



Upon receiving an invitation to the Persian city of Isfahan, Khayyam worked

in an observatory where he eventually succeeded in precisely measuring the length

of the year, leading to the development of the new Jalali calendar, which was used until the 20th century.

His observations and the subsequent calendar was based on the sun's movement, as well as quadrennial and quinquennial leap years, with the calendar consisting of 25 ordinary years with 365 days and eight leap years that had 366 days.

In the West, however, it is Khayyam's work as a poet and his collection of quatrains that is recognized and celebrated. The poems, written in four lines, were translated by Edward FitzGerald in the 1800's and published in The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám.

Khayyam became famous for his poems posthumously, having died at the age of 83 on 4 December 1131.

In 1963, the Shah of Iran ordered Khayyam's grave exhumed and his remains moved to a mausoleum in Neishabur where tourists could pay their respects.

Although not much is known about the personal life of Khayyam, it is believed that he had a wife, a son, and a daughter.

(Source: The Independent

ALMA discovers aluminum around young star

Researchers using ALMA data discovered an aluminumbearing molecule for the first time around a young star. Aluminum rich inclusions found in meteorites are some of the oldest solid objects formed in the Solar System, but their formation process and stage is still poorly linked to star and planet formation. The discovery of aluminum oxide around a young star provides a crucial chance to study the early formation process of meteorites and planets like Earth.

Young stars are surrounded by disks of gas. Some of the gas condenses into dust grains which then stick together to form larger objects, building up to form meteors, planetesimals, and eventually planets. Understanding the formation of these first solid objects is important for understanding everything which follows.

Shogo Tachibana, a professor at the University of Tokyo/ Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), and his team analyzed the ALMA (Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array) data for Orion KL Source I, a young massive protostar, and found distinctive radio emissions from aluminum oxide (AlO) molecules. This is the first unambiguous detection of AlO around a young star. "Aluminum oxide played a very important role in the formation of the oldest material in the Solar System," says Tachibana "Our discovery will contribute to the understanding

Researchers have discovered an aluminumbearing molecule for the first time around a young star. The discovery provides a crucial chance to study the early formation process of meteorites and planets like Earth.

of material evolution in the early Solar System."

Interestingly, the radio emissions from the AlO molecules are concentrated in the launching points of the outflows from

the rotating disk around the protostar. In contrast, other molecules such as silicon monoxide (SiO) have been detected in a wider area in the outflow. Normally, the temperature is higher at the base of the outflows and lower in the downstream gas. "Non-detection of gas-phase AlO downstream indicates that the molecules have condensed into solid dust particles in the colder regions," explains Tachibana. "Molecules can emit their distinctive radio signals in gas-phase, but not in solid-phase."

ALMA's detection of AlO in the hot base of the outflow suggests that the molecules are formed in hot regions close to the protostar. Once moved to colder regions, AlO would be captured in dust particles which can become aluminum-rich dust, like the oldest solid in the Solar System, and further the building blocks for planets.

The team will now observe other protostars looking for AlO. Combining the new results with data from meteorites and sample return missions like JAXA's Hayabusa2 will provide important insights into the formation and evolution of our Solar System and other planetary systems.

(Source: Science Daily)

Earliest evidence of the cooking and eating of starch

New discoveries made at the Klasies River Cave in South Africa's southern Cape, where charred food remains from hearths were found, provide the first archaeological evidence that anatomically modern humans were roasting and eating plant starches, such as those from tubers and rhizomes, as early as 120,000 years ago.

The new research by an international team of archaeologists, published in the Journal of Human Evolution, provides archaeological evidence that has previously been lacking to support the hypothesis that the duplication of the starch digestion genes is an adaptive response to an increased starch diet.

"This is very exciting. The genetic and biological evidence previously suggested that early humans would have been eating starches, but this research had not been done before," says Lead author Cynthia Larbey of the Department of Archaeology at the University of Cambridge. The work is part of a systemic multidisciplinary investigation into the role that plants and fire played in the lives of Middle Stone Age communities.

The interdisciplinary team searched for and analysed undisturbed hearths at the Klasies River archaeological site.

"Our results showed that these small ashy hearths were used for cooking food and starchy roots and tubers were clearly part of



their diet, from the earliest levels at around 120,000 years ago through to 65,000 years ago," says Larbey. "Despite changes in hunting strategies and stone tool technologies, they were still cooking roots and tubers."

Professor Sarah Wurz from the School of Geography, Archaeology and Environmental Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa (Wits University) and principal investigator of the site says the research shows that "early human beings followed a balanced diet and that they were ecological geniuses, able to exploit their environments intelligently for suitable foods and perhaps medicines."

By combining cooked roots and tubers as a staple with protein and fats from shellfish, fish, small and large fauna, these communities were able to optimally adapt to their environment, indicating great ecological intelligence as early as 120,000 years ago.

"Starch diet isn't something that happens when we started farming, but rather, is as old as humans themselves," says Larbey. Farming in Africa only started in the last 10,000 years of human existence.

Humans living in South Africa 120,000 years ago formed and lived in small bands.

"Evidence from Klasies River, where several human skull fragments and two maxillary fragments dating 120,000 years ago occur, show that humans living in that time period looked like modern humans of today. However, they were somewhat more robust," says Wurz.

Klasies River is a very famous early human occupation site on the Cape coast of South Africa excavated by Wurz, who, along with Susan Mentzer of the Senckenberg Institute and Eberhard Karls Universit?t Tübingen, investigated the small (c. 30cm in diameter) hearths. The research to look for the plant materials in the hearths was inspired by Prof Hilary Deacon, who passed on the Directorship of the Klasies River site on to Wurz. Deacon has done groundbreaking work at the site and in the 1990's pointed out that there would be plant material in and around the hearths. However, at the time, the micro methods were not available to test this hypothesis.

able to test this hypothesis. (Source: Science Daily)

From Earth's deep mantle, scientists find a new way volcanoes form

Far below Bermuda's pink sand beaches and turquoise tides, geoscientists have discovered the first direct evidence that material from deep within Earth's mantle transition zone -- a layer rich in water, crystals and melted rock -- can percolate to the surface to form volcances.

Scientists have long known that volcanoes form when tectonic plates (traveling on top of the Earth's mantle) converge, or as the result of mantle plumes that rise from the core-mantle boundary to make hotspots at Earth's crust. But obtaining evidence that material emanating from the mantle's transition zone -- between 250 to 400 miles (440-660 km) beneath our planet's crust -- can cause volcanoes to form is new to geologists.

"We found a new way to make volcanoes. This is the first time we found a clear indication from the transition zone deep in the Earth's mantle that volcanoes can form this way," said senior author Esteban Gazel, associate professor in the Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences at Cornell University. The research published in Nature.

"We were expecting our data to show the volcano was a mantle plume formation -- an upwelling from the deeper mantle -- just like it is in Hawaii," Gazel said. But 30 million years ago, a disturbance in the transition zone caused an upwelling of magma material to rise to the surface, forming a now-dormant volcano under the Atlantic Ocean and then forming Bermuda.

volcano under the Atlantic Ocean and then forming Bermuda.

Using a 2,600-foot (over 700-meter) core sample -- drilled

in 1972, housed at Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia -- co-author Sarah Mazza of the University of Münster, in Germany, assessed the cross-section for isotopes, trace elements, evidence of water content and other volatile material. The assessment provided a geologic, volcanic history of Bermuda.

"I first suspected that Bermuda's volcanic past was special as I sampled the core and noticed the diverse textures and mineralogy preserved in the different lava flows," Mazza said. "We quickly confirmed extreme enrichments in trace element compositions. It was exciting going over our first results ... the mysteries of Bermuda started to unfold."

From the core samples, the group detected geochemical signatures from the transition zone, which included larger amounts of water encased in the crystals than were found in subduction zones. Water in subduction zones recycles back to Earth's surface. There is enough water in the transition zone to form at least three oceans, according to Gazel, but it is the water that helps rock to melt in the transition zone.

The geoscientists developed numerical models with Robert Moucha, associate professor of Earth sciences at Syracuse University, to discover a disturbance in the transition zone that likely forced material from this deep mantle layer to melt and percolate to the surface, Gazel said.

Despite more than 50 years of isotopic measurements in oceanic lavas, the peculiar and extreme isotopes measured in the Bermuda lava core had not been observed before. Yet,

these extreme isotopic compositions allowed the scientists to identify the unique source of the lava.

"If we start to look more carefully, I believe we're going to find these geochemical signatures in more places," said co-author Michael Bizimis, associate professor at the University of South Carolina.

Gazel explained that this research provides a new connection between the transition zone layer and volcanoes on the surface of Earth. "With this work we can demonstrate that the Earth's transition zone is an extreme chemical reservoir," said Gazel. "We are now just now beginning to recognize its importance in terms of global geodynamics and even volcanism."

Said Gazel: "Our next step is to examine more locations to determine the difference between geological processes that can result in intraplate volcanoes and determine the role of the mantle's transition zone in the evolution of our planet."

In addition to Gazel, Mazza, Bizimis and Moucha, co-authors of "Sampling the Volatile-Rich Transition Zone Beneath Bermuda," are Paul Béguelin, University of South Carolina; Elizabeth A. Johnson, James Madison University; Ryan J. McAleer, United States Geological Survey; and Alexander V. Sobolev, the Russian Academy of Sciences.

The National Science Foundation provided funding for this research.

(Source: Science Daily)

Are dogs really smiling at us?

The dog's mouth opens wide, her lips pull up at the corners, and her tongue lolls out. Most would look at this face and see an unmistakable grin. But is that really what's going on here? Do dogs use this expression in the same way as people, to convey their joy, pleasure or contentedness?

In other words, are dogs really smiling at us?

The answer has roots in our 30,000-year history of keeping dogs as domesticated animals. Thanks to that history, humans and dogs have developed a unique bond, which has also made dogs very useful subjects for the study of communication. "Studying dogs is a really unique opportunity to look at social communication between species," said Alex Benjamin, an associate lecturer in psychology, who studies dog cognition at the University of York in the United Kingdom.

Most of this research also reinforces the idea that the communicative bond we share with dogs is unique. For instance, researchers have found that dogs embrace the human gaze and use eye contact in a way that few other animals do.

A study published in the journal Current Biology tested how wolves and dogs would respond to the impossible task of opening a container to get at some meat they knew was within. The researchers found that while the wolves would simply stalk off when they discovered they couldn't open it, dogs would turn around and give humans a long, inquiring gaze — suggesting that these animals knew a person could help them complete the task.

Another study, published in the journal Science, found that both dogs and humans experience an increase in levels of oxytocin — a hormone that plays a role in social bonding — when they lock eyes with one another. Even more intriguing, dogs that sniffed oxytocin would then spend more time staring at humans.

"[A shared gaze] is the fundamental mechanism for cooperation if you think about it," especially if, like dogs, you can't rely on spoken language, Benjamin told Live Science. Humans may have bred this trait into dogs over the course of their domestication, she said. "Dogs that look at us are much easier to cooperate with and train. So, it is possible that some unconscious or conscious selection may also have led to the behaviors we see today."

In any case, it's clear that eye contact is important to dogs as a way to intentionally gather information and communicate.

But what about the expressions that cross their faces? Do these have any relevance to humans — and do dogs use them to communicate with us?

That question is intriguing, said Juliane Kaminski, a reader in comparative psychology at the University of Portsmouth in the United Kingdom, who studies dog cognition. She said she's especially interested in one particularly adorable expression in dogs: the inward raising of the brows that produces what's known as "puppy dog eyes."

For her research, Kaminski and colleagues visited a dog shelter, where they used something called a facial action coding system (FACS) to measure the minute facial motions dogs made while they interacted with people. Afterward, the researchers kept track of the time it took for each dog to get adopted. The scientists discovered that "the more the dogs produced that movement [puppy dog eyes], the quicker they were rehomed," said Kaminski. No other behavior the researchers analyzed had as strong an effect. [Is a Dog's Mouth Cleaner Than a Human's?]

Next, Kaminski wanted to find out if this behavior was intentional. "Have [dogs] either understood or learned that if they produce that movement, humans will do something for them?" Kaminski said. So, she set up another experiment, in which dogs were exposed to humans who either did or didn't offer food. If dogs knew the power of their sorrowful gaze, it would follow that those presented with the possibility of a snack would use it more often to get what they desired.

But ... they didn't. While dogs were more expressive when they looked at humans — reinforcing the idea that eye contact is important for canine communication — the animals used their soppy-eyed expression just as much whether or not there was food involved. It's possible that humans unconsciously selected for this adorable trait as we domesticated canines, because "it resembles a movement that we produce when we are sad. So it kind of triggers this nurturing response," Kaminski said. "But that doesn't necessarily mean dogs have learned to exploit that."

That brings us to the "smile." Does your dog's wide-mouthed expression carry the same significance as a human grin? Kaminski advised caution. "I've had a dog all my life, so I know that if you know your dog really well, you're able to read its behaviors. I've got no problem with giving certain behaviors a label," she said. "But as a scientist, of course, I say, 'How would we know that?' We have zero data telling us what this actually means."

The problem with dog expressions is that our research tools are typically subjective, and paired with our anthropomorphizing tendencies, it's very possible that we misinterpret what we see on dogs' faces.

In fact, there's very little objective research to support the idea that dogs "smile." Some findings, published in the journal Scientific Reports, show that this particular expression, called "relaxed open mouth" in dogs, typically occurs in positive settings, like when dogs are inviting one another to play. But whether it's really what we would call a smile, or whether dogs are directing it at us intentionally to communicate something, remains unknown.

To answer that question, we'd need more-objective research techniques — such as FACS like Kaminski used — to determine how specific facial expressions correlate with particular situations and what precisely motivates those expressions. That's needed for all dog expressions, which are generally understudied, Kaminski said

This revelation is probably unsettling for any dog owner who has interpreted that upturned, open mouth as a smile all these years. But in some ways, it doesn't matter, because there is so much other proof of our special relationship with dogs.

Consider that they're the only creatures we know of that can successfully follow and understand human gestures, like pointing. Even chimps, our closest relatives, can't follow this communicative cue as well as dogs can. Also, canines actually show a preference for certain types of speech, as Benjamin has found in her research. She discovered that dogs prefer the company of humans who not only used dog-related phrases like "Who's a good boy?" but also spoke to the animals in higher-pitched, sing-songy voices.

So, whether or not we can share a friendly smile with our fourlegged friends, it's clear that they understand us in surprisingly nuanced ways. Benjamin said we ought to be motivated by this to become better, more sensitive communicators ourselves.

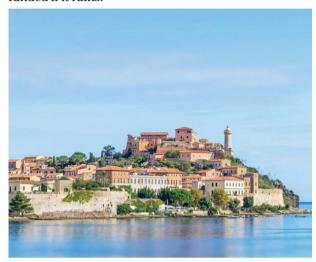
"Dogs are already so good at understanding us. They can understand very subtle cues," Benjamin said. "So it's our job as the humans to give them the cues to understand how to cooperate

(Source: Live Science)

Italian island will refund your hotel room if it rains

We've all seen it: an otherwise exceptional hotel gets a one-star Yelp or TripAdvisor rating from a grumpy guest because of bad weather.

Even though there's nothing a destination can do to guarantee perfect weather during vacation season, the Italian island of Elba -- best known for being where Napoleon was exiled toward the end of his life -- has a new program called "Elba No Rain," where guests on the island during May can get their night's hotel fee refunded if it rains.



According to Elba's official tourism site, "the overnight stay is free for days when there is rainfall for more than two hours between 10 a.m. and 8 p.m.

To qualify for the deal, guests must be staying at one of an approved list of local inns and guesthouses that are participating in the program.

"Tour operators tell us that weather forecasts of a rainy weekend can lead to a drop in bookings and attendance of over 20%," Claudio Della Lucia, tourism coordinator for the island, told CNN via email.

"The #ElbaNoRain initiative wants to be a concrete assurance to guests that, in the very rare case of a day with steady rain, they can still enjoy everything that the island has to offer without paying a euro for accommodation.

"It's a pilot project for the month of May, but considering the numerous subscriptions, we're considering to apply it also for the autumn."

May tends to be shoulder season, so it's generally cooler and less crowded than during peak summertime. Elba -- sadly, no connection to the actor Idris -- is popular with citizens of Italy, who flock there in August.

Elba is located off of the coast of Tuscany, one of Italy's most popular tourist regions, in the Ligurian Sea, just east of Corsica.

Most visitors arrive there via ferry from the coastal town of Piombino, but there's also an island airport that can take in small planes from Milan, Florence, Pisa and

So, what is there to do while you enjoy that guaranteed gorgeous weather?

The island is beloved for its beaches, but it's also worth visiting the Napoleonic Residences where the emperor lived in exile and exploring the island's mining history and ancient ruins, some of which date to the Etruscan era.

ROUND THE GLOBE

Kremlin and Red Square

Inextricably linked to all the most important historical and political events in Russia since the 13th century, the Kremlin (built between the 14th and 17th centuries by outstanding Russian and foreign architects) was the residence of the Great Prince and also a religious center.



At the foot of its ramparts, on Red Square, St Basil's Basilica is one of the most beautiful Russian Orthodox

This determined a radial and circular plan of the center of Moscow typical of many other Old Russian

In 13th century the Kremlin was the official residence of supreme power - the center of temporal and spiritual life of the state.

The Kremlin of the late 15th – early 16th century is one of the major fortifications of Europe (the stone walls and towers of present day were erected in 1485-1516). It contains an ensemble of monuments of outstanding

Its interior is decorated with frescos and a five-tier iconostasis (15th-17th century). The cathedral became the major Russian Orthodox church; a wedding and coronation place for great princes, tsars and emperors as well as the shrine for metropolitans and patriarchs.

From the early 18th century, when the capital of Russia moved to St. Petersburg, the Kremlin mainly played a ceremonial role with religious functions. Today it is the residence of the President of Russia.

(Source: UNESCO)

Iran makes bids for UNESCO intangible cultural heritage registration

1 → "The oud is planned to be inscribed jointly with Syria, Mehregan with Tajikistan, miniature with [some] Turk-Speaking countries, St. Thaddeus rituals with Armenia," he explained.

Last December, CHHTO Director Ali-Asghar Mounesan said that Yalda is amongst rich rituals Iran and its neighbors have in common, adding "This joint heritage shows that Persian-speaking countries have always been together.

In 2015, the Islamic Republic solely submitted an initial proposal on the event to the UN cultural body. However, it later issued calls for other nations, including the ones sharing a UNESCO-tag for Noruz celebrations, to join in.

Yalda Night (the birth of a new sun) and Noruz or Persian New Year (the birth of a new day) are amongst the most popular ancient Persian festivals, which are also celebrated by some countries in western and central Asia.

According to UNESCO, Yadla ceremonies, in a best way, point to cultural diversity and human creativity, especially when one considers the wide range of the communities that celebrate it.

On that graceful night, which falls on the last day of Azar (the last month of autumn in the Iranian calendar vear), the winter chill is vanquished and the warmth of love embraces the entire family. Hearts move closer to



Mehregan celebration, which falls on the 196th day of the Iranian calendar year, brings $together\ clusters\ of\ Iranian\ Zoroastrians\ to\ hold\ reunions\ in\ celebration\ of\ Mithra,\ an$ ancient goddess of friendship, affection and love

one another in the company of loved ones on Yalda.

To observe St. Thaddeus rituals, Hundreds of Christian worshippers from Iran, Armenia and other countries head for St. Thaddeus to observe the annual ritual and pilgrimage in the northwestern church in the late June.

Qareh Klise ("the Black Church"), is one of the oldest surviving Christian monuments in Iran and is located in West Azarbaijan province, some 20 kilometers form Maku, adjacent to the borders of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey.

Mehregan celebration, which falls on the 196th day of the Iranian calendar

year that usually equals to October 2 in the Gregorian calendar, brings together clusters of Iranian Zoroastrians to hold reunions in celebration of Mithra, an ancient goddess of friendship, affection

A key feature for the event is large spreads in purple laden with various ingredients, dishes and elements each on behalf of a particular belief. Fruits, vegetables, dried nuts, sweets, rosewater, grilled lamb meat, lotus seeds and silver coins and a scale are typically placed, the latter symbolizes autumnal

Oud is a pear-shaped stringed instrument frequently used in Persian and Middle Eastern music whose construction is similar to that of the lute.

Amongst the Iranian entries to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list are Radif of Iranian music, traditional skills of carpet weaving in Kashan, ritual dramatic art of Ta'ziye, music of the Bakhshis of Khorasan and Qalishuyan rituals of Mashhad-e Ardehal near Kashan.

"Chogan, a horse-riding game accompanied by music and storytelling" won Iran the same UNESCO status in the 12th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2017.

Passed down from generation to generation: Ramadan rituals in Birjand

HERITAGE TEHRAN — In the city of Birjand in northd e s k east Iran, the holy month of Ramadan is associated with various rituals which have been passed down from generation to generation. The capital of South Khorasan province, Birjand is well-

known for its saffron, barberry, jujube, and hand-woven Chahar Derakht ("Four Trees") is one of aging neighbor-

hoods where traditional Ramadan rituals may catch eyes of travelers to Birjand. Elder residents shoulder to shoulder with newcomers

make their best to keep these customs alive, IRNA reported

Seyyed Mohammad Lamei, who has lived 79 years in the "Four Trees" district tells about some rituals of the holy month of Ramadan in Birjand. He has now moved to another



district of the city.

"Each night, on the night of the 27th Ramadan, two wom-

en watched anonymously, wearing a white outfit (chador), covering their faces, and carrying a tray on which the mirror, chestnut and a bowl of water and a bucket were brought to the houses of the people," Lamei says.

"These people, in their houses, were knocked at home several times with their mattress, and the landlord notices their presence and welcomes them with flour, candy or money, and with every purpose they had, looked at the mirror inside the tray... and looked some of them in the eyes.

Another ritual is reading a juz (part) of the holy Quran

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

Muslims break their fast at the time of the call for

Bid to save Scotland's ancient rainforest

Scotland's ancient rainforest is under threat, conservationists have warned.

Almost 75,000 acres (30,351ha) of woodland on the west coast is designated Atlantic rainforest because of the rare oceanic plant life.

But the forest is being lost to overgrazing by deer and livestock, invasive plant species and disease

The dangers, and plans to regenerate the forest, have been set out in a new report by the Atlantic Woodland Alliance.

The alliance of 16 charities and organizations has proposed eradicating exotic species of plants, such as Sitka spruce and Rhododendron ponticum, from thousands of acres of rainforest, and also neighboring woodlands to prevent re-invasion.

Non-native plants diminish the quality of the rainforest, but can also smother native plantlife.

Almost all of it is over-grazed to a degree that prevents trees and other plants from re-growing, says the alliance

Invasive rhododendron can be found in 40% of rainforest sites where it threatens to choke the woodlands

Ash dieback, which is caused by a fungus,

threatens the future of our northern and vestern most ash woods

Climate change and air pollution risks the clean air needs for most of the forest's plants to survive

Planting more native trees, such as oak and birch, has also been suggested by the

Crinan Wood in Argyll, Ballachuan Hazelwood on Seil Island, Balmacara Estate in Kyle of Lochalsh and Lochaber's Allt Mhuic include areas of the ancient and bio-diverse woodland. Adam Harrison, of Woodland Trust

Scotland, one of the members of the Atlantic Woodland Alliance, said: "Scotland's rainforest is just as lush and just as important as tropicai rainforest, but is even rarer. "It is found along the west coast and

on the inner isles and is a unique habitat of ancient native oak, birch, ash, pine and hazel woodlands and includes open glades and river gorges.

"Our rainforest relies on mild, wet and clean air coming in off the Atlantic, and is garlanded with a spectacular array of lichens, fungi, mosses, liverworts and ferns.

"Many are nationally and globally rare



Almost 75,000 acres of woodland is designated as Atlantic rainforest

and some are found nowhere else in the

Gordon Gray Stephens, of the Community Woodlands Association, said it was not too late to take action to save the rainforest.

He said: "Our vision for regenerating Scotland's rainforest is clear. We need to make it larger, in better condition, and with improved connections between people and woods.

"Coming together as an alliance can help to make this happen."

More members have been sought for the alliance, whose current members include Forestry and Land Scotland, Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority, National Trust for Scotland, Plantlife Scotland and the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh.

(Source: BBC)

How to stay fresh on long trips

Just because you have a 12-hour flight doesn't mean you have to leave the plane smelling like it. Whether it's a flight, train ride or bus trip, these tips will keep you smelling fresh on those long, strenuous travel days.

When you spend the day in a plane, train or automobile, it's tough to stay — and feel — clean and fresh. But just because you have a 12-hour flight doesn't mean you have to leave the plane smelling like it. Here are some tips to help you smell fresh on those long, strenuous travel days.

Wear athletic clothes

Few activities crank up the stench quite like working out, and companies that make fitness clothing have gotten good at mitigating this problem. Workout clothes are designed to pull moisture away from your body, kill odious bacteria and be comfortable even when you have to move a lot. You still need to wash these clothes, of course. However, if you save some clean workout clothing for your travel days, you might smell a little better on that last hour of your cramped plane ride.

Avoid heavy perfumes or cologne

If you think you have an odor cloud following you around, you might be tempted to mask it with some perfume, cologne or even body spray. Do your fellow passengers a favor and don't do this. Heavy scents can be just as overwhelming as body odor, and just as inescapable in confined spaces. Instead, reach for a basic deodorant. You can even try some deodorizing wipes or freshening wipes, which aren't quite as good as taking

a shower, but they'll do in a pinch. Squeeze in hygiene whenever you can

It's not necessarily the case that you won't be able to get a shower or brush your teeth while traveling. For frequent fliers, an airport lounge that offers showers can be an option (or if you're really desperate, you can buy a day pass for some lounges).

Some long-distance trains offer either private or public bathrooms that may include space to shower. If you're traveling by car, you can find publicly accessible showers at a variety of places including community gyms or a Y.M.C.A. While opinions vary on whether it's acceptable to brush your teeth or wash up in an airport bathroom, you wouldn't be the first to do so. Worst case, packing some face wipes will help you clean up a bit without going the full shower route.

Stay hydrated Staying hydrated is always healthy, but it's easy to forget when you're on the go all day. Among other health benefits, water can help prevent bad breath.

When your mouth dries out, your saliva can't do its job of keeping your mouth clean and kill bacteria. Staying hydrated will also keep you from sweating as



much, which will also help limit body odor. You might also want to skip soda, which can have a tendency to dry out your mouth, as well as avoid some of the more gnarly-smelling foods like garlic, onions and spicy food.

Bring a plastic bag just for dirty laundry Every day you return to your hotel, you bring back dirty clothes that you have to pack. Don't just throw them back in your suitcase where they'll just stink up your clean clothes. Bring a plastic bag with you for all your dirty clothes and keep them (and their smell) isolated from the rest of your clothes. If they're particularly dirty — maybe after a long day of walking around the city under the hot sun - hang them up in your hotel room and let them air out for a bit before putting them in the bag.

(Source: The New York Times)

New telecom projects unveiled on World Telecommunication Day

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN — The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Ministry inaugurated four new projects to commemorate World Telecommunication Day, which is celebrated annually on May 17.

The achievements were unveiled during a ceremony attended by ICT Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi on Sunday, IRNA reported.

Over 7,200 villages linked to National Information Network

The projects were carried out with a total budget of 4 trillion rials (about \$95 million) aimed to provide infrastructures for ICT development and access of all people to basic services of ICT.

Up to now, 80 percent of rural areas are under ICT coverage. The plan is composed of four electronic services including banking, medical, educational and agricultural systems, which would be available in villages with more than 20 families.

The projects cut the digital gap between rural and urban areas to half, he said.

During the Iranian calendar year of 1396 (March 2017-March 2018) the urban data usage was $5.9\,\mathrm{gigabytes}$, while the number was 600 megabytes in rural areas, however the figure has reached 2.9 gigabytes in villages, he explained.

The first phase of e-government services project in Iran officially came on stream under the title of 'Mobile Government' in mid-May 2018.

The project aims to facilitate some government services, reduce unnecessary expenses and ease traffic jam, which is the main cause of air pollution in big cities

It is based on the National Information Network, an ongoing project to develop a secure and stable infrastructure network in the country.

Dejfa, security shield of National **Information Network**

The security shield project, as part of

TEHRAN – Iran has attained success in

past years, however, drug manufacturing infrastructures should be strengthened, Mostafa Qanei, secretary of bio-

tech development center (BioDC) at science and technology

of the country, to which a special attention should be paid,

Drug manufacturing is one of the most important needs

vice-presidency said, IRNA reported on Monday

pharmaceutical manufacturing over the



National Information Network, provides security for online business and govern-

The project is composed of ten systems including Tele-Afzar which deals with malware, Kovashgar which explores suspicious files, Samat which confronts Distributed Denial-of-Service (DDoS) attacks, Bina which focuses on bots in IPs, and Checkup which assesses SSL certificates and DNS

During the past [Iranian calendar] year. Iran identified and neutralized about 600,000 cyber-attacks and the figure surged to 33 million this year, which means that security has been strengthened by 50 times, Azari Jahromi announced during the ceremony.

'We also plan to provide a system to deal with phishing as one of ten security shields in National Information Network in the near

future through which attacked sites will be

announced to internet users," he added. Phishing is the fraudulent attempt to obtain sensitive information such as usernames, passwords and credit card details by disguising oneself as a trustworthy entity in an electronic communication

📕 Sarva, a bridge between open government databases and citizens

Open government databases promote transparency, accountability and value creation by making government data available to all. Public bodies produce and commission huge quantities of data and information. By making their datasets available, public institutions become more transparent and accountable to citizens.

Sarva is another project which was introduced by ICT Ministry, aiming to provide a platform in order to make national data available while securing citizens' privacy.

Using Sarva, citizens can receive mobile government services by non-state-run applications on their smart phones.

"I call today the day of nationalization of government data, on which the government data and information are available for startups to expand their markets," Azari Jahromi explained.

Development of telecommunication infrastructure

Another project was the development of telecommunication infrastructures in different provinces with a budget of 316 trillion rials (about \$75 million) using Iranian-made

Tehran, West Azarbaijan, Hormozgan and Fars are the provinces which are equipped to boost their telecommunication infrastructure.

"We have provided 70 percent of the equipment for the national telecommunication network up to now," Azari Jahromi said during the event.

World Telecommunication Day is celebrated on May 17 since 1969. The date marks the anniversary of the founding of ITU on 17 May 1865, when the first International Telegraph Convention was signed in Paris. In 1973, the event was formally instituted at the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference in Malaga-Torremolinos, Spain. Every year a topical theme is chosen and events celebrating that theme take place around the world. Bridging the standardization gap

The purpose of World Telecommunication and Information Society Day is to help raise awareness of the possibilities that the use of the Internet and other information and communication technologies (ICT) can bring to societies and economies, as well as of ways to bridge the digital divide. World Telecommunication and Information Society Day, like its predecessors, focuses on a particular theme for each event.

play an important role in order to improve pharmaceutical

items are available in Iran including monoclonal antibodies

and Drug Administration (IFDA) said some two third of Iran's required pharmaceutical raw materials are produced

In February, Qanei announced that there were 146 items of biopharmaceuticals in the global market, of which 22

In November 2018, the former director of Iranian Food

According to Gholamreza Asghari, the production of phar-

industry in the country, he explained.

and recombinant proteins.

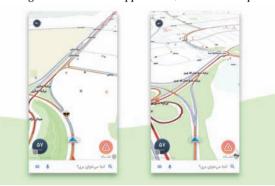
Tehran traffic police cooperates with GPS navigation software providers

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN — Tehran traffic police has signed an agreement with two Iranian GPS navigation software providers, ISNA reported on Sunday.

The agreement aims to facilitate traffic flow as well as inform citizens of implementing different traffic plans in the city.

Representatives of Balad and Neshan software providers signed the agreement with Tehran traffic police chief Mohammadreza Me-

Tehran traffic police plans to use domestic capacities in the field of IT through the use of Iranian applications, Mehmandar explained



Over 20 million trips are made in Tehran per day, he said, adding that the trips will be facilitated with the help of IT and Information Technology Services (ITS).

We should support young entrepreneurs who develop Iranian navigation apps and there should be a connection between navigation software providers and police," he said.

In this way, the applications can be updated more precisely and police can inform people of traffic laws and plans in a shortest possible time, he concluded.

Cabinet approves plan to facilitate activities of startups

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN – The cabinet of ministers has approved a plan titled "Noafarin" in order to remove obstacles in the way of startups which are at the first stages of emerging, information and communication technology minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi wrote on his twitter account on Sunday, IRNA reported.



The plan aims to remove problems of startups regarding issues of insurance, tax and investment, the minister said.

It was approved as part of digital economy development document, which aims to support startups active in the field of ICT, he added.

According to the document, startups in digital economy are exempt from complicated administrative regulations which have been set for big companies, so that they are encouraged to begin

In early May, Strategic Technologies Center announced that over 6,500 startups are now active in the country.

The Iranian startup ecosystem is one of the biggest ones in the southwestern Asia and will be turned into the most powerful economies in the near future.

Your internet may be delivered by a drone someday soon

'Drug manufacturing infrastructures should be strengthened'

As the pilotless flying wing came in for a landing, winds suddenly picked up. Facebook's Aquila drone — powered by the sun and wider than a Boeing 737 jetliner — struggled to adjust. Just before landing, part of the right wing broke off.

necessary infrastructures, he added.

That inaugural 2016 flight proved an inauspicious beginning for Facebook's foray into internet-beaming drones, but perhaps a fitting one. Two years later, the company pulled the plug on developing its own aircraft.

Since then, companies such as Amazon. com and SpaceX have made big investments in providing internet service around the world with thousands of small satellites. SpaceX had planned to send 60 internet-beaming satellites into orbit last week, but called off the launch to retool the software. Elon Musk's rocket company said the launch will probably take place this week.

And don't count out solar-powered, high-altitude drones — or giant balloons.

Advances in solar-cell and battery technology have made those technologies more feasible. Last month, Japanese telecommunications giant SoftBank said it would team up with California drone maker AeroVironment to build a drone capable of flying to the stratosphere, hovering around an area for months and serving as a floating cell tower to beam internet to users on Earth. Airbus and Boeing are also working on their own

versions of high-flying, solar-powered drones. Driving these and other projects is the promise of 5G connectivity. That fifth-generation cellular technology, which is just rolling out, will increase download speeds dramatically. And proponents say its reliability should enable services such as self-driving cars and remote medicine.

Connecting remote users would enhance the market potential even more, said John Robbins, an associate professor of aeronautical science and coordinator of the unmanned aerial systems program at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

"Increasing that footprint where people are able to access that information is extremely important," he said. "This is one way to do it."

The attraction of drones and balloons is they could cost much less than building cell towers in remote areas. And their location, closer to Earth than satellites, could offer faster





response times, said Tim Farrar, president of TMF Associates, a telecommunications consulting and research firm in Menlo Park.

Industry experts estimate that only 10% to 20% of the Earth's land area is covered by terrestrial cell towers. Mobile operators are interested in providing continuous service across the globe, particularly in light of the coverage needed for advanced, 5G applications. Drones could also be used in emergency situations in which cell towers have been destroyed or taken offline.

"If you could broadcast internet to remote areas for extended periods of time, that would be a very desirable capability to have," said Arthur Holland Michel, co-director of the Center for the Study of the Drone at Bard College in New York. "You could connect a lot of users, bolster your bottom line pretty significantly. The problem is that it is a phenomenally complex technical challenge."

Over the years, several companies have wrestled with that challenge of keeping a pilotless plane aloft for long periods.

In the 1990s, NASA formed an alliance with firms such as AeroVironment, Aurora Flight Sciences (which was acquired by Boeing in 2017), Scaled Composites (bought by Northrop Grumman Corp. in 2007) and San Diego's General Atomics to develop technology that could be used in drones that carried out science and environmental missions at high altitudes.

The result was several solar/electric-powered prototypes, including a modification to a drone AeroVironment had initially built for a classified program that became the Pathfinder Plus. On a test flight, that plane reached an altitude of 80,201 feet. The company developed other high-flying drone prototypes, such as the Helios, which reached 96,863 feet during a 2001 test.

At the time, however, the limitations of solar-cell efficiency and cost and efficiency of battery storage made those planes less than commercially viable, said Wahid Nawabi, CEO of AeroVironment.

More recently, high-profile drone efforts by tech giants Menlo Park's Facebook and Mountain View's Alphabet fizzled out for similar reasons.

Last year, after Facebook ended its efforts to create an internet-beaming drone — the company declined to say how much it spent on the project — it choose to work with Airbus and other partners.

After Alphabet shut down its solar broadband-drone project, it switched its focus to balloons. Its Loon subsidiary uses massive balloons floating 65,000 feet up to beam

internet signals. Alphabet told Bloomberg that the "economics and technical feasibility" of Loon is a "much more promising way to connect rural and remote parts of the world."

Loon's tennis court-sized balloons have already flown more than 18 million miles, and were used in Puerto Rico for six months after Hurricane Maria in 2017. The typical balloon stays up for about 150 days, though the goal is to reach an average lifespan of 300 days, a Loon official said during a joint news conference with SoftBank last month.

Last month, the SoftBank and AeroVironment joint venture HAPSMobile said it would form a "strategic relationship" with Loon that came with a \$125-million investment from HAPSMobile.

Drones could be easier to control and direct than balloons, analysts said.

Improvements in energy-carrying capacity and costs of solar cells and batteries can be seen in AeroVironment's latest drone, the Hawk30. Rolled out a month ago, the Hawk30 has a wingspan of 256 feet and 10 propellers along the edge. It is capable of providing coverage for a radius of about 124 miles while staying aloft continuously for six months, SoftBank said. The longest solar-powered flight with a previous-generation AeroVironment HAPS drone was for 18 hours in 2001.

The Hawk30 will collect power from the sun during the day and draw off its batteries at night, a SoftBank executive said in a translated presentation late last month.

AeroVironment declined to say whether the Hawk30 drone has made a first flight, or what its timeline is for making such a flight, citing competitive reasons.

But the fundamental challenge in making those systems work is to balance aircraft weight, endurance and power consumption. "I think there's a lot of promise for those aircraft," Robbins said. "Ît's just something that's dependent on the state of technology

Holland Michel was more cautious. Soft-Bank, after all, has also invested in OneWeb, which is developing a broadband satellite

"It really is anyone's guess whether this is the time that they'll actually crack the code," he said.

(Source: msn.com)

Are electric vehicles really better for the environment?

Since the first modern electric vehicles (EV) took to the roads in the 2000s, critics have been quick to question the 'clean' label attached to them. From manufacturing concerns to battery power sources as well as overall autonomy, EVs have been under scrutiny from sceptics. With the amount of debate and misinformation troubling the waters, the facts behind the efficiency of electric vehicles have become somewhat clouded - so just how clean are these vehicles?

Battery production

their activities officially.

An argument that is routinely put forward to contrast the clean image of electric cars is the pollution behind the manufacturing process of their batteries. There is indeed a range of rare earth metals

that make up the composition of the battery, and their extraction and manipulation can contribute to carbon emissions. However, $as\,a\,2018\,International\,Council$ on Clean Transportation (ICTT) report illustrates, the country in which the batteries are being produced as well as the battery composition has a much higher level of impact on emissions.

A comparative study between EVs and internal combustion engine vehicle (ICEV) in China corroborates the ICTT report, indicating that infrastructure and efficient manufacturing



techniques are the keys to reducing emissions during production. Chinese EV battery manufacturers produce up to 60% more CO2 during fabrication than ICEV engine production, but could cut their emissions by up to 66% if they adopted American or European manufacturing techniques. As such, the pollution created through the extraction process and production of batteries remains on par or slightly higher than the manufacturing process of petrol or diesel-based engines.

An electric car at charging station in Bergen, Norway. This Scandinavian nation has the highest use of electric cars in the world, and running on mostly hydropower they are also the cleanest.

An electric car at charging station in Bergen, Norway. This Scandinavian nation has the highest use of electric cars in the world, and running on mostly hydropower they are also the cleanest.

(Source: forbes.com)

Dozens of bee species extinct or on verge of disappearing across UK, study finds

Many species of bee are on the brink of extinction in parts of the UK – and some types have been lost entirely, a report has found.

Climate change, habitat loss, pollution and disease are threatening the pollinators, the analysis of 228 species concluded.

It discovered that 17 species were regionally extinct – including the Great Yellow Bumblebee, the Potter Flower Bee and the Cliff Mason Bee – with 25 types threatened and another 31 of conservation concern.

The bee's pollinating services are worth £690m a year to the UK economy.

Published on World Bee Day, the 'Bees Under Siege' report



by WWF and Buglife recommends a number of conservation actions to help reverse declines:

Ensure that coastal management plans protect coastal habitats and promote the management of sea walls, safeguard wildlife-rich brownfield sites and promote beneficial management, identify opportunities to connect disjointed habitat fragments and promote coordinated management between landowners and

landholdings, local authorities can work with and support local communities in urban areas to restore and create new habitats. ongoing survey and monitoring of bee populations, and maintain and increase awareness, advice, support and funding for practical delivery projects.

The report also called on the new Westminster Environment Bill to be "ambitious enough" to develop a nature recovery net-

The research centres were in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk – all home to nationally and internationally significant pollinating populations.

International scientists nearly three weeks ago warned of the world's alarming loss of biodiversity.

Just weeks ago, a separate report warned that wild pollinating insects have vanished from a quarter of their former habitats

Last year the European Union agreed to ban neonicotinoids, the world's most widely used insecticides, from all fields because they were killing bees.

Tanya Steele, chief executive at WWF, said: "The UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world, and the fact that our precious pollinators are in peril is a sad illustration of the dramatic decline in wildlife we're seeing all around us.

"We desperately need targeted action if we're going to bring under-pressure wildlife back from the brink.

"The Environment Act gives us a golden opportunity to restore our natural world – we need to ensure it's ambitious

Matt Shardlow, chief executive at Buglife, said: "Our study found that many of the rarer, more specialist bees are battling to keep up with the changing face of their landscape and in-

creasingly hot weather. "Although a few species have expanded their populations and range, more species are in decline, 17 species are already extinct in the region and another six species are now so endangered they are only known to survive on single sites - this

is a very unhealthy picture." A spokesman for the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs said: "We are working hard to support our bees and other pollinators – as these species are essential for pollinating crops and in turn human survival.

Through our 25-Year Environment Plan, we have already committed to developing a Nature Recovery Network to protect and restore wildlife, and our Biodiversity and National Pollinator strategies have helped to create over 130,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat.

"Furthermore the Bees Needs campaign brings together conservation groups, farmers, beekeepers to promote good practical advice so we can all do more to provide suitable habitats for bees and other insects.'

(Source: The Independent)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Relief operation in India

(November 4, 1999)

There was a massive relief operation in India following the previous month's devastating cyclone. BBC correspondent Daniel Lak reported.

Even after two full days of **relief operations**, it isn't getting any easier for the people of Orissa. The state capital, Bhubaneshwar, is still without water, power or most telephone services. People are queuing for food, fuel and water and there have been angry scenes, occasional thefts and soldiers have had to guard relief convoys to prevent **looting**. The next fear is of **waterborne** epidemics and shortages of medical supplies. Many parts of Orissa are still cut off by flood waters and blocked roads. Airdrops of food and emergency aid are continuing, but ground transport is the best way to reach large numbers of people quickly.

Then there's the question of rebuilding people's homes and repairing businesses and factories. The long-term economic cost of this cyclone, whatever international and domestic aid money is gathered in the coming weeks, will be far more than the immediate **humanitarian** needs of Orissa right now.

relief operations: national or international efforts to help

people during a time of crisis convoy: a convoy is a group of vehicles - often military vehicles

looting: means stealing during a time of disturbance waterborne: something that is carried or passed on by water epidemics: an occurrence of a disease which spreads quickly

and affects a large number of people airdrops: dropping emergency supplies from aircraft

question: in this context question means a difficult issue long-term: over a longer period of time

aid money: money that is collected to help with relief operations humanitarian needs: the things people need to help them recover from a disaster - not simply money

(Source: BBC)

Corals bleaching, choking in Persian Gulf

TEHRAN — Worldwide corals are either bleaching or choking and eventually dying and the Persian Gulf is not an exception, but what are the main threats and how is it possible to counter the threats?

Sea temperature rise, sea level rise and ocean acidification, all associated with greenhouse gas emissions are the main threats to the corals reefs.

In particular, runoff, pollution, overfishing, blast fishing, disease, invasive species, overuse by humans and coral mining and the digging of canals and access into islands and bays are localized threats to coral ecosystems.

Other threats include the ocean's role as a carbon dioxide sink, atmospheric changes, ultraviolet light, ocean acidification, viruses, impacts of dust storms carrying agents to far-flung reefs, and algal blooms.

Oceanologist believe that the phenomenon is mainly due to climate change, and hence temperature rise in the Per-

Reportedly corals in Shidvar Island, in southern province of Hormozgan, are totally gone and breakwater at Lark Island, in Hormozgan province likewise, letting sediments entering the sea, are choking the corals.

Oceanologist, Hamid Rezaei, has explained that temperature rise resulted from climate change is the leading cause of coral bleaching.

Why and how corals lose their color?

The corals that form the great reef ecosystems of tropical seas depend upon a symbiotic relationship with algae-like single-celled flagellate protozoa called zooxanthellae that live within their tissues and give the coral its coloration. The zooxanthellae provide the coral with nutrients through photosynthesis, a crucial factor in the clear and nutrient-poor tropical waters. In exchange, the coral provide the zooxanthellae with the carbon dioxide and ammonium needed for photosynthesis. Negative environmental conditions thwart the coral's ability to provide for the zooxanthellae's needs. To ensure short-term survival, the coral-polyp then expels the zooxanthellae. This leads to a lighter or completely white appearance, hence the term "bleached".

Rezaei went on to explain that in the year 1378 (March 1999-March 2000) the same thing happened to corals in Kish and Hendurabi Islands in the Persian Gulf, stating that when temperature rise



Coral is a very delicate ecosystem which needs very specific conditions to survive. If any of these conditions are upset slightly than the reef system will falter and die. One of the major ways in which this system is upset is by the influx of sediment.

is temporary and water cools within two weeks the algae returns and the corals

In Kish Island, where coral reefs are more exposed to temperature rise due to gentle slopes of the reefs corals are more exposed to bleaching while in Faror and Khark Islands it is less likely for the corals to lose color.

Some species of corals are adapted to the new climatic conditions, but others, such as staghorn corals, are not as adaptable and are dying, ISNA news agency quoted Rezaei as saying on May 6.

In the year 1378 (March 1999-March 2000) only 23 percent of the corals in Shidvar Island were alive and currently the amount decreased to 13 percent, he regretted, adding that staghorn corals are totally extinct in the area.

Tourists, construction projects, oil spill threatening corals

He went on to lament that sadly tourists try to pick corals and that's why, following a court order, they cannot enter Shidvar Island, which is a protected area. Moreover some tourists used to throw

their trash directly into the water, he said, stating that fishermen used to do the same. Construction projects would also

result in release of sediment into the sea and hence inevitably contribute to corals bleaching, choking and death, he

According to an article titled "The Effects of Sediment Discharge by Rivers on Coral Reef Systems in Sogod Bay, Southern Leyte, Philippines" coral is a very delicate ecosystem which needs very specific conditions to survive. If any of these conditions are upset slightly than the reef system will falter and die. One of the major ways in which this system is upset is by the influx of sediment. An increase in sediment means that the coral cannot photosynthesis and as such it

Oil spill and sound pollution in the Persian Gulf would cause harms to coral

However, Rezaei highlighted, for the past three months rangers have been protecting the marine environment of Kish Island.

"While the number of rangers are low it's a good start," he suggested.

Protecting coral reefs

According to the UN Environment tropical coral reefs cover a mere 0.1 per cent of the ocean but are among the most bio-diverse ecosystems on the planet, supporting one quarter of all marine species. They occur in over 100 countries, including more than 80 de $veloping\ countries,\ and\ sustain\ human$ society through a range of ecosystem services, such as livelihoods and food security from fisheries, revenue from tourism, erosion prevention and protection from extreme weather events through dissipation of wave energy and lessening inundation and damage during storms.

The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity study found that coral reefs generate up to \$1.25 million per hectare from tourism, coastal protection, medical use and fisheries annually. Approximately 850 million people live within 100 km of and derive some benefits from coral reefs, with at least 275 million depending directly on reefs for livelihoods and sustenance. Reef-dependence, and consequently vulnerability to reef loss, is particularly high in small island states, in many countries in the coral triangle, and in coastal populations in developing countries.

Despite their importance, however, coral reefs are rapidly degrading. Overfishing, destructive fishing, unsustainable coastal development, nutrient and sediment loading, a range of land-based activities, warming temperatures due to climate change and ocean acidification are all placing extremely high pressure on the world's coral reefs, and action is needed now if we are to adequately protect them. In fact, in the last 30 years we have lost between 25 per cent and 50 per cent of the world's live coral, and it is predicted that by mid-century we could lose functional coral reef ecosys tems across most of the world.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation, global, regional and national policy support, placing coral reefs on the political agenda, integrated ecosystem-based management approaches, communications, and financing can help protecting the world's coral reefs from the impacts of climate change and

'Consistent supply of water to Lake Urmia only way to save it'

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — Consistent supply of water to Lake Ure s k mia is the only solution to save the lake, head of the provincial department for the Lake Urmia restoration program in West Azarbaijan province has said.

Shared between West Azarbaijan and East Azarbaijan provinces in northwestern Iran, Lake Urmia, was once the largest salt-water lake

in the Middle East. It was a home to many migratory and indigenous animals including flamingos, pelicans, egrets and ducks and attracted hundreds of tourists every year who had bathed in the water to take advantage of the therapeutic properties of the lake.

However, decades of long-standing drought spells and elevated hot summer temperatures that speed up evaporation as well as increased water demands in agriculture sector shrank the lake drastically. In 1999 the volume of water which was at 30 billion cubic meters drastically decreased to half a billion cubic meters in 2013. Moreover, the lake surface area

of 5,000 square kilometers in 1997 shrunk to one tenth of that to 500 square kilometers in 2013. The sharp rise in precipitations rates in the area has raised hopes for

total restoration of the once glorious Lake Urmia. However, Farhad Sarkhosh explained, while increased rainfalls has

risen lake's water level temperature rise and elevated evaporation rates in summer it is not so far-fetched to believe that water level may drop again in the lake.

The lake's water right should be provided all year round so that it can be saved from drainage, ISNA news agency quoted Sarkhosh as saying

Kiumars Daneshjoo, CEO of West Azarbaijan regional water company said in mid-May that owing to the substantial precipitations received in the lake catchment area since the beginning of the current year (March 21) some 1.5 billion cubic meters of water has been released to the lake and now the volume of water at "the turquoise solitaire of Azarbaijan" has increased by almost 3 billion cubic meters compared to the same period last year. Additionally water is now covering some 3,200 square kilometers of the lakebed, he added.



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Satellite images show major damage to Saudi oil sites

TEHRAN—Satellite imagery has revealed the extent of damage to Saudi Arabia's oil facilities caused by Yemen's drone strikes last Tuesday, which forced the kingdom to temporarily stop oil flow in a major pipeline.

The Qatari television network Al Jazeera reported on Sunday that the attacks had $caused\ significant\ damage\ to\ Saudi\ energy$ giant Aramco's Pump Station 8.

The drone strikes reportedly caused a 4-meter rupture in one of the station's main oil pipes, causing severe leakage in an area of around a thousand square meters.

According to Press TV, the Yemeni army, in coordination with the Houthi Ansarullah movement, announced last Tuesday that they had launched drones to attack "critical facilities" deep inside Saudi territory.

Hours later, Saudi officials confirmed that two oil pumping stations in Dawadmi and Afif provinces in the Riyadh region had been targeted and that oil flow in the east-west oil pipeline, which carries between 3 and 5 million barrels a day, had been brought

The attacks have been regarded as the

Tibet this week

TEHRAN — U.S. Ambassador to China

Terry Branstad was scheduled to visit Tibet

this week, a U.S. embassy spokeswoman

said, the first visit to the region by a U.S.

trade tension between the two countries.

December that requires the United States to

deny visas to Chinese officials in charge of

implementing policies that restrict access

to Tibet for foreigners, legislation that was

denounced by China, Reuters reported.

sador to engage with local leaders to raise

longstanding concerns about restrictions

"This visit is a chance for the ambas-

The visit follows the passing of a law in



beginning of a new era in the years-long deadly war, which has so far killed thousands of Yemeni civilians and plunged the impoverished country into a growing hu-

War enters new stage

Afif and Dawadmi are located about 850 kilometers from Sa'ada, Yemen's northern-

The attack bears extra significance at this

stage of the war because it indicates that Yemeni forces were able to fly their armed drones a long distance and carry out precision strikes and then fly them back while evading Saudi defenses all along.

The long-range drones open unlimited possibilities for Yemeni resistance forces, which have already surpassed all expectations by surviving the massive Saudi onslaught and mounted a potent response with an arsenal of ballistic missiles.

A source within the Yemeni Ministry of Defense said on Sunday night that the oil facilities attacked on May 14 were only two of the 300 critical targets that the resistance forces were planning to attack in the near future in retaliation for the Saudi aggression.

The targets include military bases and other vital infrastructure across Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates -- the two main perpetrators of the war, the unnamed official said, adding the positions of Saudi mercenaries inside Yemen were also on the list.

The source asserted that the war had entered a "new chapter" and "substantial developments" were expected in all areas.

Russia: Syrian army declares unilateral truce in Idlib

The Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) said the army launched a retaliatory attack on Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) positions after the terrorist group fired rockets and mortar shells at the northern part of Hama province.

HTS, which is a coalition of different factions of terror outfits largely composed of the Jabhat Fateh al-Sham Takfiri terrorist group, holds a large part of the province and the zone.

The army has ratcheted up its operations in Idlib to counter numerous flagrant terrorist violations of an earlier de-escalation

Under the agreement signed between Russia and Turkey last year, Takfiri groups in Idlib had to withdraw from areas bordering Syrian government-controlled territory, but they have

According to Press TV, during a UN Security Council meeting on Friday, Iran's Ambassador to the UN Majid Takht-Ravanchi warned that continued terrorist presence in the Syrian territory is endangering civilian lives.

The Iranian envoy described the situation in Idlib as critical, saying terrorist groups were using "over two million civilians

Syria's UN Ambassador Bashar al-Ja'afari also called for a halt to foreign support for terrorists operating in the province.

Ending the suffering of Syrians in Idlib requires stopping hypocrisy and politicization and investment in terrorists and manipulating peoples' destinies and lives," he said.

Palestinian cabinet not consulted on U.S.-led **Bahrain summit, PM says**

The group criticized the ruling Al Khalifah regime for hosting the conference, saying that is a departure from all national, Islamic and humanitarian principles.

Al-Wefaq further said the Bahraini people are opposed to the "desecration" of their country and efforts for converting it into a "station" to sign a new version of the Balfour Declaration - the document that led to Israel's creation.

The group noted that the Al Khalifah regime's move to host the "disastrous project" is no surprise, adding Manama's recent rapprochement with the Israeli regime comes as it "lacks popular legitimacy" and seeks international support in an attempt to sustain its legitimacy.

Al-Wefaq called on all Bahrains and "free governments" to reject the initiative and stop the "dangerous development" from

Kremlin denies Russian involvement in Austria's **Freedom Party scandal**

TEHRAN — The Kremlin said Monday that Russia was in no way involved in a political scandal in Austria after the country's vice-chancellor was shown on video offering to fix state contracts with a woman posing as a Russian oligarch's niece.

Vice-Chancellor Heinz-Christian Strache of the far-right Freedom Party resigned on Saturday as vice chancellor and party leader after the video was released by two German news organizations. He acknowledged that the video was "catastrophic" but denied breaking the law, Reuters reported.

When asked about the scandal on Monday, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov told reporters that the incident "does not have and could not have anything to do with us.

Saudi Aramco attack beginning of larger operation: Yemen

TEHRAN —Yemen's Ansarullah movement has warned that its against 300 vital targets in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Yemen.

The Ansarullah said on Sunday its May 14 drone attack on pumping stations of the Saudi state oil company Aramco was the start of operations against 300 vital targets.

The group said other planned targets include military headquarters and facilities in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Back on Tuesday, Yemeni soldiers, backed by allied fighters from Popular Committees, launched the major operation against the strategic oil facility in Saudi Arabia in retaliation for the Riyadh regime's devastating military aggression and siege of

the impoverished country.

According to Press TV, following the attack, Saudi Arabia stopped pumping crude oil on the major pipeline across the country.

BJP prepares return to power as exit polls predict clear win

 ${\bf TEHRAN}$ — India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is to meet coalition partners to discuss a new government, two BJP sources said on Monday, after exit polls predicted a clear general election victory for the party led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to the delight of Hindu groups.

The talks will be on Tuesday at the BJP's headquarters in New Delhi and will be led by the party president, Amit Shah, one of the party sources said. The sources declined to be identified as they are not authorised to speak about the meeting, Reuters reported.

Nalin Kohli, a spokesman for the BJP, declined to comment. India's seven-phase general election, billed as the world's biggest democratic exercise, began on April 11 and ended on Sunday. Votes will be counted on Thursday and results are likely the same day.

Modi's BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is projected to win anything between 339-365 seats in the 545-member lower house of parliament with the Congress-led opposition alliance getting only 77 to 108, an exit poll from India Today Axis

showed on Sunday. A party needs 272 seats to command a majority.

U.S. Ambassador to China visiting

tion of Tibetan culture and language," the spokeswoman said in an emailed statement. Branstad was traveling to Qinghai provambassador since 2015, amid escalating ince and neighboring Tibet from May 19 to May 25 on a trip that will include official meetings as well as visits to religious and cultural heritage sites, the spokesperson

on religious freedom and the preserva-

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang said the government welcomed Branstad's visit and he could see for himself the big changes that have taken place there since Tibet was "peacefully liberated" more than six decades ago.

Qatar not invited to emergency Arab summits in Saudi Arabia

TEHRAN — Qatar has not been invited to two regional summits called to discuss attacks on Saudi oil assets, a Foreign Ministry official said on Monday.

Saudi King Salman on Saturday proposed holding the two meetings in Mecca on May 30 to discuss implications of last week's drone strikes on oil installations in the kingdom and attacks on four vessels, including two Saudi oil tankers, off the coast of the United Arab Emirates.

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt have imposed an economic and diplomatic boycott on Qatar since June 2017 over allegations that Doha supports terrorism and is cosying up to regional foe Iran. Qatar denies the charges.

"Qatar, which is still isolated from its neighbors, did not receive an invitation to attend the two summits," the director of the Foreign Ministry Information Office said on Twitter, citing State Minister for Foreign Affairs Soltan bin Saad al-Muraikhi.

The Saudi Foreign Ministry and government communications office did not immediately respond to a request for

The UAE on Sunday said that the current "critical circumstances" in the region required a "unified Arab and Persian Gulf stance".

Saudi Arabia playing 'Trojan horse' for U.S. amid tensions: Al Akhbar

TEHRAN— Saudi Arabia is fanning the flames of war between Iran and the U.S. while both countries are against a confrontation, a Lebanese newspaper has said, accusing Riyadh of playing America's "Trojan horse.

In an article on Monday, Al Akhbar criticized Saudi Arabian King Salman for calling emergency meetings of the Arab League and the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

The paper warned Riyadh's rulers that with their "subservience" to U.S. President Donald Trump, they were essentially entering the kingdom into a conflict masterminded by Israel and America.

Saudi officials, it said, are only "adding fuel to the fire' of war that is aimed at partitioning the Middle East and

The official Saudi Press Agency (SPA) reported on Saturday that Salman had invited Arab leaders to convene urgent summits in the city of Mecca on May 30 to discuss ways to "enhance the security and stability in the region."

Days before the invitation, four oil tankers, including two Saudi ones, were purportedly targeted near the port of Fujairah on May 12, in what the United Arab Emirates

described as "sabotage" attacks.

The invitation came at a time when hawks within Trump's administration are actively trying to tip the scale in favor of a major confrontation in the Middle East.

Over the past few days, the U.S. has put its political staff in its Baghdad embassy as well as in the American consulate in the Iraqi city of Erbil on high alert about what it insists are possible threats from neighboring Iran.

Washington also sent a carrier strike group as well as strategic B-52 bombers to the region in a "clear warning" to Tehran.

Saudi attitude spells doom

According to Press TV, Al Akhbar wrote that the tensions have divided the region. It said Al Saud will not use these meetings to discuss Trump's so-called "deal of the century" for Palestine -- which is expected to be unveiled in early June.

Rather, the meetings will fan the flames of war to serve American and Israeli interests, because that is what they think

The article added that King Salman had decided to once

would ultimately save them their crown, the paper wrote.



again let aggressors use the Saudi airspace and territorial waters to wage war but this would only lead to his own demise and impose a great price upon Persian Gulf sheikhdoms which have tied their economy and security to America's

Italy unions refuse to load Saudi ship in protest over Yemen war

 $\textbf{TEHRAN} - Italian\,unions\,refused\,on\,Mon$ day to load electricity generators onto a Saudi Arabian ship with weapons on board in a protest against the war in Yemen.

The Bahri-Yanbu vessel loaded arms in the Belgian city of Antwerp earlier this month, but was prevented from picking up another consignment of weapons in the French port of Le Havre following protests by humanitarian groups, Reuters reported.

Rights campaigners say the weapons contravene a UN treaty because they might be used against civilians in Yemen, where a Saudi-led military coalition is battling the Iran-backed Houthis in a war that has killed thousands.

Unions in Genoa had tried to have the boat $banned\,from\,Italy,\,but\,the\,ship\,docked\,just$ after dawn, met by a handful of protesters who gathered on the quay.

No to war" read one of their banners. Union workers refused to load two generators aboard the boat, saying that although they were registered for civilian use, they could be instead directed to the Yemen war

"We will not be complicit in what is

happening in Yemen," union leaders said in a statement. Port officials confirmed the generators were blocked on the quay, but said non-critical goods would be loaded.

The four-year conflict in Yemen has devastated the country, leaving much of the population on the brink of famine.

The vessel was expected to leave Genoa for Jeddah, in Saudi Arabia, later in the day.

Ukraine's new leader gets sworn in, dissolves Parliament

TEHRAN — Ukrainian TV star Volodymyr Zelenskiy was sworn in as the country's new president Monday, promised to stop the war in the country's east against Russian-backed separatists and immediately disbanded Parliament, which he has branded as a group only interested in self-enrichment. Even before he disbanded the Supreme Rada, which

had been one of his campaign promises, the 41-year-old Zelenskiy had upended the traditions of Ukrainian politics, AP reported. He ditched the idea of a traditional motorcade to his inauguration, walking to the Parliament through a park

packed with people. Flanked by four bodyguards, he was

giving high-fives to some spectators and even stopped to

Before he made the announcement, Zelenskiy asked the Supreme Rada to adopt a bill against illegal enrichment and support his motions to fire the country's defense minister, the head of the Ukrainian Security Service and the Prosecutor General. All of them are allies of former president Petro Poroshenko, who lost the presidential election in a landslide to the comedian with no previous political experience.

In a feisty speech after his inauguration, Zelenskiy told the Rada that his main goal for the presidency is to bring peace to eastern Ukraine, where government troops have been fighting Russia-backed separatists for five years.

U.S. angers China by sending warship to disputed sea

TEHRAN — The U.S. military says its warships have sailed close to the islands claimed by Beijing in the disputed South China Sea, in a move that angered China, which is already engaged in trade tensions with Washington.

A U.S. military spokesman, Commander Clay Doss, said Sunday that the guided-missile destroyers Preble sailed near China's man-made islands on Monday.

The warship sailed "within 12 nautical miles of Scarborough Reef in order to challenge excessive maritime claims and preserve access to the waterways as governed by international law," said Doss. Beijing - which claims almost all of the

South China Sea — is yet to react to the operation, the second such activity this month. Reacting to the move, China's Foreign Ministry said it "strongly urges U.S. to stop such provocative actions.' The ministry's spokesman Lu Kang made

the comment at a daily news briefing in Beijing on Monday.

The resource-rich sea has long been a source of tension between Beijing and Washington, which regularly dispatches its warships and warplanes to the waters as part of what it describes as "freedom of navigation" patrols.

According to Press TV, Beijing has constantly warned the U.S. against its military activities in the sea, saying that potential close military encounters by air and naval forces of the two countries in the region could easily trigger miscalculation or even accidents at sea or in air.

Mbappe statement throws spanner into the works at PSG

Despite Kylian Mbappe pledging his future to Paris St Germain following yet another early Champions League exit in March, the France striker is now casting doubt on his intentions for

The 20-year-old added Ligue 1 player of the year to his already impressive list of honours on Sunday and took the opportunity to say he wanted "more responsibility" in the future, adding it would be either at PSG or "somewhere else".

The world champion, who has scored 32 goals in Ligue 1 this season, has been sharing the front line at PSG with Uruguay striker Edinson Cavani and Brazil's Neymar.

"It's a turning point, it was the moment to say it," Mbappe was quoted as saying by L'Equipe on Monday.

"I am whole. When I say something, I mean it. I said it. If it is at PSG, that's good, if it is elsewhere, it is elsewhere.'

Mbappe, whose influence at the French champions grew when Neymar was sidelined with a foot injury this year, has always said he would love to play at Real Madrid.

Mbappe's departure would be a huge blow for PSG, who were knocked out of the Champions League last 16 by Manchester United in embarrassing fashion this season.

It would, though, allow them to stabilize their finances after they were probed for an alleged breach of the Financial Fair Play rules. Proceeedings in that case were halted in March when the Court of Arbitration for Sport upheld an appeal over a procedural error from governing body UEFA.

(Source: Reuters)

Man City need to win **Champions League, says** Guardiola

Pep Guardiola admits Manchester City will ultimately be judged on whether they win the Champions League despite wrapping up an unprecedented domestic treble with a 6-0 whipping of Watford in the FA Cup final.

The 48-year-old Spaniard said in the immediate aftermath of Saturday's rout the domestic treble is more difficult than winning the Champions League because it demands greater consistency over a gruelling season. "I said before that I know we will be judged at the end on whether we win the Champions League," said Guardiola, who twice conquered Europe as Barcelona coach.

"I know unless we do that it will not be enough."

"This comes with me. I know that. I arrived in Barcelona, we were lucky we won it two times in four years and the people expect I am something special, that we have to win the Champions

Guardiola, who has not tasted European success since 2011, having drawn a blank during his spell with Bayern Munich, said what sets the Champions League apart is the level of the opposition.

Guardiola and City, who have never won the competition, have failed to make it past the quarter-finals since he took over in 2016. They lost to Monaco in the last-16 in 2017 and exited in the

last eight to Liverpool last year and Tottenham this season. "In this club, the points record and the domestic competitions

is incredible," he said. "But the Champions League we don't win quite often compared to the other ones because the teams are so good, the competition is so demanding but we want to win it."

Kroos extends Real Madrid deal until 2023

Toni Kroos has agreed a contract renewal with Real Madrid until the end of the 2022-23 season, the Spanish club said on Monday.

The 29-year-old Germany midfielder had been linked with a potential departure from the Santiago Bernabeu by Spanish media but instead has extended his stay for another four years.

Real are expected to sell several players this summer and overhaul their squad after a bitterly disappointing season in they finished third in La Liga the Champions League in the last 16.

Kroos signed for the club from Bayern Munich in 2014 and has made 233 appearances for the club, winning 11 trophies. (Source: Reuters)

French prosecutors want exathletics boss Diack to stand trial

French prosecutors have recommended that the former head of athletics' governing body IAAF, Lamine Diack, and his son stand trial for allegedly delaying doping sanctions against Russia in return for payment, sources told AFP Monday.

Prosecutors have recommended that Diack, who was president of the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) from 1999 to 2015, be tried for corruption and money laundering.

The prosecutors want five other people, including Diack's son Papa Massata Diack, a former marketing consultant to the IAAF, to stand trial.

Lamine Diack, from Senegal, has been questioned by prosecutors in France on several occasions. But his son, who like his father lives in Senegal, has refused to cooperate.

Investigating magistrate Renaud Van Ruymbeke must now decide whether the case should go to trial.

The French investigation began in 2015 when Britain's Sebastian Coe took over from Diack as IAAF president.

The backdrop to the investigation is the alleged system of state-sponsored doping uncovered in Russia by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA).

Prosecutors allege that Lamine Diack, now aged 85, was prepared to accept funding for political campaigns in Senegal in return for lenient treatment by IAAF anti-doping officials of

Also in the prosecutors' sights is Diack's former advisor, Habib Cisse, and the IAAF's former anti-doping chief Gabriel Dolle.

They recommend both men should be charged with "passive corruption". (Source: Eurosport)

'I thought my career was over' – Azarenka on pregnancy, changing rules & priorities

A surprise pregnancy wasn't part of Victoria Azarenka's plan for the 2016 season. At the time, she was ranked sixth in the world, having won in Brisbane, Indian Wells and Miami - her 20th WTA title - earlier that year.

Instead, she had to cut her season short, announcing the news of her impending new arrival via social media - sending a tweet which, she says, was like "ripping off a band aid".
"I was scared," the 30-year-old Belarusian

tells the BBC. "It wasn't easy."

Pregnancy was a shock for Azarenka, but it quickly turned into a happy shock. She remembers crying down the phone to her mother, but when questioned, didn't know why she was upset.

She did, however, fear that she would never step on a tennis court as a professional again.

"But then, it was all about knowing I was going to come back, and when I was going to come back," says the former world number one, who reached the quarter-finals in Stuttgart last month and will play at next week's French Open.

"I felt it was a blessing, but I still wanted to have my own dreams and my own career. "I knew I was going to come back, but my first initial thought was 'oh my god, I'm

never going to play tennis again'. Azarenka gave birth to Leo in December 2016 and returned to the tour the following June, reaching the fourth round of Wimble-

don just over a week later. 'I'm sure a lot of women won't be able to relate to me but I felt so much better af-



ter [pregnancy]," she says. "I felt so much stronger physically, and my body became so much better. I felt like my body finally matured into being a woman.

'I want this to be my legacy' changing the rules

Azarenka's return came months after 23time Grand Slam champion Serena Williams announced her own pregnancy, going on to give birth to her daughter in September 2017.

Since then, maternity policies within tennis have repeatedly hit the headlines, with the WTA canvassing the opinions of players in 2018. As a result, Azarenka and other leading players on the WTA's Players' Council - including Venus Williams and Britain's Johanna Konta - have successfully campaigned for the introduction of more ranking protection for new mothers on the tour.

Previously, players had to return to play within three years and could use a special ranking for eight tournaments within one year.

From the 2019 season, players coming back from childbirth, or injury, will now be able to use their previous ranking to enter 12 tournaments over a three-year period.

They will also not face a seeded player in a tournament's opening round.

"We have the power to change the rules

and we have done," Azarenka says.
"I think that is what I want my legacy to be, that I'm fighting for women to be more comfortable, to break those stereotypes and move the needle a little forward.

"That evolution is going to continue to break boundaries and the illusion of women in sport.

I don't love tennis that much any more' - on changing priorities

"I've got to go to work, take pictures with people and smile. Some days I do that with a lot of struggle, but some ďays are better."

Life is tough on a "daily basis" for Azarenka. On the surface, it looks idyllic, travelling the world playing tennis: her blonde haired, blue-eyed boy by her side.

But in reality, she admits she wants to "cry, hide and not see anybody".

Locked in a custody battle over two-yearold Leo since 2017, the past two years have been, and continue to be, a "big challenge" for the two-time Australian Open champion.

While the case has yet to be resolved, Azarenka - ranked world number 51 - returned to the WTA Tour with Leo in tow in 2018, having missed several tournaments, including the 2017 US Open.

But although the experience is one she wouldn't wish on anyone, she admits it has provided unexpected benefits.

(Source: BBC)

'Impossible' for Bale to stay at Real, says former president



Former Real Madrid president Ramon Calderon says it is "impossible" for Gareth Bale to remain at the Bernabeu.

Bale was an unused substitute as Madrid signed off a dismal campaign with a home loss to Real Betis and he did not acknowledge the home fans as he left.

Madrid boss Zinedine Zidane said he "did not know" whether Bale had played

his final game for the club. "Zidane is not keen on him; it is a relationship that will come to an end," Calderon told BBC Sport Wales.

The Frenchman, reappointed Madrid boss in March, offered no assurances to their former world-record signing after the disappointing defeat to Betis.

"I'm sorry he didn't get to play, but no one knows what will happen," Zidane said.

team, I have to do what I think works best. 'No one can change what Bale has done for the team, but as a coach I have to live

in the present.

Asked about the future of Bale and goalkeeper Keylor Navas, who has also been linked with a move away, he added: "I don't know if it's the last game for them or

not. I don't know what's going to happen." Calderon believes Bale's time at Madrid will come to an end this summer after six years following his record £85m switch from Tottenham, as his relationship with

Zidane is so poor.

"It seems it was his last game for Real Madrid," said Calderon.

"Zidane, last year when he left, he thought it was imperative to keep [Cristiano] Ronaldo and to sell Bale and they decided not to do that.

"It seems it is impossible for him to be here... because of the coach and the relationship with the fans. They think he is not committed and that is a problem.

"The best thing for him is to move. He should take the opportunity if there is one.'

Calderon says Madrid will be prepared to take a financial hit to get Bale away from The 29-year-old has been linked with

a return to Tottenham Hotspur, though

Bale's wages far exceed those of Spurs' top "Maybe he will go on loan. It is a problem when the coach and player do not get along, you have to look at every option to

find a solution," Calderon added.

"The problem is the salary it is a high salary. He has not been lucky at Madrid since the beginning. Fans thought for the money he would be better than Cristiano and that was really impossible.

"It is a divorce that is difficult to solve. They will find a loan or a transfer for perhaps a low amount of money.'

(Source: BBC)

Nadal can't wait to return to new-look **Roland Garros**



Defending French Open champion Rafael Nadal said Sunday he can't wait to hit the clay courts of Roland Garros after claiming his first title this season and ninth Italian Open trophy.

Nadal defeated world number one Novak Djokovic 6-0, 4-6, 6-1 for a record 34rd Masters, leaving his vanquished foe to label the Spaniard as "the number one favourite for Roland Garros". "I am going to be there with time enough,

as always," said 32-year-old Nadal, who wants to capture a 12th trophy in Paris.

"I'm going to repeat my normal routines. For sure I can't wait to be there and have the feeling, see the stadium, watch all the new great things that Roland Garros is doing," the 17-time Grand Slam winner said of the rebuilt Philippe Chatrier Centre Court.

still not closed. Is a different stadium, but the feeling probably will not be very different. "This year, I don't see a big difference.

The wind is going to be the same as always. Court is still big.

His first title this season, and particularly on his favourite clay surface, is a huge boost for the Spaniard.

"Happy to reach that level in the last tournament before a Grand Slam," said

"But, as I said, for me I don't want to talk about Grand Slams now. I never did in the

past. Important title, now's the moment to keep going."

Djokovic -- winner at the Madrid Open last week -- gave an error-strewn display

in his 54th meeting with second-ranked Nadal, having spent six hours on court in his previous two matches. "For me, the most important thing is o feel myself playing well and feel myself

healthy, with the energy that I need," said Nadal.

"If that happens, experience is that I am going to fight for titles sooner or later.' The 32-year-old had not dropped a set

all week before the final taking a 6-o set from four his five rivals. "During the last couple of weeks, every day and every week have been better. And

here we are finally with this great trophy,

Nadal pulled out of Indian Wells with a knee injury, and had not gotten past the semi-finals in Monte Carlo, Barcelona and Madrid. "After Indian Wells, there have been some tough moments for me in terms

of recovering again," he said. Nadal had been stunned by Stefanos Tsitsipas, a player 12 years his junior, in the semi-finals in Madrid.

But the Spaniard brushed aside the Greek in the semi-finals in the Italian capital on Friday.

(Source: France 24)

McLaren apologizes to Fernando Alonso for Indy 500 failure

McLaren sporting director Gil de Ferran has apologised to Fernando Alonsoafter the Spaniard's shock failure to qualify for the 2019 Indv 500.

Alonso struggled throughout the opening week of practice at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and slipped into Sunday's Last Row Shootout after failing to secure a top 30 spot. Over the four-lap averages, Alonso was bumped from that showdown by American Kyle Kaiser by just 0.019mph.

De Ferran, the winner of the 2003 Indy 500, worked with Alonso during his debut in a McLaren-Andretti Autosport partnership at the Brickyard in 2017, before being given his current role with McLaren. The British team built its own team for this year's attempt, headed up by former Force India deputy principal Bob Fernley, although it was forced into taking a Chevrolet engine following the acrimonious end to the F1 deal it had with Honda.

This year's entry was seen as a precursor to a full IndyCar season in 2020 for the British team. Instead, De Ferran spent Sunday evening saying sorry to everyone involved in the project for failing to make the grade.

This has been a very emotional and difficult experience, not only for me but for the whole team," de Ferran is quoted as saying by Racer. "I want to take this opportunity to



apologise and thank the fans, not only here in the U.S. but globally, who have been following our progress. I read a lot of nice things and some great messages all over the place. So thank you, and I'm sorry we won't be in the Indy 500.'

After also apologising to McLaren's Indy 500 team and to its sponsors, De Ferran spoke to the man seated alongside him: "Last but not least, I want to thank this man here on my left -- I want to apologise to you, as well, because we didn't give you a car that was fast enough. You drove like

the champion that we know you are.

"Particularly these last three days have been incredibly tense and very difficult, and we couldn't have asked any thing more from you, Fernando. So I'm sorry, man. You're an amazing driver. In my 35 years of racing, actually a few more, this is the most painful experience I've ever had.

'There's a mixture of emotions going on inside of me but we are racers. We respect this place. This is one of the toughest challenges in racing. I want to come back tomorrow. I want to fight. I want to come back tomorrow and fight. This is incredibly painful.'

 $\underline{\text{McLaren has also confirmed it will not seek to buy another}}$ team's entry on the grid in order to get Alonso a place in the race, an option that is open to anyone who fails to qualify.

"We want to earn our place in the field," De Ferran said. Alonso's failure means he will need to wait at least another year before attempting to claim the final piece of motor racing's Triple Crown -- he already has victories at the Monaco Grand Prix and the Le Mans 24 Hours. Alonso is aiming to become only the second driver to claim that triple; two-time world champion Graham Hill did so in the 1960s and 1970s.

(Source: ESPN)

Iran win Karate 1-Series A Istanbul

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iranian karatekas topped d e S k the medal table of the Karate 1-Series A Istanbul on Sunday.

Iranian representatives won six gold and three bronze medals in the competition held in Istanbul, Turkey.

Travat Khaksar opened the gold medal count for Iran with her victory in Female Kumite -55kg. The karateka who had already claimed gold at the opening Karate 1-Series A event in Salzburg took a convincing 5-2 victory over Tzu-Yun Wen of Chinese Taipei in the final, wkf.net reported.

Hamideh Abbasli confirmed her favorite status in Female Kumite +68kg. The Iranian karateka completed a powerful performance in Istanbul with a 1-0 triumph over Japan's Ayaka Saito .in the final so to take her first gold this year

The third gold for Iranian representatives came in Male Kumite -75kg. Bahman Asgari Ghoncheh used his World champion status to claim an impressive 6-1 victory over Luigi Busa of Italy in the final. Mahdi Ghararizadeh Mahani won another gold for Iran

and produced one of the biggest upsets of the day after defeating local hero Ugur Aktas 1-0 in the final of Male Kumite -84kg.

Saleh Abazari in Male Kumite +84kg and the Iranian

Female Kata team completed the gold medal count for the Iranian delegation.

Furthermore, Ali Moskini in Male Kumite, 60kg, Mobdi

Furthermore, Ali Meskini in Male Kumite -60kg, Mahdi Khodabakhshi in Male Kumite -84kg and Iran Male Kata team claimed three bronze medals.

The event attracted over 1,800 karatekas from 101 countries, which the World Karate Federation claimed shows the "immense popularity" of the sport.



Mehrdad Mohammadi joins Aves



S P O R T S TEHRAN—Sepahan d e s k winger Mehrdad Mohammadi joined Portuguese top-flight football team Aves.

The free agent player has penned a three-year contract with Aves for an undisclosed fee.

The Portuguese club released a statement saying: "The Iranian international has ended his tie with Sepahan Isfahan FC and signed a three-year contract with Aves. The 25-year-old winger is a very technical player, with

speed being one of his greatest weapons."

His twin brother, Milad, is playing in

Russian football club Akhmat Grozny.
Mehrdad Mohammadi, 25, joined
Iranian football club Sepahan in 2016
from Rah Ahan and scored 13 goals
in 82 matches for the Isfahan based

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.

Ahmadi takes silver at World Taekwondo Championships



S P O R T S TEHRAN — Soroush d e s k Ahmadi from Iran claimed a silver medal at the World Taekwondo Championships in Manchester, England on Sunday.

Ahmadi lost to his Chinese rival Zhao Shuai 27-7 in the final match of the men's -63kg.

Iranian representatives Mahla Momenzadeh and Armin Hadipour Seighalani had already won one silver and one bronze in the competition. Momenzadeh lost to title-holder Sim Jae-young from South Korea 11-6 in the women's -46kg final match.

Hadipour also won a bronze medal at the men's -54kg after losing to Russia's Georgy Popov 14-4 in semifinals.

Around 975 athletes from 150 countries and one refugee team under World Taekwondo's flag competed in 16 weight categories (eight men, eight women) over five action-packed days at the Manchester Arena.

David Brown ready to re-write record books

Five years on from smashing the men's 100m T11 world record, Paralympic champion David Brown believes he has rediscovered the winning formula that will enable him to go even faster. With the Parapan Am Games and the World Championships both taking place this year, not to mention the clock ticking down to the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics, Brown's new lease of life couldn't come at a better time.

"I'm getting back to race form — how I was back then in 2014," said Brown, who will race the 100m and 400m T11 at the Arizona Grand Prix, which begins on Friday.

"Five years ago I was only two years into my professional career. I was doing a lot of things, but not really understanding why I was doing them. I didn't have a grasp on everything; I was still a baby," said Brown, who clocked 10.92 in California in 2014, the first in his class to go below 11 seconds.

"I even told my coach (Joaquim Cruz) this year that I feel like we've been training back in 2013 or 2014 time. He was like, just calm yourself, we've got a long way to go — firstly to November for the World Championships and secondly the overall goal in Tokyo.

"I still feel like I'm new, because I'm just — seven years in to this — discovering 'oh, this is what worked before, let's get back to this."

et back to this. A whole new me

A return to the type of shape he was in five years ago will be particularly welcome to Brown, who has found maintaining his form notably difficult since winning his



first world title in 2015.

At Rio 2016 the vision impaired sprinter suffered an injury during the 200m which meant he was unable to start the 400m; in the build-up to London 2017 he suffered a muscle strain.

"Every season I've always had an injury. Now I've cleaned up some things and I'm getting back to how I was in 2014," explained the 26-year-old.

"I'm back in physical and mental health, everything is starting to line up. I've been enjoying the season so far and I'm excited to see where it goes. It's almost like a whole new me, which is cool."

Brown's confidence was given an extra boost after he

finished 2018 as the number one T11 sprinter in the world. He's also enjoying new challenges, and has started training for the long jump as well as racing the 400m again.

"I always wanted to get back to running the 400m. Now I have a new guide for that distance, Connor Faint, and he's taken on the task very well," said Brown, who still works with guide Jerome Avery in the 100m.

"I opened up with my fastest ever this year, so once we start fine tuning some things who knows what we can do.

"With Jerome I run on the outside, but I'm on the inside of Connor. Balancing that out was tough at first, but the more you do it the easier it gets. When Connor came in, I instantly started him on my right side, so we wouldn't start any bad habits."

Into the unknown

As for the long jump, Brown decided to give it a go at the beginning of this year.

Initially hesitant — not least because he has to sprint to down the runway by himself, having spent years as a blind sprinter tethered to a guide — Brown is currently working on his run-up before attempting to add a leap in to the unknown. He is however looking forward to the chance to jump.

"Its scary because I know I have to go straight, then it's like, cool, I'm running by myself! With nobody attached!" he laughed.

"I'll jump wherever I can jump. If it's lined up for me to be able to do the long jump at the Worlds then I'll do it. I just want to get a mark first and go from there."

(Source: Paralympic.org)

Bolivian football in mourning after a referee collapsed and later died

A 31-year-old soccer referee collapsed during a Bolivian league match high up in the Andes and died after being taken to the hospital.

The match between the Always Ready and Oriente Petrolero clubs was played at Municipal Stadium in El Alto, which sits about 3,900 meters (12,795 feet) above sea level.

The game was in the 47th minute when referee Victor Hugo Hurtado toppled back-

wards and fell to the ground. Footage of the moment Hurtado fell to the ground circulated around social media along with clips showing the doctors attending to him as he lay on the pitch.

Players and team doctors rushed to his side and after a few minutes Hurtado was loaded onto a stretcher before being placed in an ambulance and driven away.

Always Ready team doctor Eric Kosziner told reporters later that the referee suffered a heart attack on the field and then a second, fatal attack as he arrived at the hospital.

Bolivian president Evo Morales confirmed

the death of the referee and sent his condolences to the family in a tweet from his personal account.

"We regret the passing of referee Victor Hugo Hurtado," he wrote.

"We send our condolences and solidarity to your family, friends and colleagues. Bolivian football is in mourning."

Bolivian football is in mourning."

The game was tied at 0-0 when the incident occurred before Always Ready took control and secured the 5-0 victory.

(Source: news.com.au)



FM spokesman congratulates Iran karate team on victory

IRNA — Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi in an Instagram message expressed congratulations on the victory of Iranian National Karate Team ranking top in Istanbul Karate1 Premier League.

In his message, which was released on Sunday night, Mousavi congratulated Iranian people, the sports community, coaches and male and female athletes on the victory.

During the event Iranian team received 6 gold and 3 bronze medals.

Turkey with four gold, two silver and three bronze medals ranked second and Japan with one gold, three silver and three bronze medals stood on the third place. Meanwhile, Spanish squad with one gold and three bronze medals ranked third.

Montenegro, Greece, Italy, Taipei, Peru, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Australia and Georgia stood on the next places. Iranian male fighters with three gold and three bronze

medals won the game and the female karatekas grabbed three gold medals and ranked first. 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.

Preview - Group A: Zob Ahan FC (IRN) v Al Nassr (KSA)

Karbala: A head-to-head battle for the top spot in Group A sees Islamic Republic of Iran's Zob Ahan hosting Saudi Arabia's Al Nassr at Karbala Sports City on Tuesday.

Both sides have progressed to the next round following positive results on Matchday Five; Zob Ahan earned a last-minute draw at Al Zawraa to stay unbeaten in five, while Al Nassr were clinical in a 3-1 triumph over Al Wasl that saw them make it three wins on the trot.

Rui Vitoria's men come into the game buoyed with their Saudi Pro League success. Al Nassr edged rivals Al Hilal to win their first league title since 2014-15. Moroccan striker Abdelrazzaq Hamdallah had missed

Moroccan striker Abdelrazzaq Hamdallah had missed the last two AFC Champions League games but the Al Nassr man returns having collected the Saudi Pro League's MVP and Top Scorer awards on Saturday.

For Zob Ahan, a place in the Round of 16 has been booked for the third time in four years, but the Isfahan-based side have been knocked out at that stage in each of the two previous occasions. Avoiding defeat on Tuesday will ensure they finish top of the group and go into the knockout stage unbeaten.

(Source: the-afc)

Masoud Shojaei announces Iran's Tractor Sazi exit

TASNIM — Iranian Tractor Sazi football team's captain Masoud Shojaei has bid farewell to his club on Sunday.

Shojaei joined the Iranian football team from AEK Athens in August 2018 and scored four goals in 23 matches for the Tabriz-based football team.

Shojaei has not made clear where's his destination for the next season.

Shojaei, Iran national football team captain, failed to help Tractor Sazi win Iran Professional League title for the first time.

Tractor Sazi finished in fifth place in the Iranian league and it means the team will not represent the country in the 2020 AFC Champions League.

AFC President assures Palestine FA of continued support

AFC President Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa has assured the Palestine Football Association of the Confederation's support in developing football in the West Asian country.

Shaikh Salman also assured General Jibril Rajoub, the Palestine Football Association President, of AFC's commitment in safeguarding its interests at the regional and international levels.



Shaikh Salman met General Rajoub in Manama, Bahrain on Sunday.

The AFC President hailed General Rajoub's efforts to serve Palestinian sports, especially football, praising the development of Palestinian football in the last few years.

Shaikh Salman also stressed that AFC will continue providing support for the Palestine FA's development projects - infrastructure, grassroots, women's football, referees, coaches and management - to ensure the game grows at all levels.

General Rajoub, in thanking Shaikh Salman, hailed AFC's support for Palestine football and said Palestine FA will work closely with the Confederation to develop the game.

Source: the-afc)

INTERNATIONAL DAILY

www.tehrantimes.com ■ Managing Director: Ali Asgari ■ Editor-in-Chief: Mohammad Ghaderi

Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895 **Switchboard Operator: Tel**: (+98 21) 43051000 Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051450 Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807

Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com

Tehrantimes79

let it fall.

Printed at: Hamshahri No. 3(Rooztab) - ISSN: 1017-94

Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603 www.eshterak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co.

No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran P.o. Box: 14155-4843 Zip Code: 1599814713

Reputation is something solid, but begging

will cause it to fall, so take care where you

Tehrantimesdaily

Imam Ali (AS)

Movie ratings system seeks to foster people's culture of cinema: official

e s k Organization of Iran said on Monday that the age-based movie ratings system has been set up

to raise the culture of cinema among people.
"This system intends to raise people's knowledge of media and helps them make a proper choice," Hossein Entezami told the media during his first press conference after taking the helm in the highest policy-making

"The system will naturally set limits, and the films that are typically threating to vulnerable groups will be restricted," he added.

However, he said that all movies must obtain the organization's approval to screen before any assessment

The Cinema Organization of Iran introduced the new

movie ratings system earlier on April 30. A group of experts from various fields is scheduled to implement the ratings system from the beginning of

Producing series and films exclusively for the home video $network\,gives\,the\,Iranian\,film makers\,more\,freedom\,from$ the regular governmental controls. Thus, the productions have received a warm welcome from people.

Entezami said, "The home video network is increasing its share of the market."

He noted that the major boost for the home video network would not cause damage to Iran's box office receipts. "However, planning officers in the organization should investigate the competitive situation.

Entezami also said that the Cinema Organization of Iran will be having its administrative structure overhauled. Accordingly, some departments and institutions in the organization will be merged or dissolved.



Cinema Organization of Iran director Hossein Entezami attends a press conference in Tehran on May 20, 2109 to brief the media about new arrangements in the organization.

IRCICA honors Iranian winners of Intl. Calligraphy **Competition in Tehran**

R TEHRAN — The Iranian winners at the 11th International Calligraphy Competition organized by the Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA) were honored during a ceremony in **Tehran on Sunday**



Iranian award winners of the 11th International Calligraphy Competition honored at the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization in Tehran on May 19, 2019. (ICRO)

The ceremony took place at the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO) and the winners received their awards from IRCICA director Khaled Irn, ICRO director Abuzar Ebrahimi-Torkaman, and Turkish Ambassador Derya Ors, the ICRO announced in a press release published on Monday.

The winners in various categories of Persian and Arabic styles of calligraphy were announced by the IRCICA in Istanbul earlier on

April 20. However, the Iranian winners were awarded in Tehran. In the nastaliq section, Ehsan Ahmadi won first prize, while second prize went to Safar Galeshi and Habib Ramezanpur

received third prize. Ahmadi also took second prize in the Kufi category, while first prize went to Farhad Yasin Nadir from Iraq and third prize was given to Fatemeh Moqimi also from Iran.

In the jaly nastaliq section, second prize was presented to calligraphers Yusuf Mazi from Turkey and Ramezanpur. Vali Mahbubi from Iran was awarded third prize. No first award winner was announced in this section.

The Turkey-based Iranian calligrapher Ahmad-Ali Namazi won first prize in the thulth section, second prize was given to Ali Irani from Iran and Egyptian calligrapher Abdah Muhammad al-Jamal won third prize.

A number of Iranian calligraphers, including Mostafa Abeidni, Mohammadreza Pajand, Shaĥram Ruhi and Ehsan Kazemi, received honorable mentions.

Over 600 calligraphers from 38 countries submitted nearly 850 works to the competition. Awards totaling $\$206,\!500$ were

dedicated to the artists of 66 works selected by the jury. This competition, which has been organized by the IRCICA every three years since 1986, aims to protect and promote the

classical art of Islamic calligraphy. Each round of the competition is dedicated to a recognized master of this art in order to commemorate masters' contributions and, at the same time, to encourage young calligraphers to follow

their examples. The 11th competition was dedicated to master of calligraphy Mehmed Shawqi Efendi who lived during the 19th century.

NEWS IN BRIEF



Mister Vorky to screen movies from Iran

TEHRAN — Five Iranian movies e s k will be competing in the 6th edition of Mister Vorky, a festival of one-minute films in Ruma, Serbia.

"For a Better Life" by Reza Golchin, "Kaveh" by Mohammad Farajizadeh and "No War" by Abedin Mohammadi are among the films.

"I Still Have Your Eyes" by Hamid Haqju and "How Many?" by Solmaz Etemad will also screen during the festival, which will be held from May 29 to June 2.

Tehran Symphony Orchestra to perform Beethoven's "Symphony No. 9"



Shahrdad Rohani conducts the Tehran Symphony Orchestra during a performance at the 34th Fajr Music Festival in Tehran in February 2019.

TEHRAN — The d e s k Tehran Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Shahrdad Rohani will be performing Beethoven's 'Symphony No. 9" during a concert at

Vahdat Hall on June 12 and 13. The Tehran Choir, which will be conducted by Mehdi Qasemi, is scheduled to accompany the orchestra during the performance.

The orchestra celebrated German composer Ludwig van Beethoven's 250th birthday by performing the "Symphony

"The Dome of Universe" named best doc at Terres Festival



A scene from Iranian director Mahmud Nazeri's documentary "The Dome of Universe".

e s k director Mahmud Nazeri's film "The Dome of Universe" has won the award for best history and heritage documentary at the Terres Festival in Tortosa, Spain.

The documentary is about Damavand. a small town located near Iran's highest

mountain of the same name.

The film depicts the city's culture, history, architecture, beautiful nature and people with traditional lifestyles.

Iranian scholar and architect Ali Afshar was a member of the jury of the festival, which was held from April 26 to May 5.

Owj turns spotlight on Jangali Movement in new docudrama

d e s k Organization, a Tehran-based institution producing revolutionary works in art and the cast. Movement and its leader, Mirza Kuchak Khan Jangali.

Ardalan Ashuri is the director of the 7-episode miniseries "Gileva", which will be broadcast from IRIB Channel 3 after the holy month of Ramadan, the Persian service of IRNA announced on Monday.

The miniseries is being filmed on location in Tehran and the northern Iranian towns of Siahkal and Kiashahr. Behruz Shoeibi stars as Mirza Khuchak Khan and

TEHRAN — The Owj Arts and Media Hamidreza Pegah, Setareh Eskandari, Mehran Rajabi

cinema, is producing a docudrama on the Jangali

Jangali Movement (1915-20) took shape in the aftermath of the 1905-11 Constitutional Revolution under the leadership of Mirza Kuchak Khan Jangali in response to the period of political decay brought about by the advent of World War I and the occupation of Iran by Anglo-Russian and Ottoman troops.

Behruz Afkhami has previously made the TV series "Kuchake Jangali" about the Jangali Movement during



Behruz Shoeibi (2nd R) plays the role of Mirza Kuchak Khan Jangali in the miniseries "Gileva".



Iranian artist Bahram Gharavi's poster (C) won first prize at the International Image Festival - FINI in Pachuca, Mexico.

Iranian artists top at Mexico's International **Image Festival TEHRAN** — Iranian

artists Sahar Jafari and Bahram Gharavi won awards at the 9th edition of the International Image Festival – FINI, which was held in Pachuca, Mexico

from May 2 to 10.

Jafari won first prize in the Professional Alternative Techniques Section for her work "The Qajar Superman", while Gharavi received first prize in the Professional

Organized by the Autonomous

University of the State of Hidalgo, the festival was held on the theme of populism in four categories of photography, alternative techniques, poster and documentary film in two sections of professional and student works.

Delon honored at Cannes as festival shrugs off criticism

CANNES, France (Reuters) — An emotional Alain Delon received a prize for his six decade-long acting career on Sunday as the Cannes Film Festival shrugged off criticism prompted by his views on women and same-sex couples to give him an honorary Palme d'Or.

Delon's heartthrob good looks and roles in major movies throughout the 1960s and 1970s made him an icon in France and he was received with a rapturous standing ovation by the crowd at a special ceremony at the festival on the French Riviera.

The decision to honor the 83-year-old actor has been controversial particularly outside France, sparking an online petition in the United States which achieved more than 25,500 signatories.

"One thing I'm sure about is that if there's something I'm proud of, really, the only thing, it's my career," Delon told the gala. "And this Palme d'Or was given to me for my career, for nothing else and that's why I'm happy, and

pleased, and satisfied."

Delon, who received the prize from his daughter Anouchka Delon, has starred in films including Luchino Visconti's "The Leopard", which won the top prize at Cannes' cinema showcase in 1963.

He has inflamed public opinion over the years, including by declaring his friendship for French far-right politician $\,$ Jean-Marie Le Pen, and has admitted to slapping women.

Earlier on Sunday, Delon stood by some of his views in an interview with France's Journal Du Dimanche (JDD) and said other comments attributed to him had been distorted, as he added that as an actor, he was irreproachable.

"I'm not against same-sex marriage, \bar{I} don't care: people should do as they please," he was quoted as saying. "But I'm

against adoption by two people of the same sex. "I said I'd slapped a woman? Yes. And I should have added that I've received more slaps than I've ever given. I've never harassed a woman in my life. They, however,

harassed me a lot."

Delon said he was "right-wing, full stop" and was not a supporter of the far-right.

In the wake of the "Me Too" movement to demand greater respect and representation for women, which erupted following a wave of sexual harassment scandals that rocked the movie industry, the prize for Delon sparked questions over its timing.

"The festival has really tried to make great strides with their organization and ... this year they doubled the number of women in competition," said Rhonda Richford, a Hollywood Reporter journalist based in France. "And so I think that doing that on one hand and turning around and giving this

just shows an error in judgment." In the run-up to Cannes, Melissa Silverstein, the founder of women's advocate group Women and Hollywood, called out the festival for honoring "these abhorrent values" with