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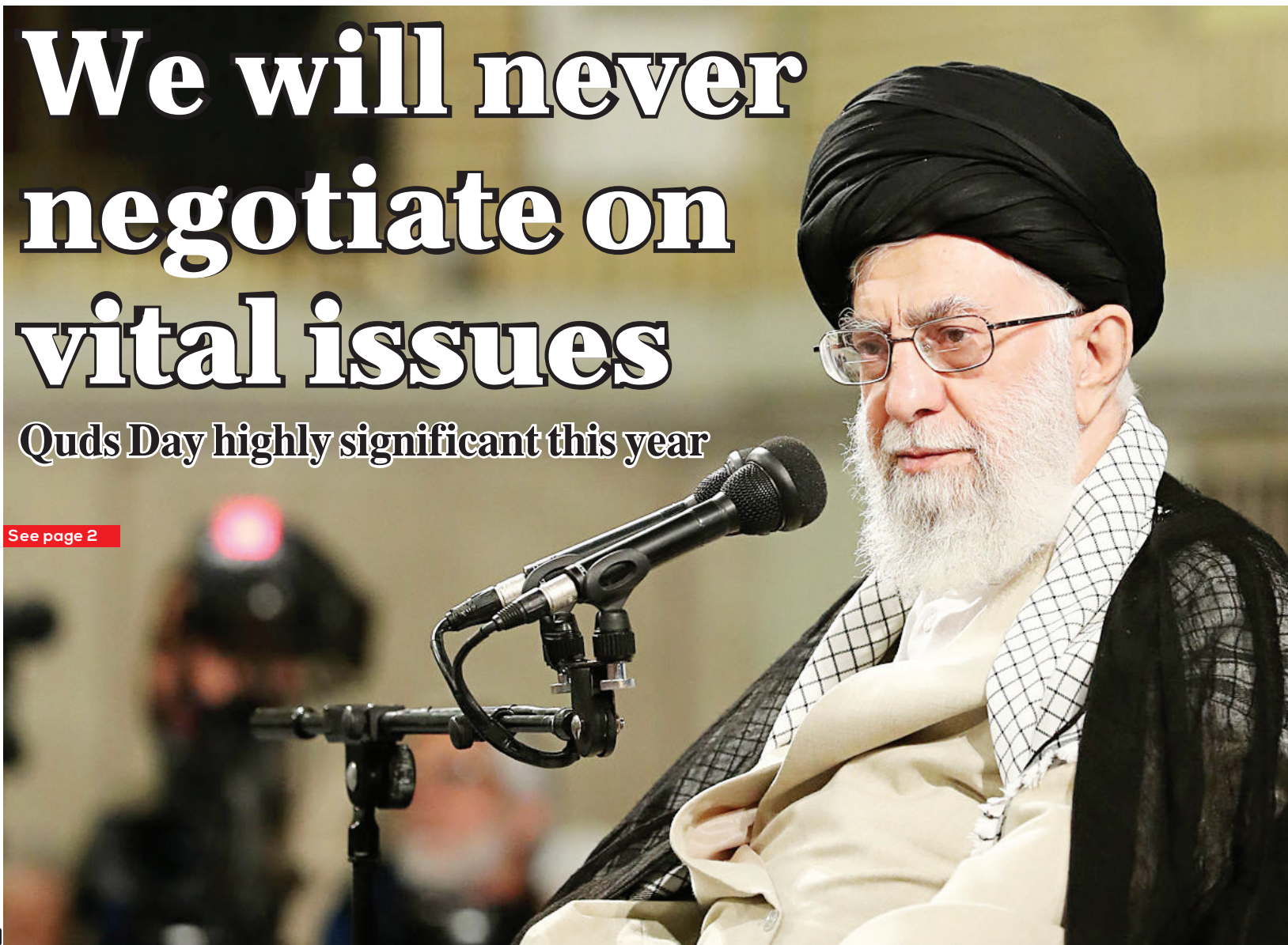


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# We will never negotiate on vital issues

Quds Day highly significant this year

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## PERSPECTIVE

**Hanif Ghaffari**  
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### Respect for Democracy by Tony Blair!

Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair continues to seek re-referendum on Brexit. Interestingly enough, in Tony Blair's remarks, there is not the slightest sign of respect for democracy and the vote of British citizens! He is precisely the same politician who attacked Iraq contrary to the will of the world public opinion! Everyone knows well that Tony Blair is a war criminal. Brexit continues to be an implicit term in the Britain's political equations. Complicating the process of the British withdrawal from the European Union is a joint measure taken by the British government and European authorities.

Now Tony Blair tries to use the wave created by opposition from a number of citizens and supporters of the two conservative parties and the Labor Party with a Brexit. He has repeatedly stated that another referendum could be held, and, if the British citizens vote against the Brexit, the earlier results of the 2016 referendum can be ignored. He's gone a step further, and mentioned that the Brexit can never happen, even despite the public's vote for leaving the EU.

The reality is that Tony Blair plans to exploit the political climate created in England! One of the main goals of the former British prime minister is to once again become an influential figure in his country. Tony Blair seems to have made some secret talks with some European politicians like German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

However, holding a referendum on the withdrawal of Britain from Europe would be in contradiction with democracy and respect for the votes of its citizens in 2016. However, the London-Brussels agreement on British exit from the EU can once again defeat Blair to in the country's political circles. For the British former prime minister, it does not matter that his country will leave Europe in the form of a "joint agreement" or "disagreement"!

Finally, even if a referendum is held again on the departure of Britain from Europe, Tony Blair does not have the power to revive his lost position in England, Europe and the world. As already mentioned, the former British PM must be accountable for his numerous crimes in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Middle East in the near future.

## The message of Paris to Trump on the Yemen war

**TEHRAN** — French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian on Tuesday reiterated calls for Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to end a conflict in Yemen that he described as a "dirty war".

According to Nour News (a website close to Iran's Supreme National Security Council) these remarks come as Paris is one of the main sponsors of Saudis in Yemen war.

Moreover, over the past four years, French have repeatedly alongside United States and Britain prevent to issue anti-Saudi resolutions in the United Nations Security Council.

The main question here is that the reason for changing the positions of the French Foreign Minister against Riyadh and Abu Dhabi is due to the tactical or strategic change in the foreign

and regional policy of this European country.

The answer is negative! The French continue to support the "chronic security crisis" strategy in the West Asia region. The strategic approach of the French in this regard is relatively similar to the White House. However, officials at the Elysee Palace, in addition to Le Drian's recent remarks, are trying to send a clear message to the United States.

The fact is that the erosion of the Yemen war on the one hand and the grudge of the French public opinion on the arms exchanges between Paris and Riyadh have increased the political cost of supporting the Elysee Palace from the Yemen war. In such a situation, news releases related to the new Trump decision to sell \$ 8 billion in weapons to the Saudis and Emiratis

have provoked angered by the French authorities of the Trump administration.

In such a situation, the French have become virtually U.S. weapons and financial maneuvers in the Yemen war, without having the ability to achieve their dirty interests in the campaign.

The main audience is the recent speeches of Jean-Yves Le Drian, are not Riyadh and Abu Dhabi! With these targeted remarks, the officials of the Elysee Palace have made Trump their main audience and have complained of the ruling relationship among Western casters during the Yemen war. Interestingly enough, the French authorities have once again proved, like in the past decades, that they are ready to sacrifice their regional agents at any time.

## Intl. Quds Day marks end of 'deal of the century': Hamas official

**TEHRAN (MNA)** — In an interview with Mehr, Ismail Radwan, a senior member of Hamas, hailed the role that the International Quds Day plays in keeping the Palestinian cause alive, saying that the day this year will mark the total collapse of the 'Deal of the Century.'

Ismail Radwan told Mehr that the International Quds Day, which has been commemorated for years, has restored the credibility of the occupied Quds, as the first Qibla of the Muslims.

Radwan also expressed his appreciation to the Islamic Republic of Iran for the role it plays in informing the young generation of the Islamic Umma about the issue of Palestine.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has always emphasized the importance of the role of the young people in supporting the issue of Palestine and

opposing the occupation," he noted.

In response to a question regarding the US and Israeli regime-proposed 'Deal of the Century', the Hamas senior member said "first of all, the plan targets Quds, then the Palestinians' right to return so that it rejects the Palestinians' right to return to their homeland as impossible."

He further described the Quds Day, which is commemorated each year on the last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan, as a day this year which would mark the total collapse of the 'Deal of the Century.'

Radwan went on to say that the 'Deal of the Century' aims to legitimize the Zionist regime of Israel's control over the occupied lands.

He further condemned attempts by some Arab states to normalize relations with Israel,

declaring Quds and the occupied Golan Heights as part of the Arab and Islamic world forever.

Elsewhere, the Hamas official referred to the Bahraini-hosted meeting to discuss the economic aspects of the 'Deal of the Century' and praised the stance taken by the Bahraini nation against the meeting.

He furthermore called on Arab and Islamic nations to come out on Quds Day this Friday to strongly condemn the 'Deal of the Century' and the attempts by some Arab rulers to normalize relations with Israeli enemy.

And finally, Radwan stressed that resistance will continue as before, hailing the victory in the recent battle in Gaza. He further noted the Israeli regime has been forced into retreat recently, calling for more cooperation and coordination among various factions of the Resistance forces.



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## Mourners bid farewell to legendary voice actor Parviz Bahram

Fans and mourners carry the coffin of legendary Iranian voice actor Parviz Bahram during his funeral in the courtyard of Tehran's Vahdat Hall on May 29, 2019.

Bahram, who lent his voice to many leading actors of the world cinema such as Orson Welles, Robert Taylor and Laurence Olivier, died of blood cancer on Monday at the age of 86.

## Iran self-sufficient in wheat production for 4th consecutive year

**TEHRAN** — For the fourth year in a row, Iran's wheat harvest is enough to make it self-sufficient in the strategic crop, Press TV quoted an official as saying on Tuesday.

Better rainfall across Iran will offset the loss of crops from unprecedented flash flooding in some provinces in March, head of the government program to buy wheat

from farmers Esmaeel Esfandiarpour said.

Under the autarky plan, the government makes purchases from wheat growers at guaranteed prices. Esfandiarpour said he expects an 800% rise in such buys in some provinces, which will help Iran's self-sufficiency in wheat recur for the fourth year. **→4**

## Tehran, Moscow discuss nuclear deal

**TEHRAN** — Russian Deputy Foreign Ministers Sergey Ryabkov held talks with Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Abbas Araghchi in Tehran on Wednesday, discussing the 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Jens Ploetner, the political director at the German Foreign Ministry, also held talks with Araghchi last Thursday in Tehran. During the talks, he said Germany will "remain committed" to the JCPOA.

Ploetner also said, "European countries will keep up their efforts and consultations aimed at meeting Iran's demands and preserving the JCPOA."

On May 8, Iran announced a partial withdrawal from some aspects of the pact, saying that the country would no longer adhere to some of the limits on its nuclear activities. It also threatened to step up uranium enrichment if it was not shielded from the sanctions' effects within 60 days. **→2**

## France, Germany spar over EU leadership

**TEHRAN** — A rift between France and Germany was apparent at an informal summit of EU leaders in Brussels on Tuesday, as French President Emmanuel Macron looked certain to protest the replacement of European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker with German politician Manfred Weber.

Macron told reporters that he preferred someone who has "experience either in their country or in Europe that allows them to have credibility and savoir faire," an apparent dig at Weber, who has never served in government or an institution as big as the commission, DW reported. **→13**



## ARTICLE

**Mahnaz Abdi**  
Head of the TehranTimes Economy Desk

### Integrated forex market to fill gaps created by NIMA

In early July 2018, Iran launched Forex Management Integrated System, locally known as NIMA, to allow the exporters of non-oil commodities to sell their foreign currency earnings to importers of consumer products.

The system, which seeks to boost transparency, create competitiveness among exchange shops and a secure environment for traders, was aimed to create the ground for importers to supply their required foreign currency without specific problems and for exporters to re-inject their earned foreign currency to domestic forex market.

Now, while the NIMA-set exchange rate was to be the base rate for setting the prices of commodities in domestic exchange markets, what is seen in these markets indicates that NIMA is not considered the basic source for setting the rate and it seems that different markets are ignoring it and somehow each of them follows its own way of setting the prices.

Some examples for ignoring NIMA rate in the commodity markets are round bar, pellet, and highly-demanded polymer grades such as polypropylene, as round bar and pellet have been recently traded at prices based on the rates lower than what NIMA has set, while trades of polymer products have been based on rates higher than NIMA rates.

Another criticism to NIMA is the low flexibility of this system.

At the moment, prices are discovered base on two complementary process in Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME): one is setting base prices based on the NIMA rate while taking the global prices into account and the other one is setting prices based on demand/supply competition.

But the process of setting prices based on NIMA rate lacks enough flexibility for lower prices; so a buyer may be forced to wait one or several weeks for the global prices to decrease so that he/she can benefit from such condition to be able to act successfully in the export markets.

While NIMA was initially the major source of rates, the condition has changed in a way that it seems not to play its real role, while it has also some other weaknesses that are unpleasant for all economic sectors. **→4**



## Senior MP criticizes European ‘neutrality’ on nuclear deal

**POLITICAL DESK** TEHRAN — Iranian Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Committee Chairman Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh has said Europeans are acting passively preserving the 2015 nuclear deal, calling their approach to the agreement “neutral”.

“Unfortunately, Europe has not attached value to our country’s cooperative approach. Europe’s ‘neutral performance’ will make it more vulnerable towards threats such as terrorism, human and drug trafficking,” Falahatpisheh said in meeting with a number of Norwegian parliamentarians in Oslo on Tuesday.

Iran has said the entire world, including Europe, will suffer if the nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), breaks apart.

Falahatpisheh said the U.S. violated international law by violating the JCPOA, endorsed by the UN Security Council Resolution 2231, and reimposing sanctions on Iran.



The senior parliamentarian also praised Norway’s position in supporting the deal.

On May 8, Iran officially announced that its “strategic patience” has come to an end as the remaining parties to the JCPOA have failed to compensate for the U.S. exit from the deal and reimposing sanctions on the country.

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

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

“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.

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

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

Iran has criticized Europeans for repeated delays in taking actions in line with keeping the JCPOA.

During a meeting with a group of Austrian MPs in Tehran on April 29, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi criticized European delay in implementing its special mechanism to save the JCPOA.

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

## Rouhani says door to diplomacy not closed if nuclear deal violators honor commitments

**POLITICAL DESK** TEHRAN — In an indirect reference to U.S. President Donald Trump on Wednesday, President Hassan Rouhani said return to the negotiating table is not blocked if the U.S. abides by its commitments under the 2015 nuclear deal.

The remarks by Rouhani came two days after Trump told reporters in a joint press conference with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in Tokyo that the United States is not seeking “regime change” in Iran.

Rouhani also echoed remarks by his foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif who said late on Monday that it is “actions” and “not words” which will show Trump’s intent.

“We pay attention to actions and not words. The path is not blocked if they stop practicing wrong deeds against the Iranian people and imposing sanctions and instead abide by their commitments and return to the negotiating table that they themselves left,” Rouhani said during a cabinet meeting.

He added, “If you choose another way in practice and abandon cruel deeds in your decisions, the Iranian people will open the way for you.”

## Tehran, Moscow discuss nuclear deal

**1 →** Under the JCPOA, Iran agreed to put caps on its nuclear work in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions. However, U.S. President Donald Trump unilaterally pulled Washington out of the nuclear deal in May 2018 and ordered reimposition of sanctions against Iran. The first round of sanctions went into force on August 6 and the second round, which targets Iran’s oil exports and banks, were snapped back on November 4.

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

Moscow has repeatedly expressed support for preserving the JCPOA.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron held a phone conversation on May 21, discussing ways to preserve the nuclear deal and continuing economic and trade cooperation with Iran.

“Discussing developments related to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear program, the leaders noted the importance of preserving this agreement that is a key factor in maintaining international stability and security. They confirmed the commitment of Russia, France and Germany to continuing mutually beneficial trade and economic cooperation with Iran,” the Kremlin said in a statement.

# Rouhani: Deal of century on Palestine will turn into ‘failure of century’

President calls on people to attend Quds Day rallies

**POLITICAL DESK** TEHRAN — Talking in a cabinet meeting on Wednesday, President Hassan Rouhani invited the people to take part massively in Quds Day rallies, which fall on Friday.

International Quds Day was initiated by the founder of the Islamic Republic Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979 to express solidarity with Palestinians and oppose the Zionist regime.

Rallies are held each year in various cities around the world by both Muslims and non-Muslim communities. Many Jewish people also attend the rallies in order to draw a line between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism.

“The Iranian people will voice support for oppressed ones in history through participating in the Quds Day rallies and will announce that they will stand against oppressors until victory is achieved,” Rouhani stated.

He noted, “The Iranian nation has always helped other nations, and we have helped the oppressed in Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan and Yemen.”

Detailing the plight of the Palestinians, Rouhani said the Israeli occupation had



robbed back-to-back Palestinian generations of their safety and freedom.

“As their brothers, other Muslims cannot remain silent in the face of the displacement of a great nation in such manner,”

the president remarked.

Rouhani added, “The oppressed people of Yemen and Palestine are resistant and not afraid of aggressors. They will force enemies to retreat with their resistance and power.”

**■ ‘Palestine using rockets not rocks to counter Israel’**

Rouhani also hailed the Palestinian nation’s defense achievements over the past years, saying resistance fighters are today responding to the Israeli regime’s missiles with “missiles rather than stones.”

He added, “There was a time when the Palestinians used to defend themselves only with rocks and stones, but today, they have worked hard and developed a tool to give crushing responses to Israelis.”

Today, missiles are answered with missiles.”

**■ ‘Failure of the century’**

Rouhani also criticized the secretive and controversial U.S.-devised deal for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Washington has kept the plan, which President Donald Trump has hailed as “the deal of century,” under wraps. Leaked information, however, indicate that it features serious violations of the Palestinian’s age-old demands.

Rouhani lambasted the plan as “the failure of the century,” warning, “Today, a plot is in the works against not only Palestine but the entire region.”

## Leader insists we will never negotiate on vital issues

Quds Day is highly significant this year

**POLITICAL DESK** TEHRAN — Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Leader of the Islamic Revolution, told a number of university professors and researchers on Wednesday that Quds Day rallies this year are “more important than any other year”.

The remarks by the Leader came and the Trump administration is set to announce its so-called “deal of the century”, which is intended to give more Palestinian lands to the Zionist regime of Israel.

On May 31, which is the lasting Friday of the fasting month of Ramadan, defenders of the Palestinians’ rights in Muslim and non-Muslim states pour into the streets to mark International Quds Day.

In an indirect references to certain Arab states which are cooperating with the U.S. to materialize “deal of the century”, the Leader said contrary to the wishes of Washington and its “followers” this project will also end in failure.

Ayatollah Khamenei said, “Support for the Palestinian nation has humanitarian and religious aspects.”

“Deal of century” is also opposed by the European Union which is pushing for the formation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel.

According to leaked reports, U.S. President Donald Trump’s “deal of the century” will not include a Palestinian state.

Ahead of Quds Day marches, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also issued a message on his Twitter page on Wednesday saying “Iran stands with Palestine”.

Pointing to the recognition of al-Quds as the capital of Israel, Zarif said, “Al-Quds (Jerusalem) is neither Amer-

ica’s to give away nor Israel’s to take.”

The chief diplomat also said Quds is “NOT for brutal accomplices to try to buy.”

He added, “Quds belongs to Palestine and Palestinians: history shows that whomever ignores this is condemned to ignominious failure.”

Ayatollah Amoli Sadeq Larijani, chairman of the Expediency Council, also said Muslims will not allow “deal of the century” to come true.

**■ Leader insists Tehran will never negotiate on vital issues**

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Leader vehemently dismissed speculation and rumors of negotiations between Iran and the United States propagated by certain media outlets and “gossipers”, asserting that Iran will not negotiate with the United States because it is “useless” and “detrimental”.

The Trump administration has said it withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal and returned sanctions on Iran in order to force Tehran to come the negotiating table. It has said that the deal does not include Iran’s defense industry, including missile program.

The Leader insisted that Iran will never negotiate on the most important national issues such as defense capability. “We don’t negotiate about military capability.”

**“The strategy of Americans is not negotiation, rather it is pressure.”**

## Araghchi says regional non-aggression pact will pave the way for trust

**POLITICAL DESK** TEHRAN — Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Abbas Araghchi said on Tuesday that a “regional non-aggression pact” will pave the way for neighboring countries to build trust and have constructive interaction.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Sunday that he has proposed the “regional non-aggression pact” with Persian Gulf Arab countries during his three-day trip to Iraq.

“In #Iraq, where I’ve held substantive and productive meetings with the President, PM, Speaker, FM & leadership of two parliamentary coalitions. Proposed regional non-aggression pact: #NeighborsFirst,” Zarif tweeted on Sunday.

During a meeting with Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani, Araghchi said security would prevail in the region when all regional countries enjoy security and economic benefits.

He also said that Iran will never negotiate with the United States.

Araghchi was in Muscat on Sunday. He met with Omani Foreign Minister Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to establish balanced and constructive relations with all countries in the Persian Gulf region based on mutual respect and interests,” Araghchi told the Omani chief diplomat.

He noted that Iran is not seeking to provoke tension in the region.

During his three-day visit to Iraq, Zarif held talks with senior Iraqi officials including President Barham Salih, Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi and political leaders such as Ammar al-Hakim, leader of the Iraqi National Wisdom Movement.

During a joint press conference with Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohamed Ali Alhakim, Zarif said that Iran sought the best of relations with the Persian Gulf littoral coun-



tries and would welcome any proposals for dialogue and de-escalation toward that end.

However, he added, Tehran will forcefully confront any attempts at waging a military or economic campaign against his country, according to Press TV.

Among the six countries member to the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council, Iran enjoys good relationship with Oman, Qatar, and Kuwait.

Iran also had good relationship with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. However, Saudi Arabia and the UAE changed their tact toward Iran as Tehran seriously entered nuclear negotiations with the 5+1 countries – the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany – to end more than a decade of nuclear standoff with the West. Saudi Arabia was so unhappy with the negotiations that it even sent its foreign minister Saudi al-Faisal to Vienna, the venue of the talks, in November 2014 to undermine the process of nuclear negotiations.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE are also unhappy with Iran which has strongly criticized their senseless war on fellow Arab nation of Yemen. Iran has also condemned the Saudi

suppression of pro-democracy movements in Bahrain.

In addition, the relationship between Iran and Saudi Arabia started nosediving with the new leadership in Riyadh. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has used the worst insults against Iran and compared Iran to the Nazi Germany.

Donald Trump, a real estate magnate who succeeded to win the post of president in the U.S. in 2016, has also misused the frosty relationship between Iran and Saudi Arabia to sell more arms to Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Regrettably, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain also welcomed the United States’ exit from the 2015 nuclear deal and reimposition of sanctions against Iran. Saudi Arabia and the UAE have even promised Trump to pump more oil to the market as Washington has threatened to drive Iran’s oil exports to zero.

In addition, certain rulers in the UAE and Saudi Arabia repeat the claims by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that Tehran is trying to revive the Persian Empire.

In order to milk Saudi Arabia and the UAE more and more, analysts say, the Trump administration, has reinforced its military buildup in the region by sending the USS Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group and a bomber task force to the Persian Gulf, citing Iran’s threat.

The U.S. had alleged that it had evidence that Iran was trying to target the interest of the U.S. and its allies in the region.

To show the insincerity of the United States’ claim, the Iranian envoy to the United Nations has urged Washington to declassify its alleged evidence of Iran’s threat.

Israel media outlets have revealed that Tel Aviv is the source of alleged threat by Iran.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has already said Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Trump’s national security advisor are trying drag the U.S. into a war with Iran.

## Defense Ministry: Resistance ingrained in Palestinian young generation

**POLITICAL DESK** TEHRAN — The Iranian Defense Ministry on Wednesday reiterated its support to the Palestinians’ resistance against the Israeli occupation, saying resistance is ingrained in the Palestinian young generation.

Resistance will not wane until it annihilates all the occupiers, the ministry said in a statement released ahead of International Quds Day, which will fall on May 31 this year.

The statement further said, “The resistance

... will continue its 70-year-long path until the complete annihilation of the occupiers.”

Palestinians have made it abundantly clear that their resistance to all forms of occupation of every single inch of their land will never wane, and that they will continue on their path until liberation, the statement added.

It further invited the Iranian nation to take part in Friday’s Quds Day rallies across the country.

International Quds Day is a legacy of Imam

Khomeini, the late founder of the Islamic Republic. He introduced such a day in show of support and solidarity with Palestinians.

Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, International Quds Day has been held worldwide on the last Friday of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan.

People across the world have been gearing up to mark this day to reiterate their call for the liberation of Palestine from Israeli occupation and to denounce Israel’s atrocities.





# Leader names key air defense commanders, creates new force in Army

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Leader of the Islamic Revolution has appointed two new commanders to key positions in Iran's air defense.

In a decree on Tuesday evening, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei appointed commander of the newly established Air Defense Force of the Army as well as the new commander of Khatam ol-Anbia Air Defense Base.

Ayatollah Khamenei appointed Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi as the new commander of Khatam al-Anbia Air Defense Base by retaining his post as Army chief.

In the decree, the Leader urged General Mousavi to use all the facilities and capacities of the Armed Forces to defend the Iranian airspace and reinforce the integrated and strong network of air defense command and control.

In a separate decree, the Leader appointed Brigadier General Alireza Sabahifard as



the commander of the newly established Air Defense Force of the Army.

General Sabahifard was chosen upon the joint recommendation of the General Staff of the Armed Forces and the Khatam al-Anbia Air Defense Base, and the recommendation of the Army chief.

In his decree, Ayatollah Khamenei called on General Sabahifard to pay special attention to the internal growth and strengthening of the Air Defense Force, particularly through professional training of forces and up-to-date maintenance and optimum use of the equipment.

The new commander was also urged to keep the Air Defense Force vigilant and use various defense methods while maintaining an effective interaction with the Khatam al-Anbia Air Defense Base.

General Sabahifard was in charge of the Khatam al-Anbia Air Defense Base until he was appointed to the new post.

## IRGC produces advanced armors against tandem-charge warheads



**TEHRAN** — Military experts at the IRGC Ground Force have managed to produce armors capable of protecting military vehicles against missiles with tandem-charge warheads, a senior commander of the force announced.

Speaking to Tasnim in an interview published on Wednesday, General Khosro Kouhmarei, commander of the IRGC Ground Force's Faculty of Armored Vehicles, highlighted the country's defense preparedness and said the faculty is today manufacturing tanks by employing modern technology.

They include tanks like "Karar" whose industrial production has begun and the IRGC experts have also tested the tank, he stated.

"We have (also) created necessary protection against anti-armor missiles," he said, adding, "We designed and produced reactive armor."

Reactive armor is a type of vehicle armor that reacts in some way to the impact of a weapon to reduce the damage done to the vehicle being protected.

Through conducting massive research, the faculty has been able to produce armors capable of protecting against missiles with tandem-charge warheads, the commander noted.

Iranian military experts and technicians have in recent years made great headways in manufacturing a broad range of equipment, making the armed forces self-sufficient in the arms sphere.

Officials have repeatedly underscored that the country will not hesitate to strengthen its military capabilities, including its missile power, and that Iran's defense capabilities will be never subject to negotiations.

Tehran has always assured other nations that its military might poses no threat to regional countries, saying that the Islamic Republic's defense doctrine is entirely based on deterrence.

## Iraq to support Iran's non-aggression pact initiative: envoy

**TEHRAN (Tasnim)** — Iraq will support any initiative that will de-escalate tensions in the Persian Gulf, the Iraqi ambassador to Russia said on Tuesday after the Iranian chief diplomat proposed signing a regional non-aggression pact.

"We support all peace efforts. We want stability. Iraq's government views all pacts in the light of its own and regional interests," Haidar Mansour Hadi said.

"Any deal that benefits all will certainly have Iraq's backing," the Iraqi diplomat added, according to Urdu Point.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif made the proposal during a trip to Iraq on Sunday.

His Iraqi counterpart, Mohamed Ali Alhakim, in turn, suggested that Baghdad mediate between the Islamic Republic and the United States.

The remarks came against the backdrop of increased tensions between Iran and the U.S. with Washington imposing new sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

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 has 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.

## Jalali: Iran's cyber security power unrivaled in the region

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — The commander of Civil Defense Organization says Iran's preparedness to counter foreign cyber threats is unparalleled in the region.

Speaking to the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) on Tuesday night, Brigadier General Gholam Reza Jalali said, "In the area of such threats, we have achieved remarkable capabilities and can easily thwart these types of attacks."

Jalali went on to underline that some countries that are hostile to Iran, including some Persian Gulf Arab states, are actively plotting against the country to hit its cyber infrastructure.

For example, he said, the Saudi regime, by purchasing shares of one of the social networks and imposing its policy on the network, has used some "mercenary companies" against Iran.

In October 2018, General Jalali said that a series of arrangements had been made to counter the U.S. hostile strategies and its potential move to block Iran's access to the Internet.

The official said the U.S. decision to cut off Iran's access to the Internet would keep Washington unaware of Iran's internal developments, adding that Tehran is nonetheless ready to counter such a possible threat.

In August 2016, Iran launched the first phase of its national data network after a gap of eleven years.

The national network offers a new internet system with higher security which officials say will be up to 60 times faster than the best speeds currently available. It is also designed to be more secure to potential cyberattacks.

## IRGC chief: Iran has sapped U.S. capacity for war

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — The commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps said on Tuesday that Iran's "absolute power" in its region has sapped the capacity of the United States to wage war against the Islamic Republic.

Quoted by the Mehr news agency, Major General Hossein Salami said, "We have been able to...empty the enemy's capacity for war. You see the decline and crash of the enemies' speech."

Salami was apparently alluding to U.S. President Donald Trump's remarks during a visit to Japan.

A day earlier, Trump said he was not seeking regime

change in Iran and that a new deal on Iran's nuclear program was possible.

"We aren't looking for regime change - I just want to make that clear," Trump said in Tokyo, Japan.

The IRGC commander added, "Today, Iran is an absolute power of the region and because of this, it is not afraid of the enemy's threats. Today, America has been defeated in its political philosophy."

Tensions have been rising between Iran and the United States since the U.S. tightened its economic pressure on Iran and started boosting its military presence in Iran's neighborhood.



## Tehran strongly dismisses Bolton's accusation over tanker damages



**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Wednesday strongly dismissed accusations by U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton that Tehran had been involved in recent attacks against four crude vessels in Fujairah port, castigating the "B-team" for their anti-Iran plots.

Bolton claimed during a briefing to journalists in Abu Dhabi on Tuesday that attacks on oil tankers off the coast of the United Arab Emirates this month were the work of "naval mines almost certainly from Iran," without offering evidence.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Seyyed Abbas Mousavi rejected the allegations, saying that they are the product of the "destructive plans and policies thought of by the B-team," according to the Foreign Ministry's official website.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said the "B-Team" includes Bolton, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (also known as Bibi), Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin

Zayed (MBZ) who are resorting to every ploy to drag the United States into a war with Iran.

"Raising such ridiculous allegation in a meeting between two members of the (B-) team who have long-term anti-Iran approaches is not something strange," Zarif said in a recent tweet.

Addressing Bolton and others whom he called warmongers, Mousavi said Iran's strategic patience, high vigilance and full defense preparedness will prevent them from materializing their ominous plots for stirring up chaos in the region.

The UAE confirmed on May 12, after initial denial, that a number of commercial ships had been targeted by "sabotage" attack near its territorial waters.

The UAE Foreign Ministry issued a statement saying that four commercial vessels had been targeted by "sabotage operations" near its territorial waters.

Mousavi, at the time, expressed Tehran's concern about the negative consequences of the sabotage operations, warning of plots against regional security and stability.

## Suspect arrested for cleric murder



Mohammad Khorsand, the deceased Kazeroon Friday prayer leader. File photo.

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Law enforcement forces have arrested a suspect for the lethal stabbing of a cleric in the southern province of Fars, local news outlets reported on Wednesday.

Cleric Mohammad Khorsand, the Friday prayer leader of Kazeroon, was killed while on his way to home from a religious ceremony on Wednesday morning.

He was attacked at 3:30, said Kavous Mohammadi, the provincial deputy police chief for social affairs.

The arrest came hours after the killing, Fars reported.

It identified the suspect as Hamid Darakhshandeh. It did not provide more information and did not say anything about the possible motive for the attack.

It was the second deadly attack on a cleric in more than a month. In April, a cleric was shot dead in the western city of Hamadan.

Kazeroon was the scene of large-scale protests and clashes between citizens and security forces on May 16-17, 2018.

A controversial proposal to divide the ancient city's boundaries into two separate entities enraged Kazeroon residents who poured into the streets and invaded the Friday Prayers location.

Fars reported at the time that the demonstration was organized on the social networking platform Telegram.

Etemad Online also wrote at the time that a local MP, who tabled the motion for new demarcation of Kazeroon, wanted to promote his hometown, Qaemieh, to a "city."

However, the Friday Prayer Imam of the city was vehemently against the division.

At least one person died during the protests, and dozens detained. The unrest culminated in a massive rally in front of the Intelligence Ministry's local office on May 16, 2018.

## 'Certain elements within Trump administration pushing for war with Iran'

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Certain elements in the Donald Trump government are trying to drive the United States into war with Iran, Iran's deputy foreign minister has said.

"We know that there are certain elements and people who are trying to push the United States to war with Iran for their own ends. However, we hope that wisdom will prevail in Washington," Abbas Araqchi told RIA Novosti in an interview published on Tuesday.

Iran is prepared for the possibility of war with the United States, but hopes instead that tensions between the two nations can be calmed down, the deputy foreign minister said.

"We hope that we can start a dialogue, but we are ready for war," he stressed.

The official underlined that a conflict would be "catastrophic" for the entire Middle East.

In comments on Wednesday, Araqchi tried to fix misunderstandings regarding his interview with RIA Novosti



by saying that he had not mentioned that Iran would talk to the U.S.

"As we have said repeatedly, there has been no direct or indirect talks, nor would there be any. But the Islamic Republic of Iran is prepared to hold talks with the entire countries of the Persian Gulf region to ease tension and establish well-balanced, constructive relations based on mutual respect and interests."

Tehran has repeatedly warned the U.S. against provoking a conflict, stating that Iran is not intimidated by Washington's increasingly hostile rhetoric and military posturing. However, Tehran has always maintained that it does not seek war.

In an effort to deescalate the situation, Iran has sought dialogue with its neighbors. Speaking with Qatar's foreign minister in Doha on Tuesday, Araqchi expressed his "country's readiness to enter into a dialogue between the Persian Gulf states and Iran regarding the stability and security of the region."



STOCK MARKET	
TEDPIX	224476.8
IFX	2800.2

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES	
USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,902 rials
GBP	53,184 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES	
Brent	\$67.37/b
WTI	\$57.95/b
OPEC Basket	\$67.42/b
Gold	\$1,284.50/oz
Silver	\$14.42/oz
Platinum	\$796.25/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

## CERAFAIR 2019 to kick off in Tehran in late June

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — The 26th International Tile-Ceramic and Sanitary ware (CERAFAIR 2019) is due to be held during June 30- July 3 at Tehran International Permanent Fairgrounds. IRIB reported on Tuesday.

According to the exhibition's executive director Behnam Aziz-zadeh, the event mainly focuses on presentation of Iranian products and introduction of Iranian industrialists, manufacturers and entrepreneurs in the field of ceramic.

Iran's CERAFAIR is one of the region's top three events in the tile and ceramic industry and every year it hosts a variety of participants from all over the world.

## Iran self-sufficient in wheat production for 4th consecutive year

**1 →** Deputy Agriculture Minister Abbas Keshavarz said on Monday Iran's total wheat harvest is estimated to reach 14.5 million metric tons this year. The government expects to buy 11.5 million tons of wheat from local farmers, he said.

"Our prediction before the floods was to harvest about 15.5 metric tons of wheat, but 65,000 hectares of farmland in Khuzestan Province went under water," Keshavarz added.

According to state officials, the country usually maintains a carry-over from previous wheat crops and past stocks which cover any shortfall.

Irrigated wheat covers only one-third of the total wheat area, thus the bulk of the wheat crop depends on seasonal precipitation. Most of the rain-fed wheat crop is concentrated in the northwest.

According to Esfandiarpour, Iran's use of improved seed technology over the past five years has boosted the country's self-sufficiency in wheat by more than 30.

Largely self-sufficient in wheat a decade ago, Iran emerged as one of the world's biggest importers a few years ago but a raft of measures taken by the government is returning the country to where it was.

## Germany's unemployment rate rises for first time since 2013

Germany's jobless rate this month climbed for the first time in more than five years in the latest sign of the struggles facing Europe's biggest economy.

According to ft.com, the unemployment rate climbed to 5 percent in May from April's 4.9 percent — the lowest since at least 1991, according to data from the country's central bank. It marked the first monthly increase since November 2013.

The tick higher in the jobless rate came as 60,000 more people were considered unemployed in May from the previous month, the largest such increase in a decade. Claus Vistesen, chief eurozone economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics, notes that the rise was partly due to the reclassification of some workers; however, he said it still represented a slowdown in the country's labor market.

The "solid German employment picture will not spontaneously combust this year, but the rate of improvement will deteriorate significantly, reflecting the grueling slowdown in manufacturing," he said.

### ■ The robust German labor market

Germany's unemployment rate remains close to the lowest level since the reunification in 1990 and significantly below that of major eurozone peers such as France. Most economists consider the German labor market to be one of the most robust of global developed economies.

However, the German economy has been showing mounting signs of strain during 2019. The trade dispute between the U.S. and China has deeply affected sentiment among German business leaders, who worry the country's large manufacturing sector will become collateral damage in the row.

At the same time, there have been indications that global growth may be slowing, another negative for a large open economy like Germany's.

German manufacturers expect to reduce the number of people they employ — a trend that has been present for the past three months, according to a survey released this week by the influential Ifo Institute in Munich.

"Willingness to hire new recruits has been in a continuous decline since the beginning of 2018," Ifo said. It added that most employment growth has taken place in the services sector, but even there the "willingness to hire is cooling off".

The sense of angst has rippled into Germany's bond market, with investors shifting into the perceived shelter of German sovereign debt. The benchmark 10-year Bund yield slipped to minus 0.16 per cent on Wednesday, from positive 0.2 per cent at the beginning of March. Declines in bond yields reflects a rise in prices.

# Monthly non-oil exports from PSEEZ up 32% yr/yr

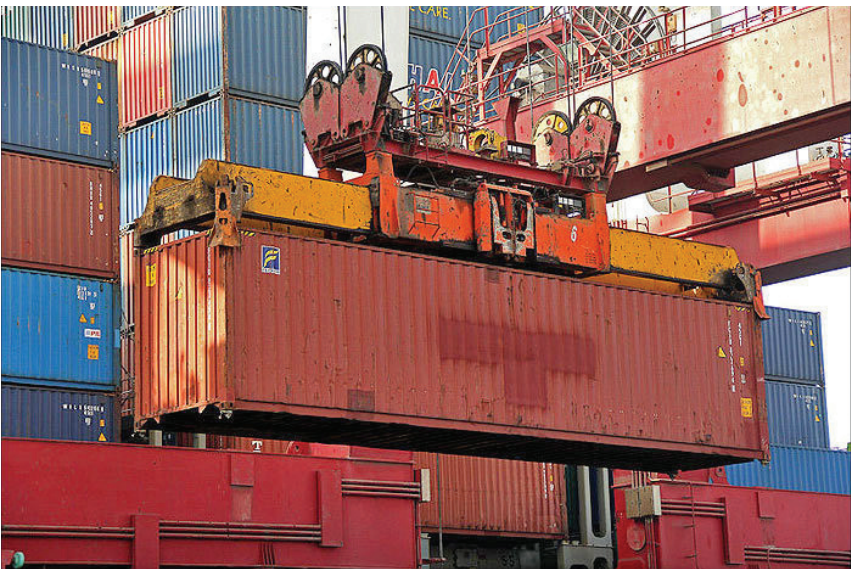
**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Non-oil exports from Pars Special Economic Energy Zone (PSEEZ) in Iran's southwestern port city of Assaluyeh reached 1.967 million tons in the past Iranian calendar month of Ordibehesht (April 21-May 21), rising 32 percent compared to the same month in the past year, according to a customs official.

Ahmad Pour-Heidar, the director general of the PSEEZ's customs office, put the value of non-oil commodities exported from this region during the mentioned month at \$728.9 million, IRIB reported.

PSEEZ, which is named Iran's energy hub, is also home to the world's largest gas reserve, South Pars gas field which Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf. The zone is the hub of Iran's exports of major non-oil commodities, that are gas condensate and petrochemicals.

Rise in non-oil exports from Pars Special Economic Energy Zone is under the condition that the U.S. has renewed sanctions against Iran.

U.S. President Donald Trump unilaterally pulled Washington out of Iran's nuclear



deal in May 2018 and ordered re-imposition of sanctions against the Islamic Republic. 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.

## Integrated forex market to fill gaps created by NIMA

**1 →** Meanwhile, the private sector says that NIMA should not be a source for supply of foreign currency for imports of raw materials.

Masoud Khansari, the head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA), believes that regarding the urgent need of producers for the raw materials and also for machineries, setting up a mechanism for imports of such goods not relying on receiving foreign currency through NIMA is now seen more necessary.

He says that the producers require to supply their raw materials at the least possible time, but under the current condition it will be a long-term process if they want to take action through NIMA.

NIMA has some weaknesses, but Central Bank of Iran Governor Abdolnaser Hemmati has said that it is a pivot of the foreign currency exchange and trade related activities in the country and it will not be omitted from the forex



market at all.

Last week, the official dismissed the news that NIMA would

stop activity once the integrated forex market is established.

While this system will not stop its activity, it has been ordered and emphasized that 50-60 percent of the foreign currency earned from the exports should be presented in NIMA, the CBI governor stressed.

NIMA will not be omitted, but its gaps can be filled through an integrated forex market.

Behzad Khosravi, an economist, is of the opinion that launching the integrated forex market will lead the NIMA rate, which is seemed somehow "imposed", toward the real rate.

The so-called integrated market is expected to be launched by the end of current Iranian calendar month of Khordad (June 21), aiming to explore the real volume of demand and supply in the foreign currency market through a new mechanism, which is to organize the transactions in the foreign currency exchange market between the exchange shops.

## Iran to launch 2 air taxi lines by March 2020

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Transport Ministry is planning to launch two air taxi lines by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 19, 2020), IRIB reported quoting an official with the ministry.

"We are trying to launch at least two air taxi flight routes by the end of the year to

identify barriers and problems in this sector and come up with appropriate solutions," Deputy Transport Minister Shahram Adamnejad said.

The official mentioned a trilateral memorandum of understanding among Iran Airports Company, Iran Civil Aviation Organization, and Aerospace Technology

Development Headquarters of the Vice-Presidency for Science and Technology, saying "this MOU is signed aiming for reducing navigation and aeronautics costs, using the capabilities of the aviation training sector, localizing the technologies required by the general aviation sector, and awarding the industry's non-governmental fields to the

private sector."

"One of the areas that needs improvement with the help of the country's young and intelligent workforce is the aerospace field," Adamnejad said.

"Iran has a good status in terms of capable workforce and experts in the aviation industry," he added.

## Reforming South Africa's economy

or euros in a venture that is unlikely to yield any returns.

And therein is our biggest problem. Eskom — South Africa's largest company — has become more than a national nuisance. It has eroded South Africa's credit worthiness as a nation to a point that the economy is fast slipping into irrelevance.

The Gupatas also failed to help South Africa as they looted whatever remained of Eskom. The current growth trajectory of around 1% is unlikely to change any time soon unless fundamental structural changes are made to turn Eskom into a financially viable parastatal company like Transnet.

At the moment, Eskom's debt is estimated at around 500 billion rand, including bonds and issued loans. Eskom's current liability to the economy is more than a third of the country's budget — or more than 10% of GDP.

The National Treasury's own estimates say that the country's debt, excluding Eskom, could deteriorate to reach a staggering 60.2% of the GDP by 2024.

Just weeks before the elections, Eskom was given 5 billion rand in emergency funds to enable it to meet obligations. This will not be sustainable in the long-term.

President Cyril Ramaphosa used a Goldman Sachs investment meeting to state that Eskom was too big to fail. And that is true.

Eskom plays a pivotal role in our country's economy. Its collapse would trigger damages yet unseen in the country.

If this came to pass, it would lead to more

foreigners abandoning the South African market on a much larger scale than they did when former president Jacob Zuma replaced Nhlamhla Nene with Des van Rooyen in 2016. Our national currency, the rand, would be as valuable as the Zimbabwean dollar.

Because South African asset holders are already showing anxieties on what Ramaphosa's new administration would bring, Ramaphosa needs to speed up the proposed break-up of Eskom into three separate units that would be responsible for generation, transmission and distribution.

### ■ Creating clearer structure

That would not create a clearer structure for Eskom, but would bring the power utility to current international energy generation standards.

It would break Eskom's monopoly on energy supply and create more competition in the energy sector. It would also bring more clarity on its costs as well as better accountability and oversight on its functions.

But for this plan to succeed, Ramaphosa will have to be prepared to tough it out with South Africa's spoiled labor unions and to make the best decisions in the interest of the country.

The National Union of Mineworkers (Num) and National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa) have already threatened fire and brimstone should Eskom be unbundled.

However, South Africa is too big to be held to ransom by such outdated rhetoric. Ramaphosa will have to be brave enough to tell them that

Eskom's bloated workforce is not compatible with its output.

And, that workers can be trained for more opportunities outside the outdated fossil energy model toward much cleaner generation that the world is moving towards.

Given the country's current debt-to-GDP ratio, the successful unbundling of Eskom would more likely be the biggest step in addressing key structural reforms in the South African economy.

It would lead to more money that would be available for a plausible stimulus package. It would also go a long way in addressing the country's ballooning unemployment.

The restructuring of Eskom and the overall economy would take some time to materialize. But Ramaphosa would need courage and a solid team to see through the reforms.

That team would need to have the arrogant pragmatism of the like of Finance Minister Tito Mboweni. While sometimes combative, Mboweni has the uncanny ability of dissecting problems for what they are.

To be sure, Eskom needs a long-term view that would address its governance and management frailties. Bringing in new players even if they come from the private sector would not be a bad thing at all if it helped Eskom and the economy.

Mboweni might be brash and at times outlandish. But his clarity of thought is a breath of fresh air and the kind of brave courage that the country needs to move forward.

(Source: theglobalist.com)

## European Central Bank sends Italy a warning over debt

**By David Mchugh**

The European Central Bank says that challenges to financial stability in the eurozone have risen amid global trade tensions, and warns that indebted governments such as Italy could run into trouble if they don't heed rules limiting debt and deficits.

The warning in an ECB report released Wednesday comes as Italy's populist government is challenging the debt rules, intensifying conflict with the EU's executive commission.

Italy's borrowing costs in bond markets rose this week - a sign of international investor concern - as Deputy Premier Matteo Salvini repeated his opposition to the rules after his League party came in first in elections to the European Parliament.

The ECB said that "should downside risks to growth materialize, financing costs for vulnerable sovereigns are like to increase and may increase debt sustainability concerns."

ECB Vice President Luis de Guindos said that the economy's performance would be key to financial stability. The central bank still



expects growth to pick up in coming months after a period of weakness. But it is cautioning that external threats such as trade tensions could undermine that. Weaker growth saps tax revenues that help governments pay off bonds, and undermines bank profits as well.

The "environment is more challenging than six months ago," de Guindos told journalists at a briefing after the release of the report.

He said that a "trade war is the main risk to the economy globally." A dispute over tariffs

and trade between the U.S. and China has unsettled the global business environment through fears of higher import taxes that could slow trade and growth.

Italy's debt is connected to the banking system because banks hold Italian bonds and their finances could take a hit from a fall in the bonds' value or default. Banks are key to the eurozone economy since that is where companies get credit to operate and expand.

### ■ In the eurozone's debt crisis

Troubles over Italian debt played a large role in the eurozone's debt crisis in 2010-2012, threatening to break up the currency union and helping topple the government of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi in 2011.

The European Commission, charged with enforcing the debt and deficit limits that come with joining the 19-country euro, has sparred with Italy over the government's push to run larger deficits, spend more and cut taxes. The ECB report contained a chart showing Italy as an outlier among indebted countries, with high borrowing needs through 2020 and low

growth compared to interest costs, a gap that can help debt snowball. Italy has failed to significantly reduce a heavy debt burden that amounted to 132% of GDP at the end of last year due to years of slow growth.

Salvini, emboldened by his party's gains in European parliamentary elections, said Tuesday that his party's first proposal in Brussels will be to propose a new role for the ECB as a guarantor of government debt. He is also pressing his proposal for a flat tax and challenging EU budget rules, saying spending should be loosened to boost growth and allow more government investment in things like schools. Salvini also has become increasingly combative in the face of a prospect of warning letter from the European Commission on Italy's public debt.

Borrowing costs on Italian debt have risen sharply in recent days. While still relatively low in historical terms, the rise suggests investors are more cautious about Italy's economic prospects.

(Source: mcall.com)



# India seeking to resume oil imports from Iran

ENERGY

**TEHRAN** – India is planning to resume oil imports from Iran and the new government is going to hold talks with Iran in order to discuss ways of getting around U.S. sanctions like paying in national currencies.

“The Modi government will immediately initiate talks with Iran to discuss steps that will allow it to resume oil imports,” India digital news portal The Print reported on Tuesday quoting government sources.

According to the sources, Iran’s Pasargad Bank and India’s Reserve Bank could be used to arrange the payments.

“Payments can be deposited in the Iranian bank and then Iranian authorities can decide how to utilize the money,” a senior government official who didn’t wish to be identified said.

“These talks have been held earlier too but got stalled due to elections. They will be revived and this will be one of the first focus areas of the government,” the official said.

India stopped oil imports from Iran after the six-month sanction waiver from the U.S. ended on 2 May.

In May last year, the U.S. brought back sanctions on Iran after withdrawing from the Iran nuclear deal which was struck in 2015.



They told India and other countries to cut oil imports from the Persian Gulf nation to “zero” by November 4 or face sanctions. However, Washington granted a six-month waiver to India and seven other countries to buy oil from Iran. The waivers are due to expire in May.

India, which is the second biggest purchaser

of Iranian oil after China, has since then restricted its monthly purchase to 15 million tons in a year (300,000 barrels per day), down from 22.6 million tons (452,000 barrels per day) bought in 2017-18 financial year, sources said.

The world’s third biggest oil consumer, meets more than 80 percent of its oil needs through imports.

## Russia’s Gazprom considering participation in Iran’s energy projects

ENERGY

**TEHRAN** – Russia is still evaluating potential participation in Iran’s energy projects, Tass reported quoting the company’s deputy chief executive officer.

“Gazprom is not showing interest in participation in the project on construction of a gas pipeline from Iran to Oman. Our work on entering the projects in Iran has not been completed yet, which is why it is too early to speak where gas from Iran will run. As of today we are at the stage of considering our participation in projects in Iran,” Vitaly Markelov said on Tuesday.

“A joint coordination committee with the Iranian side considers all those issues,” Markelov added.



Gazprom reported on December 14, 2017 that it had signed a roadmap on implementation of projects in Iran and a memorandum of understanding and cooperation on an LNG project in Iran.

Meanwhile, at the beginning of November 2018, Gazprom and National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) signed a number of memorandums of cooperation in the gas sector. The documents stipulate partnership in the field of development of Iranian gas fields, gas transporting and monetizing.

Iran and Oman reached an agreement to construct a gas pipeline in 2015. Supplies were planned at 28 million cubic meters of gas per day within 15 years.

## Oil prices drop as trade war worries outweigh supply disruptions

Oil prices fell by around 1% on Wednesday on concerns the Sino-U.S. trade war could trigger a global economic downturn, but relatively tight supply amid OPEC output cuts and political tensions in the Middle East offered some support.

As per reuters.com, front-month Brent crude futures, the international benchmark for oil prices, were at \$69.53 a barrel at 0641 GMT, down 58 cents, or 0.8%, from last session’s close.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were at \$58.46 per barrel, down 70 cents, or 1.2%, from their last settlement.

“Crude oil was weak ... primarily as the bears on demand are winning compared to the bulls on supply,” James Mick, managing director and energy portfolio manager with U.S. investment firm Tortoise, said in an investor podcast.

“Investors are concerned from a macro perspective about worldwide demand, particularly in the face of the growing

trade dispute between the U.S. and China,” he said.

Fawad Razaqzada, analyst at futures brokerage Forex.com, said another concern was that “falls in emerging market currencies (are) making dollar-priced crude oil dearer to purchase in those nations” and that crude prices could pull back.

Despite the economic concerns, global oil demand is so far holding up well, likely averaging over 100 million barrels per day (bpd) this year for the first time, according to data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA).

But analysts are concerned that tightening credit amid the economic slowdown will hamper trading in commodities.

“We remain cautious regarding the short-term macroeconomic environment,” commodity brokerage Marex Spectron said in a note.

“Credit availability on the physical commodity markets is of particular concern.”

Eastport, a Singapore-based tanker brokerage, had similar concerns.

An “increase in caution and risk aversion could weigh on economic growth,” it said in a note on Wednesday.

Despite these concerns dragging on oil markets, crude prices remain relatively tight.

“Supply risks remain at elevated levels with continued geopolitical uncertainty in the Middle East, as well as Venezuela’s well-known struggles,” said Tortoise’s Mick.

Adding to this are ongoing supply cuts led by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) since the start of the year to prop up the market.

OPEC and some allies including Russia are due to meet in late June or early July to discuss output policy going forward.

Russian First Deputy Prime Minister Anton Siluanov said on Wednesday that the country would consider a possible extension of its oil output reduction agreement.

## Australia to achieve 50% renewables by 2030 without government intervention

Australia is on track to achieve 50 percent renewable electricity by 2030 even without new federal energy policies, according to modelling by the energy analysts RepuTex.

The analysis, to be released on Wednesday, suggests that a surge in renewable energy driven by state schemes and rooftop solar installations will reduce wholesale prices from \$85 per MWh to \$70 over the next three years.

Lower prices will make gas- and coal-fired power less competitive, even without a market mechanism to make fossil fuels reflect the cost of pollution or a direct constraint on emissions, although a lack of federal policy could lead to longer-term price rises, RepuTex found.

During the election campaign, the Coalition attacked Labor for its 50% renewable energy target – as well as its 45 percent emissions

reduction target – claiming they would harm energy-intensive industries and cost jobs.

But after the Coalition won on 18 May, the Liberal senator Arthur Sinodinos urged the government to use the changing energy mix to bolster its environmental credentials, and treasurer Josh Frydenberg declared that the “inevitable” transition to low-emissions sources created an opportunity for the country.

With the federal renewable energy target

set to expire in 2020, RepuTex noted that state policy was now the dominant signal for new investment in the national energy market.

RepuTex projected that current policies, including renewable energy targets in Queensland and Victoria, were likely to drive about 13GW of new renewable energy capacity by 2030, in addition to 6GW of renewable capacity currently committed for development.

## The ‘extremely stable genius’ has been outsmarted by China: U.S. LNG exports at risk

By Ken Silverstein

The U.S. president, who refers to himself as an ‘extremely stable genius,’ is getting outsmarted by China in the trade war of his own making. The result is not just that American natural gas exporters will get hurt but also that Donald Trump has no trump card to play — that China can outlast him, politically.

China has little reason to allow Trump to save face.

Trump, who also refers to himself as a ‘tariff man,’ wants the United States to be a leading oil and gas producer that is flush with new markets. But China is the world’s largest importer of oil and the second largest importer of frozen natural gas, or liquefied natural gas (LNG). While the market for U.S.-produced LNG is global, one of the world’s fattest energy consumers has options from where to buy those products.

U.S. oil and gas exporters are somewhat protected because they secured long-term contracts with China prior to the trade war. However, no such agreements will get signed going forward unless this dispute is resolved. LNG must be captured and frozen before it is shipped and unfrozen, all of which requires an expensive investment in export and import terminals. And those investing in or financing them want to see long-term contracts.

“I think the trade tensions and the tariffs are unproductive and create some added costs to our Chinese consumers,” Jack Fusco, chief executive of Chenier Energy, said on an earnings call, as reported by the Financial Times. “But as a company, we’re relatively insulated from the current future tariffs and we don’t expect any material impacts.”

■ **Leading LNG exporters**

Indeed, companies like Chenier,



ExxonMobil and Dominion Energy are among this country’s leading LNG exporters. Chenier, in fact, was the first to receive such approval from the Obama administration in 2016.

Trump announced \$200 billion worth of tariffs on Chinese goods entering the United States, which began in September 2018. China, meanwhile, responded in-kind, tagging \$60 billion in tariffs on U.S. products headed to China. Initially that included a 10% tariff on LNG exports but now, it will become 25% on June 1 — the result of Trump ratcheting up tariffs once again on Chinese goods exported to this country.

The implication? Only two tankers loaded with LNG left the United States for China this year, notes the shipping data firm, Refinitiv Eikon. That compares to 14 the year before. China is thus looking for new suppliers that include Russia, Qatar and Australia.

The “idea that China should buy large amounts of natural gas from the U.S. must be revisited,” Wang Yongzhong, a senior fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, told the South China Morning Post. He said that China imported 4% of its LNG from the United States in 2017.

Economists almost universally agree

that free trade facilitates commerce among international partners, thereby increasing the amount of wealth and jobs as well as the quality of goods and services. To that end, the United States has been a part of trading agreements like NAFTA and the Trans-Pacific Partnership that have mechanisms to resolve disputes centered on labor, the environment or protectionism.

■ **Chinese natural gas demand**

Now, about 5% of the U.S. economy is tied to trade with China. And the potential for increased energy trade with China had been huge — until the ‘extremely stable genius’ got involved: The International Energy Agency said that the United States could have been exporting 70 billion cubic meters of LNG by 2020 and 110 billion cubic meters by 2040. Chinese natural gas demand is forecast to grow by 60% between 2017-2023 because it is switching from coal to gas.

Once China inks long-term contracts with new suppliers, it will be hard to crack. And there are other, domestic deals at risk: a \$43 billion natural gas pipeline from the North Slope of Alaska to an LNG export facility that is near Anchorage — to be funded

by a Chinese national bank. There’s also China Energy Investment Corp.’s \$84 billion non-binding trade agreement with the state of West Virginia — one that would give it access to that state’s natural gas patch.

Beyond energy markets, there’s also agricultural exports and specifically soybeans. And while Trump has offered up a subsidy to farmers, the tariffs could ultimately doom them if China gets new countries to feed its needs.

What it all means is that China has more staying power than Trump does, who stands for re-election next year. Trump is feeling the heat, given that the trade war is hurting businesses and consumers in states that he won in 2016.

“As to whom can inflict the most pain and last longer is a destructive way to look at this,” says Bryan Riley, director for free trade initiatives at the National Taxpayer Union, in an interview. “If this drags on, it will be bad for both countries. The tariffs are not working. But the Trump administration thinks it may need to double down. A more constructive approach would be to immediately get off-ramp and allow time to quietly resolve the dispute.”

Trade wars don’t work. History has shown that for each attack there is a counter attack — exercises that raise cost on consumers and inflict pain on exporters. To deal with potential disputes, countries enter into trade agreements. Trump, whose own former secretary of state refers to him as a ‘moron’ and whose tax records show he was the biggest loser for a decade, has now gotten the country into this mess. And the way out of this quicksand is if American voters toss him in 2020 or if the U.S. Congress impeaches and convicts him.

(Source: forbes.com)

## India is still Iran’s priority for developing Farzad B field: Zanganeh

ENERGY

**TEHRAN** – Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said India is still the top option for awarding Farzad B gas field development project, Mehr news agency reported on Wednesday.

“Our intention is to hold final talks with them [India]...if they are not ready to do the project, we will continue with an Iranian company, however if Indian companies come forward, they will be the ministry’s priority for completing the project,” Zanganeh said.

The official noted that Iranian oil ministry has prepared a plan for financing the project and the framework of the contract is also going through final editions.

Earlier in February 2019, head of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) said Iran and India are still discussing development of Farzad-B gas field.

“Development of Farzad-B has been and will be a top priority for NIOC and the negotiations with India are still underway,” Masoud Karbasian told Tasnim news agency.

Farzad-B, with estimated reserves of 12.8 trillion cubic feet of gas, was opened in 2008 by a consortium of three Indian companies: ONGC, Oil India Limited and Indian Oil Corporation.

The Indians were supposed to develop the field after its exploration, but they stopped their activities after the West intensified sanctions on the Islamic Republic in 2012.

With the lifting of the sanctions, India once again called for the development of Farzad-B by ONGC Videsh which is the overseas investment arm of the country’s biggest energy exploration firm.

According to an agreement, the Indians were first to submit a technical plan and then a financial proposal for the development of the field, but Iran did not agree with the other side’s financial proposals.

## The single biggest challenge for the oil and gas industry

By Irina Slav

The string of new oil discoveries off the coast of Guyana has lifted spirits recently, creating the impression that the energy industry is back on its feet and making more and more discoveries. However, this may not be the case.

According to a report from Westwood Global Energy Group released earlier this month, for example, the success rate of exploration activity has fallen in the past five years, and it has fallen by a lot.

“In the downturn success rates had increased as companies high graded their portfolios to ensure that only the best prospects were drilled. Unfortunately, this didn’t last, and 2018 saw discovered volumes, average discovery size and success rates all decline.”

This development was most pronounced in the high-impact drilling segment, the company said. New oil and gas discovered through high-impact drilling fell by as much as 50 percent between 2014 and 2018. The slump was the result of a combination of factors, Westwood Global Energy Group said, including a 28-percent decline in the number of new wells drilled, lower success rates and lower reservoir volumes.

This may sound shocking given the abundance of new discovery announcements from different parts of the world — not to mention the invariably bullish forecasts about U.S. shale oil production in the medium term — but these are not the only discovery news stories out there.

■ **Crude oil production**

Recently, for example, the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate warned crude oil production in the country could drop to a 30-year low precisely because of the lack of new discoveries despite a lot of exploration efforts.

Pakistan also recently announced the end of exploratory drilling in the Arabian Sea after the companies leading the project — Exxon and Eni — failed to find any commercial amounts of hydrocarbons.

Yet not everyone is pessimistic. Rystad Energy has calculated that new oil and gas discoveries in the first quarter of the year hit 3.2 billion barrels of oil equivalent. They also said that many more new wells are scheduled for drilling through the end of the year. However, more than a third of the first-quarter discoveries — 38 percent to be precise — were made by Exxon and Hess in the Stabroek block off the Guyana coast. For new well drilling, Westwood Global Energy Group cautions that these have often yielded lower volumes of oil and gas than preliminary estimates suggested, and this may well continue to be the case.

“With oil companies planning to increase exploration drilling in 2019, the question is whether the global drilling portfolio for both near-field and high impact prospects is strong enough to sustain an increase in activity without sacrificing exploration performance,” the company said in its report.

On the other hand, «Majors are leading the charge in exploration, reporting more than 2.4 billion boe of discovered resources. The six largest discoveries by the majors each exceed 150 million boe, and the top three could even hold more than 300 million boe apiece,» according to Rystad upstream analyst Taiyab Zain Shariff. As quoted by Forbes Gaurav Sharma. If this rate of new discoveries continues, Shariff added, the total will be 30 percent higher than discoveries made in 2018.

■ **Mixed picture in exploration**

This dual information published by these research companies paint a mixed picture in new exploration. While there are still large discoveries being made, due to the very nature of hydrocarbon resources — that is, the fact they are finite — there are increasingly fewer untapped reservoirs left in the world. Many of these are in remote areas where exploration is hampered by harsh weather or a “difficult” rock structure: the Arctic and China’s shale formations are examples of these two, respectively.

What’s more, it seems increasingly clear that even the latest in exploration technology cannot guarantee a discovery even if it makes discoveries more likely. As per Westwood Global Energy Group’s data, exploration success rates last year were down to 33 percent from 48 percent in 2017. Interestingly, this was despite the fact — or probably because — energy companies became bolder with investments.

During the downturn, every E&P picked their new exploration projects carefully to make sure the returns would be as high as possible with the costs and risks as low as possible. This boosted the success rate of new discoveries considerably. Now that prices have stabilized and there is more money to spend on drilling, companies are taking greater risks with exploration and it is showing in the success rate. What we are seeing is yet another cycle in the oil and gas industry with the only difference that there are less resources left to discover.

(Source: oilprice.com)



## Rodney Martin: Trump Kicked out of Politics if attacks Iran



**TEHRAN (FNA)** — Rodney, former US Congressional Staffer, says John Bolton's attempt to persuade Donald Trump to attack Iran will lead to nowhere, as the US president knows he will permanently lose his political career.

Speaking to FNA, Rodney Martin said neither Americans nor main US political parties support a war on Iran, adding "Neocon-Zionist soldiers like John Bolton and Mike Pompeo" would march to "the current drums of war only being beaten in Tel Aviv".

Rodney Martin is a former US Judge and former US Congressional Staffer who has held numerous US Federal, State and Local Government positions. He is a former Harry S. Truman Scholar and Lyndon B. Johnson Congressional Fellow.

Below is the full text of the interview:

■ Secretary Pompeo has said Iran was possibly behind the attack on oil tankers off the UAE and drone strikes on an oil pipeline in Saudi Arabia, to justify the stand-off with Iran. How do you interpret it?

A: Secretary Pompeo, like National Security Advisor John Bolton, is a Republican-Neocon-Zionists. Like Bolton, Pompeo subscribes to the PNAC (Project for a New American Century) hegemony which translates to economic domination of the Globe, by economic terrorism or by military force. The United States has traditionally accomplished this by "creating incidents". This goes all the way back to the Spanish-American War and the Administration of William McKinley. The United States wanted to dislodge Spain from attractive territorial assets in the Far East and Caribbean, specifically The Philippines and Cuba, so it sent the USS Maine into Havana Harbor and it blew up, most likely due to a boiler issue. The US created a false narrative of Spanish sabotage and cried out "Remember the Maine" and declared war on Spain and dislodged it from all its territories and sent in US Companies which harvested Philippine and Cuban resources for 100 years. Fast forward to Vietnam and President Lyndon Johnson's totally false "Gulf of Tonkin" incident where the US Navy opened fire for several hours into the darkness at absolutely nothing in order to give President Johnson a basis to get Congress outraged, so he could order US ground forces into Vietnam. This resulted in over 50,000 US soldiers dead and untold millions Vietnamese dead. These are just a couple of examples. We are seeing an attempted repeat of these examples by the likes of Bolton and Pompeo; however times have changed.

■ A recent poll shows 60% of Americans are against war on Iran; only 12% voted in favor. Do the White House warmongers represent the nation?

A: There is absolutely no support among the American populace, either in the Democrat or Republican political Bases for any military action against Iran. The current drums of war are only being beaten in Tel Aviv and the Neocon-Zionist Soldiers like John Bolton and Mike Pompeo and many American Evangelicals are lining up to march. Fortunately, these are not the majority of the Americans nor have they presented a compelling case. For the most part, Americans have been aware Iran played a significant role defeating ISIL and most Americans view Saudi Arabia far more negatively and are questioning the American relationship with the Saudis and why the US props up the illegitimate Saudi Royals in the same way it propped up the Shah in Iran. While Bolton and Pompeo and the Neocon-Zionist do NOT reflect the views of the greater American populace, they do have their hands on the levers of power and presently influence public policy. However, it is clear Donald Trump is not supportive of a massive land war, like Bush's Iraq War, against Iran. Donald Trump ran for President expressly opposing "Dumb Wars" and he knows that launching a War against Iran which Bolton has attempted to for nearly 20 years, would be the one single incident that would cause his political base to separate from him.

■ The US national debt has ticked 22.22 trillion dollars. Why doesn't Washington pay back the debts, instead of waging wars here and there?

A: The short answer is the US is broke. The broader answer is, 80% of the US economy is artificial which is why the US engages in massive economic terrorism backed up by brute force military and often "Black Ops" and why the US is paranoid when there is any discussion by other nations about the US Dollar not being the Reserve Currency or Oil not trading on the US Dollar. This is also why Trump's Trade War with China is so dangerous not for China but for the US. If China ceases buying US Treasury Notes or simply dumps what they presently own, this would have a devastating impact on the US economy, far greater than the crash of 2008. Simply put, the US cannot pay back its debts, thus it must prop up its economy by excessive borrowing and essentially secures its economy by global domination of world assets. The US is 4.4% of the Global population, yet it consumes 25% of the Globe's resources. The US has 800 (known) military bases in 70 countries around the Globe and has more aircraft carries than the rest of the world combined. 1/3 of American households are 1 paycheck from economic disaster. Simply put the United States on its present course is not sustainable. At some point it will reach critical mass whereby it will no longer be able to fuel its "brute force" Agenda.

# The confidence of the president of the U.S. has been lost!

By Saeed Sobhani

**TEHRAN** — Although the president of the United States has stated that he does not credit the polls conducted in his country, his advisers are afraid of the current process. They believe that Trump has lost some of his popularity with American voters. This fall in popularity, especially in key states such as Florida, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Michigan, could lead to a defeat of Trump in the 2020 presidential election.

Donald Trump suffers a decline in his popularity today! The president of the United States is well aware that if Congress repeats the results of the 2018 congressional elections in the decisive states, especially the three states of Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, he can no longer be at the forefront of Washington's political and executive equations. During the congressional elections in 2018, the Democrats were able to win in these three states. However, during the 2016 presidential race, Trump could beat Hillary Clinton in the three states of Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Michigan and win the election.

Now the game is different from 2016! An overview of some polls and reports published in the US media shows how much the president of the United States is as confused about his political future.

Election Forecast Models Trump The President's Bad Poll Numbers

As Bill Whalen wrote in Forbes, America doesn't lack for superhero movies in the summer of 2019: an X-Men sequel will premiere a few days from now, followed in July by another Spiderman instalment. But what of the Democrats' search for a superhero of their own? May I suggest: Aquaman? Here's why the submariner seems appropriate (other than the film's preachy environmentalism): remove former Vice President Joe Biden and South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg from this Quinnipiac Poll of 2020 Democratic candidates and what one discovers is a field that's "underwater" (higher negatives than positives: Biden's numbers: 49% favorable; 39% negative.

His rivals for the nomination: Bernie Sanders: 41%-48%; Elizabeth Warren: 32%-41%; YOU MAY ALSO LIKE Kamala Harris: 27%-30%; Beto O'Rourke: 20%-32%; Cory Booker: 23%-31%; Buttigieg: 23%-19% Bill de Blasio: 8%-45%.

Trump also is in the poll, which was released last week. His positive/negative came in at 38%-57%, compared to 41%-55 in the first week of May. What this suggests: come a year from now, when the Democrats either have settled on their presidential nominee or are in the closing days of doing so, we could be looking at two parties whose standard bearers' approval ratings are underwater. And it begs this question with regard to Trump: what polling data is relevant to the man's political fortunes (this seems like a fair question to ask given that the recent federal election in Australia again has us asking why the pollsters got the outcome wrong).

Let's take another look at that Quinnipiac Poll. On the economic front, 52% of respondents said they're better off today than they were in 2016 (only 21% said they're worse off). 71% of American voters rated the economy



either excellent (22%) or "good" (49%). It's been 18 years since the same poll produced such bullish numbers. But add Trump's name to the mix and the numbers work against the White House. Only 48% of voters approve of his handling of the economy; 40% approve of his handling of U.S. policy toward China (Trump's Iran-related approval is 37%); only 37% of voters approve of Trump's handling of foreign policy.

Those numbers could change should the President find common ground with the Chinese on trade practices and/or tensions in the Persian Gulf are eased. It's these sets of numbers that should concern the Trump re-elect brain trust: 54% of Americans say they "definitely" won't vote for him next year. That includes 54% of independent voters (along with 94% of Democrats and 10% of Republicans).

But also unsettling are these results from a Monmouth Poll that came out last week: only 37% of voters believe Trump deserves a second term, while 60% want someone new in the White House; only 29% of poll respondents believe the nation's on the right track; 63% think we're on the wrong track. So with those numbers in mind, some election prognosticators have concluded that Trump... will be reelected. That includes a model that combines incumbency and gross domestic product growth rates, plus other forecasts that measured economic variables as well as the Electoral College.

About that model: it's the handiwork of Ray Fair, a Yale economist who predicted that Trump would win in 2016 (though he was off on the popular vote). For 2020, Fair's model sees Trump receiving up to 56.1% of the popular votes. But in 2016, he likewise had Trump at 56%, only to see the candidate lose the popular vote to Hillary Clinton. What all of this suggests:

Trump needs more policy victories so as to improve those "right track/wrong track" numbers;

Trump needs to figure out the disconnect with independent voters — is it policy or personality-based?

Trump isn't the only candidate with weak numbers — it would seem we have a skeptical electorate;

Another Trump election could make for more polling confusion;

Forget about wagering on Trump vs. Biden, or Trump vs. the Democratic field. The real

head-to-head struggle in 2020: Trump vs. Trump.

Also JONAH GOLDBERG wrote in Los Angeles Times:

"Without the ILLEGAL Witch Hunt, my poll numbers, especially because of our historically 'great' economy, would be at 65%," President Trump tweeted last week. In all likelihood, the president believes what he wrote. It's a strongly held sentiment among many of Trump's ardent supporters that if he hadn't been stabbed in the back by the Deep State, the investigation of special counsel Robert S. Mueller III and a complicit media, people would have realized by now that Trump is, as the actor Jon Voight recently put it, "the greatest president since Abraham Lincoln." Or at least they would give him a fairer shake than he's gotten.

Is it true that the president's poll numbers have suffered largely because of what he calls a "witch hunt"? The shortest and most accurate answer for this and all counterfactuals is, "We can never know." Still, there's ample reason to conclude the answer is, probably not.

There are two mutually reinforcing reasons for this conclusion, one structural the other specific to Trump. The structural explanation is that the electorate has been growing more polarized for decades, and the presidency had become a symbol in the culture war long before Trump.

There have been only a handful of times in recent decades when any president has enjoyed a super-majority of public approval. During wartime, for example, the rally around-the-president effect often swamps partisanship. George H.W. Bush hit 89% after the first Iraq war, and after 9/11, his son reached 90%.

Other events can also goose approval ratings. Bill Clinton's highest approval numbers were reported on the day he was impeached (a fact House Speaker Nancy Pelosi probably is thinking about as the House considers impeaching Trump). It's widely believed the bump in Clinton's polling was less a referendum on the president than on the effort to remove him. Barack Obama's best performance — 69% — came four days after his inauguration, when many Americans were hopeful that his presidency could deliver on his campaign promise to put the culture wars behind us.

In all of these cases, however, the entropic effect of polarization reasserted itself as

Americans divided back into Red and Blue teams. Obviously, events mattered. If, say, the second Iraq war had gone swimmingly things might have been different, but there's little reason to believe the larger trend wouldn't have manifested itself again in time.

And then there's the specific case. Trump won in 2016 by picking the lock of the electoral college while losing the popular vote by nearly 3 million votes. According to Gallup, he took office with an approval rating of 45%. His highest approval rating in Gallup's polling was achieved last month: 46%.

The notion that the public would have come around to Trump but for the Mueller probe presupposes that the investigation is what made him unpopular, when all of the evidence suggests that the investigation was merely something that people who already disliked the president put their hopes in. When Mueller's finding that there was "no collusion" was released, Trump's approval rating went down, not up. Also, the fact that Trump enjoys majority approval for his handling of the economy even as his overall disapproval ratings stay high, demonstrates that voters don't look only to economic indicators when judging presidents.

There is, however, one way in which the Mueller probe may have hurt him: His reaction to it. When impeachment loomed for Clinton, however much he was privately obsessed with it, his public position was to ignore it and at least seem like he was focused on the people's business. Trump went a different way.

Normal presidents begin their terms by reaching across the aisle and attempting to at least appear as if they represent the whole country. They try to build on the coalition that elected them. Trump has never made any sustained effort in this regard. From his inaugural address onward Trump has catered to his biggest fans and most ardent supporters.

This is a defining feature of Trump's character. The only people who matter are the ones who love him. And since his election, he's routinely mocked the idea that he should be "presidential" because his fans would find it "boring."

It's easy to imagine a world where the Mueller probe never happened. It's harder to imagine one where Trump isn't Trump, which is why 65% approval was never in the cards.

Conclusion:

The president of the United States has a difficult and complicated situation. He knows well that the result of his two-year presence at the head of Washington's political and executive equations is nothing but a crisis. Even his popularity in the realm of economy appears to be as clear as the results of his destructive economic policies (against China and ...) will be reduced in the near future. Trump's unbalanced and intervening foreign policy has also led to American dissatisfaction and anger. In such a situation, Donald Trump will have to make fundamental changes in US foreign policy to survive in the White House. An issue that is hard to enforce to a large extent for the controversial president of the United States.

Surveys in the United States show that, contrary to Trump's imagination, he is not eager to win the presidential election of 2020. Incidentally, state surveys show that this time the likelihood of a Trump failure is higher.

## Civilians still suffering from U.S. Mideast plan

**TEHRAN (FNA)** — Despite the United Nations Security Council's task of protecting civilians, millions around the world are still being displaced and killed with little to no accountability for perpetrators.

Marking 20 years since the UN Security Council included the protection of civilians in its agenda, the group convened for an open debate on the subject this week. While there has been some progress, the global picture remains dire as civilians continue to bear the brunt of the cost of war.

"Grave human suffering is still being caused by armed conflicts and lack of compliance with international humanitarian law... we have the rules and laws of war. We all now need to work to enhance compliance," said Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to the council at the convention.

Amnesty International's Crisis Response Director Tirana Hassan has already urged the Security Council to end its "catastrophic failure," stating: "World leaders have all but abandoned civilians to the ravages of war. This week's open debate in the Security Council must yield more than just posturing and empty promises.

Concrete action is needed to reverse course, effectively protect civilians, stop war crimes and end impunity."

According to the UN, more than 22,800 civilians were killed or injured in 2018 alone across just six countries: Afghanistan, Iraq, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, and Yemen. All five permanent Security Council members are parties to many of these conflicts, and are thus complicit or responsible for the failure to protect civilians.

For instance, the United States-led coalition killed more than 1,600 civilians in the Syrian city of Raqqa over four months in 2017. The Saudi-led coalition, supported by Western arms from the United States, United Kingdom, and France, have also injured and killed thousands of civilians and deliberately blocked food assistance in Yemen, contributing



to one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

The UN Secretary-General particularly pointed to the indiscriminate use of explosive weapons in populated areas and its devastating impact as 90 percent of those killed and injured are civilians. Many of those civilians are too often children.

Here, the great military powers cynically boast about 'precision' warfare and 'surgical' strikes that distinguish between fighters and civilians. But the reality on the ground is that civilians are routinely targeted where they live, work, study, worship and seek medical care. Parties to armed conflict unlawfully kill, maim and forcibly displace millions of civilians while world leaders shirk their responsibility and turn their backs on war crimes and immense suffering.

Beyond the deaths and injuries of civilians, we also see damaged infrastructure leading to the collapse of essential health, water systems, and more. It is not only civilian infrastructure that is harmed — the environmental consequences of conflict are often overlooked. This includes vital natural

resources which, after being damaged have had implications not only for the survival of civilian populations but also for environmental risks.

Since September 2014, a coalition led by the US has conducted air strikes targeting many oil installations in Syria as well. Such damage has generated significant air pollution and soil and water contamination, producing further long-term negative health consequences, including respiratory disorders and cancer.

A collapse in waste management services, often disrupted due to fighting, has also led to contamination and health risks, posing a challenge not only for civilians still living in Syria but also for those who wish to return.

The need for the Security Council to protect displaced communities or at the very least to let them protect themselves is urgent more than ever.

Too often do we see that in addition to being exposed to war and violence, populations in places like Yemen are stopped from reaching safer spaces, are constrained by bureaucratic obstacles and are limited in their free movement.

The time is now to enhance compliance with international humanitarian law as well as greater and more progress on accountability. For the Security Council, this means being more consistent in how it addresses protection concerns within and across different conflicts, and being more comprehensive in terms of, for example, grappling with the protection challenges of urban warfare. And it also means keeping those responsible to account. Such decisions are crucial for the peace, security, and protection of civilians in both Syria and Yemen, where the United States and its allies are killing mostly civilians rather than armed enemy.

These decisions can save lives or end them; they can create hope or misery; and they can bolster or break the norms that protect universal humanitarian laws and principles.



# Europe pressed between China-U.S. trade spat

**Global Times** — As Huawei is pinned in the eye of the China-U.S. trade war, French President Emmanuel Macron claimed Europe won't capitulate to U.S. pressure to block the Chinese tech company. What is Europe's attitude toward US demands? What impact has the trade conflict caused for Europe? Thorsten Jelinek (Jelinek), the European Director of the Taihe Global Institute and former associate director at the World Economic Forum, shared his insights in an exclusive interview with Global Times (GT) reporters Li Aixin and Bai Yunyi.

■ Does Macron represent the European mainstream stance in welcoming Huawei's 5G technology?

A: When we talk about Europe, it's like measuring the average body temperature of patients in hospital. Each patient has a different illness and body temperature. So, the average doesn't mean anything. But in general, if you compare it to the US, I think Europe is much more open.

There are differences within Europe. The EU has 28 member states. Each country can voice whatever it wants, but each tries to find a solution for Europe. Germany might say that the EU would not block a single company from any country. Usually if something is blocked, it is technology or products. Legally, this could be justified, but not for a whole company. It's not lawful from a European perspective.

There is a long-term relationship between Huawei and European countries and carriers in the field of 4G, for example. A lot of Huawei equipment is already here. There's trust in the relationship. Carriers in Europe such as Deutsche Telekom, Vodafone, Telefónica are supportive and open to go with Huawei in the 5G environment.

Huawei also works with local agencies on security issues by allowing its equipment to be tested and certified. As you know, from Germany, nothing has been found.

Technology changes quickly, so today nothing is there. What about tomorrow? That's the concern of US intelligence services and in parts of Europe. I think the whole discussion extends beyond Huawei for two reasons.

One, 5G is a more secure network technology compared with 4G and previous generations. But with 5G, because of the connectivity, general security risks increase exponentially.

Second, the real problem is the clash between the US and China and maybe between Europe and China. China has stepped up in terms of economic strength which has caused panic. Let's not blame anyone, but when someone else becomes strong, which actually was anticipated so no one should be surprised, but China functions differently with a different government and culture. Huawei is at the center of this new technology



**As Huawei is pinned in the eye of the China-U.S. trade war, French President Emmanuel Macron claimed Europe won't capitulate to U.S. pressure to block the Chinese tech company. What is Europe's attitude toward US demands? What impact has the trade conflict caused for Europe?**

which makes it an unfortunate target for such tension.

■ Now Huawei is at the center, do you think similar conflicts between China and the US over 5G development will soon occur in other fields, like AI?

A: It's interesting that a couple of years back, telecommunication infrastructure was just a commodity. However, now it has become a strategic infrastructure. Now it's back on the radar. It has become government-owned.

When it comes to AI, I think there is already a battle. Any other advanced technology might become the center of that, especially AI, because of the impacts it has on the economy, labor, society, security, etc. It's inevitable that AI becomes the next battlefield.

However, the world is globalized already. It is interconnected. Seventy percent of products Huawei purchases are non-Huawei products. So, there's a lot of globalization going on.

This has created growth and wealth. So, I believe, if reason prevails, we can have more of a step-by-step resolution, or compromise.

For now, I am a little bit pessimistic that there will be a quick resolution. Probably Trump will be reelected. So, he will have a little more time to negotiate. He can move it to his next term. But actually, it's devastating to wait that long.

■ If China and the US cannot reach an agreement any time soon, what impact will it cause, for example on production chain and supply chain?

A: For the US, it is very difficult to find a new supplier worth of hundreds of billions and it is very difficult for China to find markets for products worth hundreds of billions of dollars. But the buyer has always had the upper hand.

But maybe it's just an illusion of having the upper hand, because the US will need to

buy things elsewhere. Where should it do it?

What is happening is a decoupling between the Chinese and US economies. This can have a ripple effect by hitting other economies which are not that strong.

The China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative is a backup strategy because 90 percent of trade with China goes by sea, through the Strait of Malacca, but there should also be road transport. To be very realistic, you need to do both. You need to have this mitigation approach and you need to still try the best to sort out the trade dispute.

■ What is your perspective on the trade ties between China and Europe?

A: For Europe, I think it's important to continue dialogue and communication. But words must then be followed by action. This is how China can build trust. Both sides have a responsibility to rebuild the trust.

Europe's complaint in general is that China's government does not take Europe as seriously as its bilateral ties with individual European countries.

I understand the Chinese side, which thinks it's a fantasy to consider Europe as only one voice. Each country is a sovereign country. But I think it would be smarter for China to channel that communication through the EU Commission and maybe not so much bilaterally.

Having said that, Germany is one that does most bilateral trade with China, so it's a really tricky situation.

■ What is the most pressing problem that China and Europe need to address in their economic and trade ties?

A: I think the most pressing problem is the US-China conflict because European investment decisions will depend on that. For example, if Huawei is hit by sanctions, it will also affect European markets because Huawei cannot use stuff from Europe or cannot use equipment because of US pressure on Europe.

This will also complicate the relationship between Europe and China because in the end, Europe is an ally of the US and Europe does a lot of trade with the US. You cannot isolate Europe from the China-US trade conflict.

In the meantime, I think Europe should make up its mind on how it wants to treat the relationship with China. Unfortunately, China is also regarded as a strategic competitor. It has a very strong foreign policy and this is how it is perceived. So, I think maybe there must be a little bit of a rebalancing to make its foreign policy look more positive. The US' unilateral approach toward China is also an opportunity for Europe to sort out its own problems on security and military issues, NATO, and economics to create a single digital market in Europe, and maybe to be more competitive with the US and China, and to have a clear strategy toward China.

## The global threat of Populism in Europe



**TEHRAN (FNA)**— Courtesy of Donald Trump in the United States, far-right and nationalist parties saw strong gains in the European Union's elections on Sunday.

France's Emmanuel Macron, who has staked his presidency on persuading Europeans that the EU is the answer to the challenges of an uncertain, globalizing world economy, took a personal hit when his centrist movement was edged into second place by Marine Le Pen's anti-immigration, anti-Brussels National Rally.

Results from the European Parliament elections also suggest that far-right parties have scored considerable gains in other parts of Europe. In Italy, Matteo Salvini's anti-migrant League party won the most votes, marking a historic success for the far-right.

The leader of the far-right Sweden Democrats Jimmie Akesson celebrated with supporters at an election event in Stockholm as early results showed gains for his party in the European vote. Meanwhile, Dutch far-right leader Geert Wilders was kicked out of the European Parliament as results confirmed a win for the social democrats.

The center-right People's Party of Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz also gained in the elections, with the far-right Freedom Party coming third. Last but not the least, Progressive Slovakia/Together coalition won EU election in Slovakia.

These exit polls are bad news for millions of immigrants, Muslims and minorities living in Europe, where the left has been banished to the political margins, socialism has devolved into nationalism or just plain corruption and racism. In this rising tide of right-wing populism, the liberal left commands only a few countries. In so many other places, increasingly illiberal, pro-Trump and racist leaders are in charge.

Trump and his European type should be understood in this context. While his European counterparts may not rhyme, they all dance to the same rhythm — no to immigrants, no to Muslims. These racist politicians have uniformly come to power by attacking globalization, Muslims and everything Islamic. They have criticized the neo-liberal transformations of the recent past that enriched the few at the expense of the many, while challenging the major political parties of the center left and center right that implemented the failed economic reforms such as austerity that unleashed such forces.

They have taken aim at immigration that has metastasized in political systems already ill equipped to handle a massive uptick in cross-border politics and from faraway lands in the Middle East. When politically useful, they have demonized immigrants and refugees who are one side effect of their forever war on terror, as well as victims of that very burgeoning globalization movement.

They have championed national sovereignty against the interventions of multilateral organizations like the United Nations, while blasting multicultural values and the human-rights groups that promote them. And they have taken advantage of social media like Facebook and Twitter that promote a version of participatory totalitarianism in which individuals can freely relinquish their racist remarks and abandon conventional news media.

The recent election results in Europe suggest that globalization, multilateralism and human rights have all become discredited at a popular level. A quick glance at the names of the parties that have won the elections reveals that the chattering classes, too, have noticed this Western trend.

The Trumps of this world have cannily identified a fundamental shift in the political playing field. By successfully linking all the ills facing their countries to liberals and their follies, as well as migrants, Muslims and refugees, they have now transformed the political landscape.

Elections for the European Parliament once again proved that it's a mistake to dismiss Trump's racist policies and right-wing moves. Europe is only part of his plan. Together, they will soon erode whatever is left of the foundations of international law and democratic societies - demonizing the media, immigrants and Muslims, working to suppress voter turnout, chipping away at the legal barriers between international peace and forever wars, and packing the UN with ideologues who support their neo-colonialist agenda.

In summation, the vast majority of the countries mobilizing to defeat Trump and his cohorts in Europe are working with traditional tools to effect global change at the UN. Having learned from past masters of populism, team Trump and European far-right populists instead are busy changing the playing field.

After all, the forces that gave rise to this tidal wave of right-wing populism remain in place: widening economic inequality, surging migrant flows, ballooning corruption scandals, forever wars in the Middle East, and a broke global economy. To deal with this new threat, a similarly international, broad-based, and fundamentally new approach is called for.

It's time for a movement to counteract far-right politicians and warmongering hordes the world over, a global coalition that joins people and politicians in a united, international effort to respond to the true global problems - climate change, endless wars, trade wars, and economic inequality and sanctions for whatever reasons - that threaten everyone on the planet

## Washington's ruse to sell arms to Saudis and UAE

**TEHRAN (FNA)** — US President Donald Trump has once again used a fake "national emergency" regarding tensions with Iran for the sole reason of circumventing Congressional restrictions and international law on arms sales, and using it to rush shipments of more arms to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Under the Arms Export Control Act, Congress is supposed to get a 30 day notice ahead of any sales, and can then block shipments — not that it will ever do. Concerns about war crimes in Yemen mean Saudi arms should face some effort to block them. But the law has a loophole in it, which allows the president to declare an "emergency" of any sort he wants, with no oversight on that declaration, and then send the arms over without Congressional notification.

This is a notoriously cheap way to circumvent Congress on arms exports. It's also a perfect excuse to bypass international humanitarian law by declaring Iran as a "threat". This way US arms could be easily directed toward the ongoing Saudi-led war on Yemen.

Trump claims his "national emergency" is for tensions with Iran, though the US has had nonstop tensions with Iran for decades, and that's not a reason to suddenly declare a new emergency.

At any rate, experience tells us Iran is just an excuse for the US to sell new arms to Saudis amid international criticism and condemnation regarding the ongoing humanitarian disaster in Yemen. We know how these weapons will be used. Just for the record, on Saturday, US-backed Saudi warplanes attacked the southwestern Yemeni province of Taiz, hitting a gas station in the Maweyah district and causing a major explosion. At least eight civilians were killed, with some reports saying as many as 12 civilians may have died.

The dead included at least four children, and on top of the fatalities, dozens of other civilians were reported wounded. There has been no statement from Saudi Arabia on why this attack was launched. This is common, however, as Saudi airstrikes have tended to kill a lot of civilians, and it's seemingly random when the Saudis feel like offering an explanation or a denial for the killings.

In general, it suggests that American weapons are being used to indiscriminately slaughter civilians in Yemen which makes the US complicit in Saudi war crimes and crimes committed against humanity. What's more, the illegal war has reached far beyond the borders of Yemen. It is fought by Saudi pilots, Sudanese soldiers and American-British weapon dealers and armed forces as well. But it is the Yemeni civilians who suffer the most.

Over 22 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, 11 million in need of acute humanitarian aid and



**US President Donald Trump has once again used a fake "national emergency" regarding tensions with Iran for the sole reason of circumventing Congressional restrictions and international law on arms sales, and using it to rush shipments of more arms to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.**

people living in 107 out of the 333 districts in Yemen are at risk of famine. Thousands of people have been killed, 2 million people are displaced and there has been a cholera outbreak with 900,000 suspected cases.

Now the war has been carrying on for four years. Since the start of the war, the damage to Yemen has been extensive, including a high and rising death toll among Yemeni civilians. Sadly, the Western consciousness has fallen asleep, too occupied with the spectacle of Donald Trump and the rise and fall of stock prices. It is simply incredibly - and outright sickening - that the suffering of 22 million people could be overlooked, or simply ignored.

The world needs to confront the warmongers, point to their crimes and contradictions. How can any European or American politician say that he is in favor of peace when he allows the selling of arms to a nation killing thousands every year? How can any government say that it will fight

for what is right when it turns a blind eye to human rights violations and war crimes in Yemen?

Progress has been made. The Netherlands, Canada, Belgium, Ireland and Luxembourg have succeeded in getting an investigation by the UN Human Rights Council into what is happening in Yemen underway. Some European countries have also stopped sending arms to the Saudis and the UAE. The time is now to stop the weapons sales from all Western countries, and to stop the aid that the US provides to the Saudis in the Yemen war. There have been protests in Europe and at the UN against Saudi-led airstrikes.

But more can be done. The spirit of the anti-war protests and international outcry is still alive, and its power must be wielded again. This time not to stop the dropping of bombs on remote Afghan, Syrian or Iraqi villages and towns, but to stop the Western funding and support of an illegal war, and to stop the biggest humanitarian disaster in the world today.



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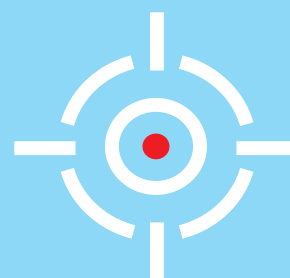
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# NASA photo showcases landing site for Mars 2020

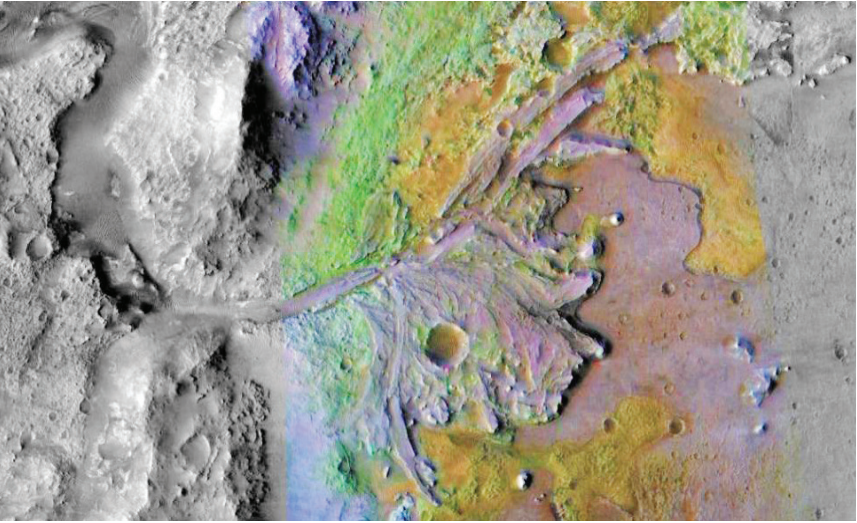
A new photo captured by NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter and shared online this week features the landing site for the space agency's Mars 2020 mission.

The Mars 2020 rover, scheduled to launch next year, is expected to land in the Jezero Crater, located in a region of Mars known as the Syrtis Major quadrangle.

The crater is thought to have once been filled with water, and its watery history is visible in the sedimentary formations that texture its interior surface, as well as its outer contours. The new MRO image showcases the remnants of an ancient delta where in-flowing rivers once entered, bringing water and sediment.

Channeling patterns move both to and from Jezero Crater, and in the MRO photo, fans and deltas can be seen extending out from many of the channels.

"Examination of spectral data acquired



from orbit show that some of these sediments have minerals that indicate chemical alteration by water," NASA said. "Here in Jezero Crater delta, sediments contain clays and carbonates."

NASA regularly relies on MRO to scout potential landing spots. As the latest MRO image makes clear, the Mars 2020 rover -- and its impressive suite of instruments -- will have plenty of interesting sedimentary structures to investigate. The rover's scientific mission will help scientists better understand Mars' watery past.

Earlier this year, NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine detailed the agency's plans for visiting the moon and Mars.

"For the first time, we are going to cache samples on Mars," he said. "For the first time, we are going to fly a helicopter on another world with the Mars Helicopter."

(Source: UPI)

# Exotic matter uncovered in the sun’s atmosphere

Scientists from Ireland and France have announced a major new finding about how matter behaves in the extreme conditions of the Sun's atmosphere.

The scientists used large radio telescopes and ultraviolet cameras on a NASA spacecraft to better understand the exotic but poorly understood "fourth state of matter." Known as plasma, this matter could hold the key to developing safe, clean and efficient nuclear energy generators on Earth. The scientists published their findings in the leading international journal Nature Communications.

Most of the matter we encounter in our everyday lives comes in the form of solid, liquid or gas, but the majority of the Universe is composed of plasma -- a highly unstable and electrically charged fluid. The Sun is also made up of this plasma.

Despite being the most common form of matter in the Universe plasma remains a mystery, mainly due to its scarcity in natural conditions on Earth, which makes it difficult to study. Special laboratories on Earth recreate the extreme conditions of space for this purpose, but the Sun represents an all-natural laboratory to study how plasma behaves in conditions that are often too extreme for the manually constructed Earth-based laboratories.

Postdoctoral Researcher at Trinity College Dublin and the Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies (DIAS), Dr Eoin Carley, led the international collaboration. He said: "The solar atmosphere is a hotbed of extreme activity, with plasma temperatures in excess of 1 million degrees Celsius and particles that travel close to light-speed. The light-speed particles shine bright at radio wavelengths, so we're able to monitor exactly how plasmas behave with large radio telescopes."

"We worked closely with scientists at the Paris Observatory and performed observations of the Sun with a large radio telescope located in Nançay in central France. We combined the radio observations with ultraviolet cameras on NASA's space-based Solar Dynamics Observatory spacecraft



to show that plasma on the sun can often emit radio light that pulses like a light-house. We have known about this activity for decades, but our use of space and ground-based equipment allowed us to image the radio pulses for the first time and see exactly how plasmas become unstable in the solar atmosphere."

Studying the behavior of plasmas on the Sun allows for a comparison of how they behave on Earth, where much effort is now under way to build magnetic confinement fusion reactors. These are nuclear energy generators that are much safer, cleaner and more efficient than their fission reactor cousins that we currently use for energy today.

Professor at DIAS and collaborator on the project, Peter Gallagher, said: "Nuclear fusion is a different type of nuclear energy generation that fuses plasma atoms together, as opposed to breaking them apart like fission does. Fusion is more stable and safer, and it doesn't require highly radioactive fuel; in fact, much of the waste material from fusion

is inert helium."

"The only problem is that nuclear fusion plasmas are highly unstable. As soon as the plasma starts generating energy, some natural process switches off the reaction. While this switch-off behavior is like an inherent safety switch -- fusion reactors cannot form runaway reactions -- it also means the plasma is difficult to maintain in a stable state for energy generation. By studying how plasmas become unstable on the Sun, we can learn about how to control them on Earth."

The success of this research was made possible by the close ties between researchers at Trinity, DIAS, and their French collaborators.

Dr. Nicole Vilmer, lead collaborator on the project in Paris, said: "The Paris Observatory has a long history of making radio observations of the Sun, dating back to the 1950s. By teaming up with other radio astronomy groups around Europe we are able to make groundbreaking discoveries such as this one and continue the success we have in solar radio astronomy in France. It also further strengthens scientific collaboration between France and Ireland, which I hope continues in the future."

Dr. Carley previously worked at the Paris Observatory, funded by a fellowship awarded by the Irish Research Council and the European Commission. He continues to work closely with his French colleagues today, and hopes to soon study the same phenomena using both French instruments and newly built, state-of-the-art equipment in Ireland.

Dr. Carley added: "The collaboration with French scientists is ongoing and we're already making progress with newly built radio telescopes in Ireland, such as the Irish Low Frequency Array (I-LOFAR). I-LOFAR can be used to uncover new plasma physics on the Sun in far greater detail than before, teaching us about how matter behaves in both plasmas on the Sun, here on Earth and throughout the Universe in general."

The work was funded by the Irish Research Council.

(Source: Science Daily)

# Big black holes can settle in the outskirts of small galaxies

Big galaxies like the Milky Way have correspondingly big black holes. But small galaxies might have massive ones, too. A new survey picked up dozens of massive black hole candidates in diminutive dwarf galaxies.

Surprisingly, some of those potential black holes aren't at their galaxy's center, but instead appear to roam the outskirts, astronomer Amy Reines said May 20 at the Black Hole Initiative Conference 2019 at Harvard University. Studying these wonky monsters could help astronomers figure out the mystery of how supermassive black holes in bigger galaxies form.

"Contrary to conventional wisdom, dwarf galaxies can, and at least some do, have massive black holes," said Reines, of Montana State University in Bozeman. These black holes could "hold clues to the formation of the first black hole seeds in the early universe."

Almost every massive galaxy ever observed has a supermassive black hole at its center. These behemoths, including the Milky Way's, weigh between 100,000 and a few billion

times the mass of the sun. And that mass is closely related to the mass of the host galaxy. "In general, bigger galaxies have bigger black holes," Reines said.

So when Reines, as a graduate student in 2011, stumbled upon a supermassive black hole in the dwarf galaxy Henize 2-10, she was stunned. Reines had been looking for signs of star formation, and instead found the actively feeding black hole, some 30 million light-years from Earth.

"This discovery marked a whole new environment for a massive black hole, and I was motivated to look for more objects like this," she said.

Peering into thousands of dwarf galaxies, Reines and colleagues have since found roughly 100 massive black holes, given away by the glowing disks of gas that swirl around the black holes as they feed.

Those black holes "are likely the tip of the iceberg," Reines said. Only the most actively feeding black holes show up in visible wavelengths, and only in galaxies with relatively

low star formation. So there may be many others that are harder to spot.

The researchers are now focusing their search on longer, invisible radio wavelengths, which can reveal black holes that feed less aggressively. Using the Very Large Array of radio telescopes in New Mexico, the team has already found 39 possible black holes in 111 dwarf galaxies. At least 14 of those candidates are likely to be black holes, Reines said. Some of the others might be other objects that emit brightly glowing radio waves, such as supernova remnants.

Weirdly, some of the newly found black holes are not at their galactic centers, but instead are "wandering around in the outskirts of their host galaxies," Reines said. Computer simulations had suggested that up to half of all dwarf galaxies might have off-center black holes. Still, "I was very surprised" by the finds, she said. "This hasn't been seen before." She suggested that the black holes could have been knocked askew in a galaxy merger, or kicked off-center when two smaller

black holes merged within a galaxy.

The work "identifies a new and unique population [of black holes] that may have been missed by other selection techniques," says astrophysicist Vivienne Baldassare of Yale University, who uses other techniques to search for black holes in dwarf galaxies.

Studying massive black holes in small galaxies could help scientists figure out how supermassive black holes in larger galaxies got so big over cosmic time. One possibility is that black holes bulk up by adding their masses together when their host galaxies merge, or they could have started out relatively massive long ago. Dwarf galaxies, which are small enough that they probably haven't gone through many mergers, may preserve relics of those ancient massive black holes. Knowing how big those relic black holes can get could help link up the supermassive monsters astronomers see in the present-day universe with their ancient counterparts.

(Source: sciencenews.org)

# Exploding stars led to humans walking on two legs, radical study suggests

It was the evolutionary leap that defined the species: while other apes ambled around on all fours, the ancestors of humans rose up on two legs and, from that lofty position, went on to conquer the world.

The benefits of standing tall in the African savannah are broadly nailed down, but what prompted our distant forebears to walk upright is far from clear. Now, in a radical proposal, US scientists point to a cosmic intervention: protohumans had a helping hand from a flurry of exploding stars, they say.

According to the researchers, a series of stars in our corner of the Milky Way exploded in a cosmic riot that began about 7m years ago and continued for millions of years more. The supernovae blasted powerful cosmic rays in all directions. On Earth, the radiation arriving from the cataclysmic explosions peaked about 2.6m years ago.

The surge of radiation triggered a chain of events, the scientists argue. As cosmic rays battered the planet, they ionized the atmosphere and made it more conductive. This could have ramped up the frequency of lightning strikes, sending wildfires raging through African forests, and making way for grasslands, they write in the Journal of Geology. With

fewer trees at hand in the aftermath, our ancient ancestors adapted, and those who walked upright thrived.

That, at least, is the thinking. In the history of human evolution, walking upright dates back at least 6m years to Sahelanthropus, an ancient species with both ape and human features discovered from fossil remains found in Chad. One prominent theory is that climate change transformed the landscape, leaving savannah where trees once stood.

One of the study's authors, Adrian Melott of the University of Kansas, said ancient human relatives were already dabbling with standing upright before the effects of any supernovae took hold. But he believes the violent explosions still played a role. "Bipedalism had already gotten started, but we think this may have given it a strong shot in the arm," he said.

"Lightning has long been thought to be the primary cause of fires before humans had a role, and with a lot of fires you get the destruction of a lot of habitat," Melott said. "When the forests are replaced with grasslands, it then becomes an advantage to stand upright, so you can walk from tree to tree, and see over the tall grass for predators."

The cosmic rays from one star known to have exploded

about 164 light years from Earth would have increased the ionization of the atmosphere 50-fold, the scientists calculate. Cosmic rays ionize the atmosphere when they knock electrons out of the atoms and molecules they slam into in the air. Cosmic rays normally only ionize the upper reaches of the atmosphere, but powerful ones from nearby supernovae can penetrate the entire depth of the atmosphere, ionizing it all the way to the ground. "We are sure this would have increased lightning strikes, but lightning initiation is not well understood, so we cannot put a number on it," Melott said.

If the scientists are right, future supernovae could potentially trigger more wildfires on Earth. But the planet appears safe for the moment. The nearest star on course to explode in the next billion years is Betelgeuse, one of the brightest in the constellation of Orion, which lies a safe 642 light years away.

The researchers concede that more research is needed to understand if cosmic rays really do drive lightning. "If the lightning-cosmic ray connection turns out to be incorrect, this whole thing falls apart," said Melott.

(Source: The Guardian)

## Comet inspires chemistry for making breathable oxygen on Mars

Science fiction stories are chock full of terraforming schemes and oxygen generators for a very good reason -- we humans need molecular oxygen (O2) to breathe, and space is essentially devoid of it. Even on other planets with thick atmospheres, O2 is hard to come by.

So, when we explore space, we need to bring our own oxygen supply. That is not ideal because a lot of energy is needed to hoist things into space atop a rocket, and once the supply runs out, it is gone.

One place molecular oxygen does appear outside of Earth is in the wisps of gas streaming off comets. The source of that oxygen remained a mystery until two years ago when Konstantinos P. Giapis, a professor of chemical engineering at Caltech, and his postdoctoral fellow Yunxi Yao, proposed the existence of a new chemical process that could account for its production. Giapis, along with Tom Miller, professor of chemistry, have now demonstrated a new reaction for generating oxygen that Giapis says could help humans explore the universe and perhaps even fight climate change at home. More fundamentally though, he says the reaction represents a new kind of chemistry discovered by studying comets.

Most chemical reactions require energy, which is typically provided as heat. Giapis's research shows that some unusual reactions can occur by providing kinetic energy. When water molecules are shot like extremely tiny bullets onto surfaces containing oxygen, such as sand or rust, the water molecule can rip off that oxygen to produce molecular oxygen. This reaction occurs on comets when water molecules vaporize from the surface and are then accelerated by the solar wind until they crash back into the comet at high speed.

Comets, however, also emit carbon dioxide (CO2). Giapis and Yao wanted to test if CO2 could also produce molecular oxygen in collisions with the comet surface. When they found O2 in the stream of gases coming off the comet, they wanted to confirm that the reaction was similar to water's reaction. They designed an experiment to crash CO2 onto the inert surface of gold foil, which cannot be oxidized and should not produce molecular oxygen. Nonetheless, O2 continued to be emitted from the gold surface. This meant that both atoms of oxygen come from the same CO2 molecule, effectively splitting it in an extraordinary manner.

"At the time we thought it would be impossible to combine the two oxygen atoms of a CO2 molecule together because CO2 is a linear molecule, and you would have to bend the molecule severely for it to work," Giapis says. "You're doing something really drastic to the molecule."

To understand the mechanism of how CO2 breaks down to molecular oxygen, Giapis approached Miller and his postdoctoral fellow Philip Shushkov, who designed computer simulations of the entire process. Understanding the reaction posed a significant challenge because of the possible formation of excited molecules. These molecules have so much energy that their constituent atoms vibrate and rotate around to an enormous degree. All that motion makes simulating the reaction in a computer more difficult because the atoms within the molecules move in complex ways.

"In general, excited molecules can lead to unusual chemistry, so we started with that," Miller says. "But, to our surprise, the excited state did not create molecular oxygen. Instead, the molecule decomposed into other products. Ultimately, we found that a severely bent CO2 can also form without exciting the molecule, and that could produce O2."

The apparatus Giapis designed to perform the reaction works like a particle accelerator, turning the CO2 molecules into ions by giving them a charge and then accelerating them using an electric field, albeit at much lower energies than are found in a particle accelerator. However, he adds that such a device is not necessary for the reaction to occur.

"You could throw a stone with enough velocity at some CO2 and achieve the same thing," he says. "It would need to be traveling about as fast as a comet or asteroid travels through space."

That could explain the presence of small amounts of oxygen that have been observed high in the Martian atmosphere. There has been speculation that the oxygen is being generated by ultraviolet light from the sun striking CO2, but Giapis believes the oxygen is also generated by high-speed dust particles colliding with CO2 molecules.

He hopes that a variation of his reactor could be used to do the same thing at more useful scales -- perhaps one day serving as a source of breathable air for astronauts on Mars or being used to combat climate change by pulling CO2, a greenhouse gas, out of Earth's atmosphere and turning it into oxygen. He acknowledges, however, that both of those applications are a long way off because the current version of the reactor has a low yield, creating only one to two oxygen molecules for every 100 CO2 molecules shot through the accelerator.

"Is it a final device? No. Is it a device that can solve the problem with Mars? No. But it is a device that can do something that is very hard," he says. "We are doing some crazy things with this reactor."

The paper describing the team's findings, titled "Direct dioxygen evolution in collisions of carbon dioxide with surfaces," appears in the May 24 issue of Nature Communications. Caltech co-authors include Tom Miller, professor of chemistry; Philip Shushkov, postdoctoral scholar in chemistry; and Yunxi Yao, postdoctoral researcher, formerly of Caltech. Funding for the research was provided by the National Science Foundation, the Joint Center for Artificial Photosynthesis, and the U. S. Department of Energy.

(Source: Science Daily)

## A 50-million-year-old fossil captures a swimming school of fish

Fossilized fish captured mid-swim offer a rare glimpse into extinct animal behavior -- and suggest that swimming in schools developed at least 50 million years ago.

A limestone shale slab from the Eocene Epoch reveals that extinct, thimble-sized fish called Erismatopterus levatus may have coordinated their motion similar to how fish in groups move today, researchers report May 29 in Proceedings of the Royal Society B.

The fossil captures a mass of 259 fish apparently swimming in the same direction. It's unclear what killed the fish. But a suddenly collapsing sand dune, for example, could have buried them in place in a flash, knocking just a few askew in the process, the researchers suggest.

Analysis of the fish's positions and orientations suggests they followed the same rules of "attraction" and "repulsion" that govern fish shoals today: The fish are repelled from their nearest neighbors to avoid collisions, but stick with the group by tracking with farther away fishes.

(Source: sciencenews.org)



## Dam tourism in the pipeline in Iran

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** — Dam tourism attractiveness is to be highlighted across the country based on a recent agreement between the Ministry of Energy and the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization.

As per a memorandum of understanding (MOU), which Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian and CHHTO Director Ali-Asghar Mounesan inked on Tuesday, tourism on the margins of dams will be promoted, ILNA reported.



Though Iran is an arid and semi-arid land, it still embraces many dams, rivers, ponds and wetlands that offer scenic vistas, camping areas and fishing expeditions.

On Tuesday, CHHTO Deputy Director Vali Teymouri said the organization plans to form a think tank to jumpstart tourism sector.

## Meybod to host major Zilou festival

**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** — Meybod is preparing to host a major festival of Zilou, a traditional type of floor covering, which the Iranian oasis city is famous for.

World Crafts Council-Asia Pacific Region Director Ghada Hijavi and artisans from ten provinces have been invited to the festival, which pursues market-oriented goals, a tourism official said, ISNA reported.



In February, Meybod celebrated becoming a world city for Zilou, a status given by the WCC-APR after its experts probed the in-house expertise that has been passed down generations to generations across central Iranian city.

The festival, that comprises a sales exhibition, will be held from June 13 to 17.

According to the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization,

Iran's exports of handicrafts fetched over \$190 million during the first nine months of the past Iranian calendar year (ended March 20), increasing 11 percent year on year.



## ROUND THE GLOBE

### Churches of Chiloé

In the Chiloé archipelago off the coast of Chile are about 70 churches built within the framework of a "Circular Mission" introduced by the Jesuits in the 17th century and continued by the Franciscans in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The most exceptional illustrations of this unique form of wooden ecclesiastical architecture (the so-called Chilota School of architecture) are the churches of Achao, Quinchao, Castro, Rilán, Nercon, Aldachildo, Ichuac, Detif, Vilupulli, Chonchi, Tenaun, Colo, San Juan, Dalcachue, Chellin and Caguach.



These sixteen churches are outstanding examples of the successful fusion of European and indigenous cultural traditions. The abilities of the people of Chiloé as builders achieved its highest expression in these wooden churches, where farmers, fishermen and sailors exhibited great expertise in the handling of the most abundant material in this environment, wood. Along with the churches, the mestizo culture resulting from Jesuit missionary activities has survived to the present day.

This isolated archipelago was colonized by the Spanish in the mid 16th century.

The construction techniques and architecture of the churches of Chiloé are specific to this locale: European experience was adapted and reformulated, giving rise to a vernacular tradition, supported by a great quantity and variety of testimonies which are still in use. Along with the culture of the archipelago, these churches are the result of a rich and extensive cross-cultural dialogue and interaction.

(Source: UNESCO)

# Visit Imam Khomeini Mosque in downtown Tehran

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** — Surrounded by Tehran's Grand Bazaar, the vast Imam Khomeini Mosque is well worth a visit when you're heading to downtown of the metropolis.

The early-18th-century monument is one of the city's largest and busiest mosques. Following some rounds of restoration, it is now looking all the better for interior design.

There are various entrances to the mosque but the main one is off Panzdah-e Khordad St, which takes you directly into a large courtyard.

There is a large central pool in the courtyard for the faithful to make their before-prayer ablutions. The yard faces to some enormous ivans (porticos) and also leads to a passageway that goes to the Grand Bazaar where hundreds of people pass through each day.

Still popularly known as the Shah Mosque (its former name), the mosque proves to be a great piece of architecture and beauty due its courtyard, beautiful Shabestans (nocturnal



A view of Imam Khomeini Mosque in the heart of Tehran.

areas), a giant tile-worked dome and interesting arches and entrances.

The Mosque was built upon the order of Fath-Ali Shah (r. 1797 -1834). At the time of completion, it was considered to be the most significant architectural monument in Tehran. During the reign of Naser al-Din Shah (r. 1848 – 1896), the two current minarets were added to the structure.

Its proximity to the bazaar makes it one of the liveliest places in Tehran. It is also adjacent to the UNESCO-registered Golestan Palace that embodies a successful integration of earlier Persian crafts and architecture with Western influences.

The grand bazaar comprises various mazes, corridors, lanes, intersections, entrances and passageways with hundreds of shops offering different types of goods and services. While most of its covered structures and marketplaces are associated with the 19th century onwards, the history of trade in the bazaar is rooted much deeper in time.

## Iranian tourism to overseas drops by 24.5%

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** — Iran's outbound tourism slumped 24.5% during the first month of the current Iranian calendar year (started March 21) from the same period a year earlier, a tourism official said on Wednesday.

"A total of 660,314 Iranian nationals traveled overseas during the month of Farvardin (March 21-April 20) while 874,633 people traveled abroad in the same period last year, which indicates a 30 percent decline," Vali Teymori said, ISNA reported.

In one hand, sharp rises in the value of foreign currencies against rial have pushed up the costs of traveling

in the country. On the other, U.S.-led sanctions together with its anti-Iran propaganda campaign has lessened Western travelers to the Islamic Republic but the country is doing its best to attract more visitors from neighbors.

Earlier in March, Iran tourism chief Ali-Asghar Mounesan estimated that domestic trips would grow by 20 percent over the New Year (Noruz) holidays in Farvardin, saying "This year, there have been three million dropping of foreign travels, and if this [figure] is to be added to domestic travels, we will have a 20 percent increase in [the number of domestic] travels during Noruz."

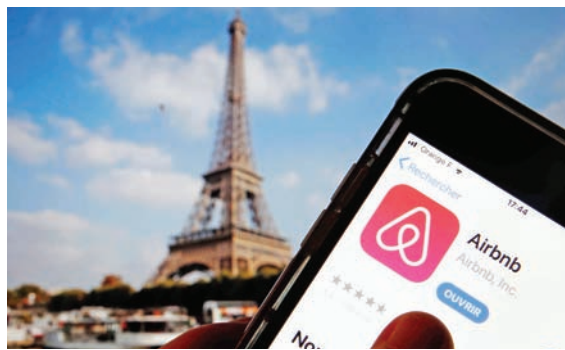
## Airbnb is eliminating its most annoying feature

Airbnb is changing how fees are handled for bookings in Europe, Asia Pacific, the Middle East, and Africa.

Travelers who book on Airbnb know the service offers an incredible range of accommodations — and they also know that sometimes those accommodations come with pretty high fees.

Airbnb now has a plan to change how booking fees are handled for professional hosts who sign up for its service beginning June 4, Skift reported. Beginning June 4, the new structure will be rolled out for professionally managed properties in Asia Pacific (except Japan), Europe, the Middle East, and Africa.

The vast majority of hosts on Airbnb will still maintain access to the shared host (3%) and guest fee. This new fee model is only required for new professional hosts (hotels and traditional hospitality hosts) that join Airbnb after June 4.



Airbnb has typically charged hosts 3%, and guests have been charged a fee between 0% and 20% (which they likely noticed when going to book), depending on

the reservation. Starting in June, hosts in the above regions will have the option to share the fee, or be charged a full 14% fee by default, and decide for themselves how much of that to pass on to the guest.

No word yet on if the structure will roll out to the Americas.

According to Airbnb, the new structure is already positive for those who've tested it out. In an internal memo to hosts, Skift reported, the home-sharing service noted that hosts that adopted the new fee structure saw an increase in bookings.

"Many hosts provided feedback that our guest fee made it difficult for them to maintain full control over the price displayed to guests," Airbnb said. "We created the host-only fee structure to solve for this and give hosts more control."

(Source: travelandleisure.com)

## Ancient Egyptians invented the ubiquitous things we use today

From boats to glass, from door locks to the world's first police force, the ancient Egyptians invented many of the things that we use today. But the Pyramids still remain a mystery.

### Boats

The ancient Egyptians used the Nile River and its canals to transport agricultural products, animals, troops, and stone for building projects. Beginning around 4,000 BC, the earliest boats were made from bundles of bound papyrus reeds.

The earliest sailboats were made of native acacia wood or imported cedar wood from Lebanon. They were built without nails, using a number of short planks tied together with ropes, and they were steered by a large rudder oar at the back of the ship. A single sail in the middle of the boat caught the wind, allowing the boats to go southward against the current.

### Fishing tools

Fishing in ancient Egypt was for sport, food and trade. The Nile contained delicacies such as Nile Perch and Eel, as well as the less desirable catfish, carp, mullets, tilapia, elephant-snout fish, tiger fish, and moonfish.

To catch the fish, the ancient Egyptians used nets, traps or pens, hooks, and harpoons. Both barbed and barbless hooks were used, and they were made from bone.

### Desert glass jewelry

The ancient Egyptians turned a greenish yellowish glass that they found littering the desert floor into beautiful jewelry, including a scarab buried beside Pharaoh Tutankhamun. According to the April 2019 issue of the journal Geology, the mystery of how this glass came to be found in the deserts of eastern Libya and western Egypt has been solved.

### Glass making

By 1,500 BC, Egyptian artisans were making glass items in varied tints, hues, and patterns. They used a core-forming technique, where the hot glass was wound around a core made from a ceramic-like material. They then added handles and a rim, and when the vessel was cool, they removed the core. These small flasks were used to contain perfumed oil.

### Wigs

In ancient Egypt, if you didn't leave the house without your eye makeup, you certainly didn't leave without your wig. It's thought that the ancient Egyptians shaved their heads to avoid infestations of lice.

To cover their heads, both men and women wore wigs, with those of high status wearing wigs made of human hair. Those with less status wore wigs made of dyed sheep's wool. Slaves weren't even allowed to shave their heads.

High-status women adorned their wigs with headbands, flowers, jewelry, and ribbons, while Queen Nefertiti was spot on with today's trend for colored hair, she wore a dark blue wig.

### Mirrors

How to check out your wig and eye makeup without a hand mirror, and many examples of ancient Egyptian hand mirrors have been found. They were often decorated with inscriptions and figures, such as images of the god Bes. Besides hand mirrors, upper-class homes also had wall mirrors.

### The first door lock

In the ruins of a palatial ancient Egyptian complex was found the world's first door lock. It used a pin-tumbler mechanism, which consisted of a wooden post that was affixed to a door, and a horizontal bolt that slid into the post. The bolt had a set of openings which were filled with pins.

A wooden key was shaped with pegs that corresponded to the pins in the lock, and when this key was inserted into the opening and lifted, it moved the pins and allowed the bolt to be withdrawn. Some keys were as long as 2 feet (.6 m) in length. The pin-tumbler lock is still in use today.

### Breath mint

Sand and small stones from grinding wheat were common in the food of ancient Egyptians, and this wore down their tooth enamel, exposing the tooth pulp, and leading to tooth decay. Many ancient Egyptians had rotting teeth, which caused bad breath.

### Shaving

Besides shaving their heads, the ancient Egyptians also shaved their faces. They considered a beard to be the mark of lower



social status. Initially, they used sharp stone blades set in wooden handles, but eventually adopted copper blades. Ancient Egyptian barbers would make house calls to shave wealthy clients, while ordinary citizens were shaved sitting on benches beneath shady sycamore trees.

### The pyramids

The ancient Egyptians built approximately 118 pyramids, with the earliest being built at Saqqara, northwest of Memphis. The Pyramid of Djoser was built around 2,630 – 2,610 BC and was designed by the famed architect Imhotep.

The most famous Egyptian pyramids are those at Giza, on the outskirts of Cairo. They are among the largest structures ever created by man, and the Pyramid of Khufu, is the largest Egyptian pyramid and the only one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World that is still in existence.

While it has long since been carried away to use as a building material, most pyramids were faced with polished, highly reflective white limestone. This would have given them a brilliant appearance when viewed from a distance, and their names even indicate this as the formal name of the Bent Pyramid at Dahshur is "The Southern Shining Pyramid," and the pyramid of Senwosret at el-Lahun is "Shining".

The first list of all the pyramids was com-

piled in 1842 by the Prussian archaeologist Karl Richard Lepsius. On November 11, 2008, a new pyramid, that of Sesheshet, was discovered at Saqqara. Sesheshet was the mother of the Sixth Dynasty pharaoh Teti.

Interestingly, all pyramids except one, the small Third Dynasty pyramid of Zawyet el-Amwat (or Zawyet el-Mayitin), are located on the west bank of the Nile River. To this day, it's not known how the pyramids were constructed although this wall painting found in the tomb of Djehutihotep might give a hint.

It shows a large statue being transported by sledge, with a person standing on the front of the sledge wetting the sand. According to a 2014 study by researchers at the University of Amsterdam, "sliding friction on sand is greatly reduced by the addition of some - but not that much - water." With the right amount of water, "capillary bridges", which are extremely small droplets of water, are formed between sand grains and glue together individual grains of sand.

The ancient Egyptians had to get it just right because with too much water, "the static friction progressively decreases in amplitude ..." According to the researchers, this "stiff sand" would cut by half the amount of force required to move the sledge."

(Source: Interesting Engineering)



# ICT Ministry creates 68,000 job opportunities

**TECHNOLOGY** **TEHRAN** — Iran's Information and Communication Technology Ministry has created 68,000 job opportunities, ICT Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi said.

The ministry provided the ground for job creation over the past year, he added.

"We hope that plans for job creation will be implemented with the cooperation of Majlis (parliament) and government.

The plans for providing the infrastructure will be announced until late [Iranian calendar month of] Khordad, (which ends on June 21), he said.

"We have responsibility toward protecting

property and privacy of people and they are always on top agenda," he explained.

According to statistics released by the IranTalent.com, the leading job site and on-line recruitment service in Iran in February 2019, the number of jobs created for digital marketing businesses and startups grow by 46 percent during 2018 in comparison to its preceding year. The demand for computer experts grew by 14 percent. During 2018, some jobs like developer had a big share of marketing despite the economic crisis Iran is facing.

According to a report released by the E-Commerce Development Center of Iran



in September 2018, 72 percent of e-commerce businesses were run with less than five persons and only six percent of them were companies with more than 30 staff in the previous calendar year.

Some 43 percent of individuals who are active in the field of e-commerce are from 30 to 40 years old, and 36 percent are between 20 and 30 years old. Meanwhile, only nine percent of e-commerce managers are women.

## Strategic development document created for herbal medicine



**TECHNOLOGY** **TEHRAN** — The traditional medicine sciences and technology development headquarters at the science and technology vice presidency has provided a strategic development document for herbal medicine in each province, ISNA reported on Wednesday.

Each province has a special capacity in the field of herbal medicine and the headquarters supports their activities, the headquarters' secretary Mohammad Hassan Assareh said.

Having innovative plans for development of herbal medicine is a necessity and the knowledge-based companies in this field in all regions are great potentials, he added.

Herbal medicine can be used in perfumery, natural flavor, natural colors and cosmetics industries, he explained.

He said that the herbal medicine industry has the potential to generate a large revenue.

The ecological characteristics of region has a great role in the selection of the type

of herbal medicine for investment, he said.

The local types of herbal medicine can pave the way for international marketing, he added.

According to Market Research Future, the global herbal medicine market is expected to reach \$129689.3 million by 2023.

The global herbal medicine market, by source, is segmented into leaves, fruit, roots, and barks whole plant, and others (combinations of various plant parts). On the basis of source, the leaves segment is expected to lead the global herbal medicine market. The leaves segment held a share of \$51,495.2 million in 2017.

The increasing demand for natural medicines, increasing research funding for herbal medicines, and multiple applications of herbal medicines have led to the growth of the global herbal medicine market in recent years. However, side-effects and allergic reactions and poor standardization are likely to restrain market growth over the forecast period.

## 'National Information Network provides advanced cyberspace for Iranians'



**TECHNOLOGY** **TEHRAN** — The National Information Network (NIN) provides an advanced cyberspace, which benefits people and businesses, a cyberspace activist Mehdi Sarami told Mehr on Tuesday.

In many developed countries, such networks are established as a symbol of power and sovereignty of governments in cyberspace, he said.

The NIN, as the main infrastructure in cyberspace, can have great benefits for users and service providers, he said.

Secure, fast and low cost services are the facilities that NIN can provide for the Iranians, he said.

The national internet service should have priority to foreign competitors, which is not fulfilled yet, he lamented.

The NIN provides facilities for the users to use Iranian websites and applications with faster speed in comparison to foreign ones, which may lead to their inclination to use national services, he said.

All services provide by the NIN should be legal and the rights of users, providers are protected, he said.

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 National Information Network is an independent domestic network which enables Iranians to communicate without reliance on international Internet hubs.

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.

The national scheme comprises several projects including but not limited to the expansion of the local fiber optic network, installation of Internet Exchange Points (IXPs) and giving a boost to Content Delivery Networks (CDNs).

## Iranian company exports antibacterial carpets to 25 countries

**TECHNOLOGY** **TEHRAN** -- An Iranian carpet manufacturing company has exported 1.5 million euros of antibacterial carpets containing silver nanoparticles to 25 countries during the past Iranian calendar year 1397, which ended on March 20, 2019, ISNA reported on Wednesday.

Iraq, Oman, China, Japan, Russia, Austria, Germany and South Africa are amongst the destinations of carpets, the company's marketing director Khashayar Mohajer Shojaei said.

The antibacterial carpets are very healthy and are suitable for elderly and children, he said.

High humidity in the Persian Gulf countries increases the chance of growing bacteria in carpets, so the Persian Gulf countries welcome this kind of products, he explained.

According to Nano Products Database website, silver particles are stabilized easily in nano-dimension which leads to formation more stable colloids. The most noticeable advantages of silver nanoparticles are in biomedicine. It could be mentioned that in nano-dimension, antibacterial effect of silver increases significantly, so that they are able to destroy over 650 bacterial species.



The modified electrochemical properties of silver nanoparticles can also offer faster response times and lower detection limits in nano-scale sensors. In the case of odor-resistant carpet, the textile industry recognizes that silver nanoparticles offer distinct properties that combat bacterial growth and reduce body odor.

According to rugspa.com, there are at least 200,000 germs and bacteria in addition to dust mites, and allergens per square inch thriving in your rug. Carpets are germ breeding farms. Norovirus survives on the carpet or rug for many weeks then it gets airborne and then causes stomach flu on humans. Fungi and mold cause allergies and even death. There are at least 200,000 germs and bacteria in addition to dust mites, and allergens per square inch thriving in your rug.

## The tech empowering disabled people in cities

Cities are difficult to navigate at the best of times, but for people with disabilities they can be like an obstacle course and a maze wrapped into one.

A UK national travel survey found that adults with mobility difficulties took 39% fewer trips than those with no disability in 2017. Yet that could change as devices and cities grow smarter.

Assistive tech is playing a big role in the transformation. The global value of the industry is expected to increase from \$14 billion in 2015 to \$30.8 billion in 2024, according to Zion Market Research and Coherent Market Insights.

Jose Di Felice, from Switzerland, was paralyzed in both legs and one arm after a high-speed motorcycle accident three years ago. While adjusting to life in a wheelchair, he realized that stairs were his biggest hurdle. He took to YouTube to look for alternatives and discovered Scewo. The startup has built a wheelchair that can be controlled through a smartphone. It can tackle a range of terrains, and has special rubber tracks for climbing stairs.

Di Felice requested a test drive and soon after he was climbing the steps of the local town hall in a wheelchair. "It was really emotional to go up these stairs, and look down there and say that it's possible," he says.

The wheelchair is expected to be distributed to users by the end of 2019, and Di Felice will be one of the first to receive the product.

"We cannot wait on having all these ramps built," Bernhard Winter, the CEO and founder of Scewo, says of urban mobility. "This is why we developed this product, so it gives you back mobility and freedom."



### ■ A robotic exomuscle suit

Wearable tech is also becoming more sophisticated. Zurich-based start-up MyoSwiss has developed an exomuscle suit with a combination of robotics and textiles.

The robotic garment, weighing less than 5 kilograms (11 pounds), adds a layer of muscle that supports movements and provides stability to people with mobility impairments. It uses sensors at the knee and hip to detect movements the user wants to make and helps accordingly.

"It assists people that need extra force or extra assistance in their daily life," says Jamie Duarte, CEO of MyoSwiss. "[It's] for people that can still walk to some extent but maybe struggle to stand out from a chair or struggle to go upstairs."

This year the MyoSuit enabled two people with mobility limitations to take part in a relay version of the Zurich marathon.

Another technology that could transform lives is a smart walking stick designed by engineers from Young Guru Academy (YGA) in Turkey.

The WeWalk stick has an ultrasonic sensor that detects obstacles above chest level and uses vibrations to warn the user. It can be paired with a smartphone to help navigation, and is integrated with a voice assistant and Google Maps.

According to the World Health Organization, 39 million people worldwide are blind and another quarter of a billion are visually impaired.

"In these days we are talking about flying cars," says Kursat Ceylan, CEO and founder of WeWalk, "but these people have been using just a plain stick."

Ceylan, who has been blind since birth, says that connecting the stick to the Internet of Things and smart city solutions makes it user-friendly.

"As a blind person, when I am at the Metro station I don't know which is my exit ... I don't know which bus is approaching ... [or] which stores are around me. That kind of information can be provided with the WeWalk," he says.

But will these high-tech solutions be accessible?

(Source: CNN)

## We need to build up 'digital trust' in tech

For months, there's been a steady march of controversies over how tech companies collect, manage, process, and share massive (and passive) amounts of data. And even though the executives and founders of these companies profess a renewed commitment to privacy and corporate responsibility, people are beginning to worry about surveillance and power—and reconsider how much faith they should put in both the leaders and services leveraging these quickly evolving technologies. The latest manifestation of these concerns came out of San Francisco, home to the tech economy: the city banned facial recognition technology to "regulate the excesses of technology."

As tech winds its way deeper and deeper into our lives, deeper questions arise: How can you trust someone you'll never see? How can you trust an algorithm that is making thousands of decisions a second of which you aren't even aware? How can you trust a company that tracks your movement every day? The biggest question of all? Given that trust is such a foundational principle for the global economy, and the global economy is digital, what is a meaningful definition of "digital trust"?

To start, trust in digital products and the companies that produce them is already eroding. Edelman's 2019 Trust Barometer shows that more than 60 percent of respondents, globally, believe tech companies have too much power and won't prioritize our welfare over their profits. "If the lifeblood of the digital economy is data, its heart is digital trust," notes a recent PWC report that claims the most consequential companies of the next generation will be the ones that prioritize security, privacy, and data ethics. The ones that don't are facing a costly problem. A recent study by Accenture found that during the next five years, CEOs could reclaim more than \$5 trillion in lost value with new governance approaches for safeguarding the internet. For a global company, that could mean the equivalent of 2.8 percent in revenue growth. Yet a recent report on Digital Trust and Competitiveness from Tufts University found few business leaders are confident they have sufficient "digital trust" controls in place.

So, how do you build "digital trust" and what does it look like? At the World Economic Forum, our new report provides a framework for a more efficient and effective global dialogue on digital trust built on two main components: mechanical trust and relational trust.

Mechanical trust, especially as it relates to cybersecurity, is the heart of digital trust. It is the means and mechanisms that deliver predefined outputs reliably and predictably. An automobile's braking system provides a good metaphor. Step on the brakes. The car stops. No ambiguity, no uncertainty.



Predictable, reliable outputs are expected to be delivered every time. If a system is secure and performs predictably, individuals will be more willing to use it. They'll be able to trust it.

But we need another, equally important, form of trust to support this: relational trust. Even if all the mechanical systems work, if people don't believe that we're all playing by the same rules, trust breaks down. That is why relational trust—the social norms and agreements that address life's complex realities—is vital. While the brakes in a car may be highly reliable, we also need a shared agreement that a red light means to use them. Similarly, we need a shared agreement on when, where, why, and how technologies are used.

To establish these rules, we need people, processes, and tools. For emerging tech, that means creating frameworks that incorporate accountability, auditability, transparency, ethics, and equity. By incorporating these principles in the early stage design of digital products and services, stakeholders can have a more meaningful say in how emerging networked technologies are bound by (and in turn affect) our long-standing normative and social structures. Relational trust also ensures that the promise and value apportionment of new technologies can be more equitably delivered, fostering a virtuous cycle of trust leading to improved outcomes, which leads to greater trust.

Considered this way, trust is an amalgam of many elements; a combination of tools and rules. If global trust is to be strengthened, this is the new lens for understanding digital trust.

We need this new lens because cybersecurity failures, by business and by governments, erode digital trust globally. These breakdowns in mechanical trust leave citizens wondering who they can rely on to protect them. Unless they

take cybersecurity seriously, companies' and governments' credibility—and relational trust in them—will continue to wear away.

Failures of relational trust are both difficult to recognize and difficult to resolve because they stem from a lack of accountability. If no one is accountable for the problem, it's hard to find someone to blame and even harder to find someone to fix it. This breakdown in relational trust fuels the current "techlash."

This brings us back to the San Francisco facial recognition ban. At least part of the reason such technologies are seen as creepy or dangerous is the belief that they will be used to harm rather than help citizens and consumers. The worry is not that such tech isn't secure; the worry is that the owners of these technologies build them in order to exert control. This legitimate concern comes from the fact that these technologies seem unaccountable and their uses are not transparent or responsible. In other words, there's no trust here and no mechanisms for establishing it.

Unless implementors take digital trust seriously, more technologies will be similarly received. This is where so-called "ethics panels"—meant to advise on the ramifications of new technologies, such as AI—are meant to come in. While laudably attempting to include some components of relational trust in decisions about technology use, the process of creating these panels lacks transparency, accountability, and auditability. So, despite being aimed at ethical use and building trust, these panels succumb to the distrusted mechanisms that made them seem necessary in the first place.

Establishing digital trust is a team sport and one that requires significant effort on the part of businesses and governments. It requires prioritization of security and development of systems that ensure transparency and accountability. However, the costs of distrust are significantly greater. New, innovative technologies require data to work and that data will only be available to trusted actors. More importantly, national, global, and international institutions rely on trust to function—without digital trust now, we won't be able to build the institutions we need for the future. We'll retreat to isolation, suspicion, and uncertainty. Our response needs to be global in scale and local in ability to address contextual and cultural differences.

The users and subjects of technologies all have to agree that the goal is a world open to innovation with equal chances at achieving the prosperity that new technologies bring. Building in both mechanical and relational digital trust ensures that we can do that.

(Source: wired.com)



## 150,000 clunker taxis plying roads across Iran

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — The situation of clunker taxis in Iran is worrying, as some 150,000 of them are plying the roads, making a disproportionate impact on the country's air quality. Morteza Zameni, director general of urban taxis union has said.

Renovation process must speed up to soon replace the existing clunker cabs with new ones, otherwise, by the end of this year, the number will reach up to 192,000, he further lamented, adding, the number of old taxis will hit 243,000 by the end of Iranian calendar year 1400 (March 2021- March 2022).



Referring to the renovation scheme of 90,000 clunker taxis, he noted that since past three years, some 62,500 taxis have been renovated, which set the record high in fleet renovation history.

Through the scheme, we signed a contract with Iran Khodro car manufacturing company to receive some 10,000 cabs by the end of this year, while last year the car company did not fulfill its commitment and provided us with only 1,500 taxis, he explained.

Due to the unfavorable economic condition, we announced that taxi owners can to replace their old taxis with newer (second-hand) models instead, IRNA news agency quoted him as saying on Monday.

In past few years, we granted loans to the cab owners to purchase new ones, however, due to high prices of cars, they cannot afford it anymore.

He further concluded that we are trying to increase the loans to encourage owners to renovate their vehicles.

Mohammad Tarahhomi, an official with traffic police in January said that there are 1.5 million clunker vehicles and 9 million clunker motorcycles in Iran.

Deputy interior minister for urban and rural development, Mehdi Jamalinejad, said that some 22,000 busses are operating in the country's public transport fleet, 16,000 of which are clunkers, accounting for 70 percent of the volume of bus transport system.

Ali Mohammadi, an official with traffic police, said in early January that the scrappage of clunker vehicles has decreased by 65 percent in the current Iranian calendar year (starting on March 21, 2018) compared to a year earlier.

While last year some 140,000 vehicles were scrapped this year only 50,000 old vehicles were discarded, he added.

Clunker cars, produce great deal of emission and cause air pollution especially in metropolises like Tehran. Tehraners have experienced a 17 days of excellent air quality since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2018).

## WORDS IN THE NEWS

### Controversial new theory on how speech began

(March 30, 2000)  
University Professor Tim Crow, in Oxford, England, proposed a controversial new theory on how we first began to speak. The BBC's Toby Murcott reported.

We know that modern human beings appeared in Africa around a hundred thousand years ago and most **anthropologists** agree that we had language by thirty thousand years ago. Now Professor Tim Crow is suggesting that a single **genetic mutation** sometime within that period changed the **wiring** of our brains and allowed us to develop language. He proposes that the change increased the division between the two halves of our brain, freeing one side to develop speech. He's also suggesting that the change happened to one man and the advantage his new found ability gave him allowed his **offspring to dominate**.

The leading **paleontologist Professor Chris Stringer is cautious about** crediting the development of language to a single event. He believes that language could have formed gradually over a long period of time. The idea is likely to **spark a great deal of** debate, not least because while fossils provide **hard evidence** of physical characteristics, language leaves no such **traces** in the ground.

■ **Words**  
**anthropologist:** someone who studies people, society and culture  
**genetic mutation:** a change to a gene (a gene is one of the parts of a human cell which control how a living thing develops)  
**wiring:** the internal structure of the brain is sometimes referred to as wiring  
**offspring:** your offspring are your children; a formal word  
**dominate:** be the most powerful  
**paleontologist:** a person who studies the fossils of extinct animals and plants  
**crediting:** if you are credited with an achievement or something is credited to you then people believe you are responsible for it. Here, the use of the word cautious implies that the new theory may not be correct.  
**spark:** if one thing sparks another it causes it to start happening  
**great deal of:** a lot of  
**fossils:** the hardened remains of a prehistoric animal or plant, or a print that it leaves in rock  
**hard evidence:** physical things that imply something is true  
**traces:** a trace is a sign which shows that someone or something has been in a place

(Source: BBC)



Without water,  
everything  
withers

# Campaign calls on Leader to ban production, importation of GMOs

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — A public **d e s k** spearheaded campaign dubbed “no to genetically modified organisms” has called on the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei to legally ban production and importation of any kinds of GMOs in or to the country, Tasnim news agency reported on Tuesday.

In a letter sent to the Leader, the campaign has underlined the threats associating with consumption of GMOs.

The letter highlights that importation of GM crops as a source of animal feed without conducting any tests to ensure their safety and the refusal for labeling the genetically modified products are of the issues concerning the public.

It also criticizes ministries of health and agriculture for issuing permits for the importation of the products and not prioritizing the cultivation of organic products.

“While some cancers, strokes and heart conditions could be caused by the use of such products no laboratory to tests the effects of the GMOs are set up in the country,” the letter reads.

Finally the campaign asks for placing total ban on importation as well as cultivation of GM crops in the country and prosecuting violators for importing the products to the country. It also urges the ministries on health,



**The campaign asks for placing total ban on importation as well as cultivation of GM crops in the country and prosecuting violators for importing the products to the country.**

agricultures and industry, mine and trade to support cultivation of organic products.

For the past two decades some are commonly expressing concerns about unwanted

## Health Ministry denies shortage of wound dressings for EB patients

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — While reports published **d e s k** on Monday claimed that U.S. sanctions hindering wound dressing import, threatened the lives of Iranian Epidermolysis Bullosa (EB) patients, an official with Health Ministry announced that there are a sufficient amount of wound dressings in the country for the current year ending on March 19, 2020.

We used to purchase wound dressing with trade name of mepilex from Mölnlycke, a Swedish pharmaceutical company, advisor to deputy health minister, Jamshid Kermanchi, said.

Since past few years, the Ministry has purchased the dressing and provided to the patients free of charge, he said, adding, “last year we managed to buy more of the products, therefore, there are no shortages.”

He went on to say that the patients will not face any difficulties receiving skin care products at least till the next year.

“However, last year, we faced with some challenges for



importing the wound care products to the country which was then resolved by the Ministry's efforts,” he concluded.

EB is a group of rare diseases that cause fragile, blistering

skin. The blisters may appear in response to minor injury, even from heat, rubbing, scratching or adhesive tape. In severe cases, the blisters may occur inside the body, such as the lining of the mouth or the stomach.

There's currently no cure for EB, but treatment can help ease and control symptoms. With so many wounds at different stages of healing, the management of EB is complex. Protecting the peri-wound skin, avoiding skin stripping, addressing the bio-burden and exudate management are all key factors to consider.

In patients with EB the skin is so fragile and dressing changes so frequent that atraumatic dressings are recommended to prevent further damage, pain or bleeding. Silicone-based dressings are easier to apply and remove than traditional dressings. They also protect the wound and peri-wound skin and create a favorable environment for wound healing.

## WHA lauds Iran's plan to lower hypertension

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — World **d e s k** Health Assembly (WHA) members have lauded Iran for its national plan to lower high blood pressure among people across the country, deputy health minister Alireza Raeisi has said.

The 72nd WHA meeting was held on May 20 to 28 in Geneva, Switzerland.

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

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

In mid-May Afshin Ostovar, the Health Ministry's director for non-communicable diseases, said that about 100,000 Iranians die of high blood pressure annually.

Some 97,000 Iranians died of diseases



caused by hypertension in 2017, according to Dr. Ramin Heshmat, who is an associate professor of epidemiology in Tehran University of Medical Sciences.

World Health Organization officials also praised Iran's efforts to reduce the burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and appreciated the intervention in lowering high blood pressure, ISNA reported on Wednesday.

Annually held in Geneva, the World Health Assembly is the decision-making body of WHO. The main functions of the WHA are to determine the policies of the Organization, appoint the Director-General, supervise financial policies, review and approve the proposed program budget.

## Rare Asiatic cheetah sighted in north-central Iran

**ENVIRONMENT** **TEHRAN** — An Asiatic cheetah has been caught on cameras near a watering trough at Khar Turan National Park of Shahroud county located in north-central province of Semnan, YJC reported on Wednesday.

The report claimed that the cheetah's stomach is strangely big which might be a sign of pregnancy.

In less than two months, cameras installed to determine the exact distribution of the species have captured photos of two Asiatic cheetahs in Shahroud county.

Listed as critically endangered by the IUCN, the Asiatic cheetah is among the rarest cats in the world at subspecies level, with fewer than 50 believed to remain in Iran.

The cheetah thrives in open lands, small plains, semi-desert areas, and other open habitats where prey is available. The Asiatic cheetah mainly inhabits the desert areas around Dasht-e Kavir in the eastern half of Iran, including parts of the Kerman, Khorasan, Semnan, Yazd, Tehran, and Markazi provinces. Most live in five protected areas, Kavir National Park, Touran



National Park, Bafq Protected Area, Dar-e Anjir Wildlife Refuge, and Naybandan Wildlife Reserve.

Roads fragmenting cheetahs' habitats are the main threats for the species, while guard dogs and stray dogs, drought spells, decreasing population of the prey species to support the cheetahs, and habitat loss are also other factors endangering the sparse population of the cheetahs in the country.

Abbasabad-Mayami road, linking north-central Semnan to Mashhad, north-eastern province of Khorasan Razavi, is one of the deadliest roads for Asiatic cheetahs as 8 cheetahs have been killed in this area over the past 10 years.

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

## ‘Playing to learn’ scheme piloted in elementary schools

A plan dubbed “playing to learn” aiming at using educational games toward deeper learning was implemented for first time in elementary schools across the capital, with the Education Minister in attendance, Fars reported on Saturday.

Through the first phase of the scheme, 1,000 schools from 10 provinces nationwide will implement the playing to learn scheme, including Tehran, Khorasan Razavi, Fars, Hamedan, Mazandaran, Kordestan, Kerman, West Azarbaijan, Qazvin, and Sistan-Baluchestan.

According to the report, schools regarding their proper environment and conditions volunteered and chose to hold game-based classes and assess the results, currently in each province 50 girls’ schools and 50 boys’ schools among state-run and private schools have piloted the scheme; 20 percent of which are private schools.

## PREFIX/SUFFIX

### “hepato-, hepat-”

■ **Meaning:** liver

■ **For example:** There is no specific treatment for this disease and complete recovery from any form of **hepatitis** may take four months or longer.

## PHRASAL VERB

### Hang over something/somebody

■ **Meaning:** if something bad is hanging over you, you are worried or anxious about it

■ **For example:** It's not very nice to have huge debts hanging over your head.

## IDIOM

### Have a brush with something

■ **Explanation:** when you have a brush with something, such as the law, you encounter or experience it briefly

■ **For example:** He had a brush with the law for speeding a few years ago, but he has had a clean record ever since.



# Terrorists in Idlib using civilians as human shields: Bashar al-Ja'afari

**TEHRAN** — Syria's UN Ambassador Bashar al-Ja'afari says foreign-backed Takfiri militants based in the northwestern Idlib Province are using civilians as "human shields," stressing the government's commitment to protecting its people from the scourge of terrorism.

Speaking Tuesday at a UN Security Council session on the situation in Syria, Ja'afari said that the al-Nusra Front terrorist group, which occupies most of Idlib, continues its acts of aggression against the region's adjacent areas and the Syrian army positions.

He also emphasized that Syria reserves the right to safeguard its citizens from terror. "Syria will liberate all its territory from terrorism and from any illegitimate foreign presence in the country," Ja'afari said. "Syria will spare no effort to rescue its citizens from the dominance of terrorist organizations in Idlib, which take people as human shields and to put an end to the attacks of those terrorists on civilians in the neighboring towns and cities."

Ja'afari also complained that some Security Council member states have, since the beginning of the Syria crisis, been trying to exploit the humanitarian issue in order to defame the Syrian government and tarnish its image.



ity Council member states have, since the beginning of the Syria crisis, been trying to exploit the humanitarian issue in order to defame the Syrian government and tarnish its image.

In recent weeks, Syrian armed forces, backed by Russia's air cover, have been conducting counter-terrorism operations in areas surrounding Idlib, the last significant militant stronghold in Syria.

Last week, the Syrian army warned civilians to leave Idlib amid preparations for a final military campaign to flush terrorists out of the region.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Ja'afari slammed American occupation forces and their affiliated terrorists for seizing thousands of civilians at al-Hawl and Rukban refugee camps.

He further urged the Security Council to intervene in the U.S. obstruction of the Russian-Syrian efforts meant to end the sufferings of the camp residents and prevent Turkey from changing the demographic nature of the regions it occupies, Press TV reported.

"The presence of any foreign military force on the Syrian territory, without the Syrian government acceptance, is an aggression and occupation," Ja'afari said.

Senior officials in the U.S., Britain and France seem to be prompting the terrorist groups to use chemical weapons against civilians in order to put the blame on the Syrian government, he added.

## U.S. puts nine countries on watch list over currency practices

**TEHRAN** — The administration of U.S. President Donald Trump has refrained from calling China a currency manipulator, but put the Asian country along with eight other nations on its watch list.

"Treasury takes seriously any potentially unfair currency practices, and Treasury is expanding the number of U.S. trading partners it reviews to make currency practices fairer and more transparent," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said on Tuesday.

China, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, and Vietnam need close attention due to currency practices, the department said in its semi-annual report to Congress.

The report, which was due in mid-April, was delayed partly because of the changes to the criteria used to evaluate countries, according to a senior Treasury official.

A 1988 law stipulates that the Treasury Department report to Congress every six months on whether any countries are manipulating their currencies to get trade advantages over the U.S.

Designation as a currency manipulator does not come with any immediate penalties, but can rattle financial markets.

According to Press TV, the new report also said that two nations — India and Switzerland — which had been on the watch list issued in October, were removed.

"The Treasury Department is working vigorously to achieve stronger growth and to ensure that trade expands in a way that helps U.S. workers," Mnuchin said.

The administration decided not to label any country as a currency manipulator with the aim of gaining unfair trade advantages over the United States.

The decision to keep China off the list might avoid further escalation in the current trade war between Washington and Beijing.

## Eyeing new independence vote, Scotland sets out referendum rules

**TEHRAN** — Scotland's pro-independence government has set out new rules on referendums in the hope of holding another secession vote in the second half of 2020 if Britain's parliament gives the go-ahead.

A bill presented to the devolved Scottish parliament on Wednesday aims to give clear ground rules that are legally watertight for any referendum vote, Reuters Reported.

Nicola Sturgeon's government aims to give visibility and purpose to widespread discontent in Scotland over Britain's exit from the European Union.

That puts extra pressure on a UK government and parliament riven by political acrimony and unable to decide the shape of Brexit.

"Just published a bill to set the rules for an independence referendum - to allow the Scottish people to choose our own future rather than having a Brexit future imposed on us," Sturgeon tweeted.

The bill also prepares the ground for a secession vote which the British government says it will not allow.

Sturgeon argues that stance cannot be maintained.

"It is essential the UK government recognises that it would be a democratic outrage if it seeks to block such a referendum — indeed, any such stance would, in my view, prove to be utterly unsustainable," she said in a statement.

The bill does not set a date for a new independence vote but, speaking to the BBC in Dublin on Tuesday, Sturgeon said the latter half of next year would be the "right time."

In 2014, Scots rejected leaving their 300-year-old union with England and Wales by 55 to 45%.

Polls say support for independence has grown since, but that a majority still backs the current UK political structure.

## Boris Johnson to face court over Brexit 'lies'

**TEHRAN** — Boris Johnson, the frontrunner in the race to become Britain's next prime minister, will be summoned to court over allegations he lied to the public during the Brexit referendum campaign.

The former foreign secretary is facing a private prosecution, following a crowd funding campaign led by 26-year-old Marcus Ball.

"The (proposed) defendant repeatedly lied and misled the British public as to the cost of EU membership, expressly stating, endorsing or inferring that the cost of EU membership was £350 million (\$442 million) per week," the application against Johnson said.

The number was a central and controversial part of the pro-Leave campaign's narrative, famously emblazoned across the side of a campaign bus. Opponents argued that it was deliberately misleading and it became symbolic of the divisions caused by the Brexit referendum.

Johnson will be required to attend Westminster Magistrates' Court for a preliminary hearing, and then the Crown Court for trial.

"Having considered all the relevant factors I am satisfied that this is a proper case to issue the summons as requested for the three offences as drafted," District Judge Margot Coleman said in a written ruling on Wednesday morning.

The judge said the allegations against Johnson were "unproven", but added that issuing a summons was proper.

according to Al Jazeera, in 2017, the UK Statistics Authority criticized Johnson for doubling down on the figure in a newspaper column. In a formal letter to Johnson, then foreign secretary, Sir David Norgrove, chair of the authority, said it was "a clear misuse of official statistics".

Ball, who has led the legal campaign against Johnson, spent more than two years preparing the case, and raised more than \$500,000 to fund the action, Huffington Post reported.

His legal team is hoping to make it a criminal offence for politicians to lie to the public about spending figures,



but also maintains that Johnson is innocent until proven guilty, and appealed to the public "to respect the formality of the court process".

## Erdogan aide warns Saudi king against executing Muslim scholars

**TEHRAN** — An advisor to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has written to Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, warning that the planned execution of Muslim scholars would bring nothing but "disaster" to the monarch.

In an open letter to King Salman published by Turkish daily Yeni Zafak on Monday, Yasin Aktay raised concerns about plans by the Riyadh regime to execute three imprisoned dissidents, Sheikh Salman al-Ouda, Sheikh Awad al-Qarni and Ali al-Omari, after the holy Muslim fasting month of Ramadan.

The Saudi king, he said, would achieve nothing by executing the scholars.

"That which will bring disaster to you is

executing Islamic scholars, which was recently announced. Scholars are the inheritors of prophets, and each scholar is a world on their own. The death of a scholar is like the death of the world. The killing of a scholar is like the killing of the world," Aktay added.

He also noted that scholars are treasures of the Muslim community and their case is not a domestic issue.

"The matter of Islamic scholars is not an internal affair. The scholars in question are assets who are acknowledged and revered by the whole Muslim community. They are not your subjects; they are our common treasures, whose advice we heed, and who are beacons of light with their knowledge and stance. The sin of detaining them even an

hour in the dungeon, let alone executing them, is enough to destroy an entire life," Aktay said.

According to Press TV, Erdogan's aide further said that he had met with Ouda and believed that "he does not bear a grain of the extravagance" the Saudi regime had attributed to him.

"The claim of extremism toward Salman al-Ouda is a great slander. On the contrary, he is an extremely sympathetic and logical Islamic scholar who has made Islam appealing to youth and modern-day people with his familiar discourse," he explained.

Contrary to Ouda, he added, official Saudi scholars — who advocate the radical Wahabi ideology — encourage people to wage

attacks in Afghanistan, ban women from driving and sow discord among Muslims and non-Muslims.

"While your official scholars claimed women were prohibited from driving, he (Ouda) said Muslim women rode camels and horses back in the time of our prophet, and that he did not understand why this was any different from driving a car. It was your official scholars that indoctrinated animosity when they said Muslims can never be friends with non-Muslims, while he said that being kind to and getting along well with non-Muslims who do not have animosity towards you, and co-existing in peace with them is the command of God," Aktay said.

## Bannon describes Trump Organization as 'criminal enterprise'

**TEHRAN** — U.S. President Donald Trump's former senior adviser Steve Bannon has described the Trump Organization as a criminal entity and predicted that investigations into the president's finances will lead to his political demise, according to transcripts of a new book.

The shocking comments are contained in the upcoming book *Siege: Trump Under Fire*, written by Michael Wolff, the Guardian newspaper reported on Wednesday, saying it obtained a copy of the book. The book, which will be published on June 4, describes the second year of the Trump administration and is a sequel to *Fire and Fury: Trump in the White House*, which was a bestseller in 2018.

Wolff writes: "Trump was vulnerable because for 40 years he had run what increasingly seemed to resemble a semi-criminal enterprise." He then quotes Bannon as



saying: "I think we can drop the 'semi' part."

Bannon, a leading promoter of far-right populism, served as White House Chief Strategist during the first seven months

of Trump's term before he was removed in August 2017. He was a major source for *Fire and Fury*.

According to Press TV, Among other claims in that book, Bannon described as "treasonous" a famous meeting at Trump Tower in New York City between Donald Trump Jr, Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, his campaign manager Paul Manafort and a Russian lawyer.

Wolff also quotes Bannon as saying that investigations into Trump's finances will offer evidence of the underlying criminality of Trump's company and cause even his most ardent supporters to abandon him.

"This is where it isn't a witch hunt — even for the hard core, this is where he turns into just a crooked business guy, and one worth \$50 million instead of \$10 billion." "Not the billionaire he said he was, just another scumbag."

## France, Germany spar over EU leadership

➔ "The key for me is for the people at the most sensitive positions to share our project and be the most charismatic, creative and competent possible," Macron said, adding that he wants two men and two women to fill the top four EU positions.

"I want to unite. If everyone remains stuck on names as they are, we'll be blocked."

He also said that the bloc needed "renewal" after traditional parties suffered badly in the weekend's EU elections.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, however, spoke of her continued support for Weber, a member of the Bavarian sister party of her Christian Democrats (CDU), who has led the center-right bloc, the European People's Party (EPP), in the European Parliament since 2014.

"We stand by our lead candidate, the EPP candidate, that is Manfred Weber," she told reporters.

"We have responsibility towards our voters, and we will have to wait and see. It's too early to speak about this, everyone needs to show tolerance and a willingness to engage in compromise."

## Myanmar military committing war crimes in Rakhine: Amnesty

**TEHRAN**— The same units of the Myanmar military that in 2017 were implicated in a brutal crackdown that drove hundreds of thousands of mainly Muslim Rohingya from the country are again committing war crimes as they step up their campaign against ethnic Rakhine rebels, Amnesty International has said.

The conflict in western Myanmar's Rakhine state escalated in January after 13 police officers were killed in a co-ordinated attack by the Arakan Army, prompting the civilian government of Aung San Suu Kyi to order the armed forces to "crush" the group, which recruits from the largely-Buddhist ethnic Rakhine community.

In a new report on Wednesday, Amnesty said its investigations showed war crimes and human rights violations were being committed by soldiers from the Rakhine-based Western Command, which was also implicated in atrocities against the Rohingya in August 2017.

According to Al Jazeera, victims also identified soldiers from the Myanmar Army's 22nd and 55th Light Infantry Divisions, units that usually operate in other parts of the country.

## U.S. may stop training Turkish pilots to fly F-35 jets over S-400 deal

**TEHRAN**— The United States is reportedly considering halting the training of Turkish pilots to fly American F-35 warplanes as Ankara keeps resisting Washington's pressure to ditch a deal to buy Russian S-400 air defense systems.

The training is part of the U.S. "F-35 program," which has also made Turkey a partner to the aircraft's manufacturing process.

Two sources, who are familiar with Turkey's role in the program and who asked not to be named, made the remarks to Reuters on Tuesday. The Pentagon has yet to take a final decision on the issue, they added.

According to Press TV, The U.S. has threatened Turkey that it would end the program if it refuses to halt its 2017-finalized deal with Moscow for Russia's advanced S-400 missile systems.

On April 1, Washington directly announced that it would be suspending all "deliveries and activities" related to Turkey's procurement of F-35 stealth fighter jets over Ankara's plans to purchase the S-400s.

The U.S. claims that the Russian equipment is not "compatible" with the hardware and network lying under the control of the Western military alliance of NATO, which is dominated by Washington and has Turkey as a member.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, however, says the purchase of S-400 missiles is "a done deal."

## Britain urged to recognize independent Palestinian

**TEHRAN**— Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh has called on Britain to implement its parliament's recognition of the Palestinian state on the ground.

British move "will be so important in light of Israel's intention to annex parts of the West Bank," Shtayyeh said in a statement on Tuesday after meeting with a British parliamentary delegation in the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah.

He also urged Britain to send a technical team to Palestine to investigate the Israeli deduction of Palestinian tax revenue dues.

Back in October 2014, the British Parliament overwhelmingly voted in favor of the government recognizing Palestine as a state.

The ayes had it when 274 MPs voted to adopt the non-binding motion and only 12 voted against it.

The original motion stipulated that "this House believes that the government should recognize the state of Palestine alongside ... Israel."

Then Labour Party legislator Grahame Morris said recognizing a Palestinian state could help break the impasse in peace negotiations between the Palestinians and the Tel Aviv regime before it was too late.

Conservative lawmaker Nicholas Soames also said that "to recognize Palestine is both morally right and is in our national interest."

According to Press TV, Britain does not designate Palestine as a state, but asserts it could do so at any time if it believed it would help the long-stalled talks peace process between the Palestinians and Israel.

The last round of Israeli-Palestinian talks collapsed in 2014. Among the major sticking points in those negotiations was Israel's continued settlement expansion on Palestinian territories.

Palestinians want the West Bank as part of a future independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem al-Quds as its capital.



## Muguruza canters into French Open third round

Former champion Garbine Muguruza cantered into the third round of the French Open with a routine 6-4 6-1 victory against Swede Johanna Larsson on Wednesday.

The Spaniard, seeded 19th, was kept on her toes in the opening set before motoring on in the second on Court Suzanne Lenglen.

Muguruza, who lifted the Suzanne Lenglen Cup in 2016, relied on her booming forehand throughout and wrapped it up when Larsson netted a service return. "I'm very happy, it's another win in a Grand Slam. It's a special tournament for me," the 25-year-old, who also won Wimbledon in 2017, told a courtside interviewer.

She will face Elina Svitolina after the ninth seed advanced without hitting a ball on Wednesday when her opponent, fellow Ukrainian Kateryna Kozlova, withdrew from the tournament due to intercostal pain.

(Source: Reuters)

## Liverpool's Salah seeks Champions League final redemption

Mohamed Salah is keen to make a decisive contribution in Saturday's Champions League final against Tottenham Hotspur and help lay to rest the demons of Liverpool's nightmare defeat by Real Madrid a year ago.

Salah injured his shoulder in a coming together with Real defender Sergio Ramos during last year's final in Kiev and was forced to leave the field with half an hour played.

Liverpool went on to lose 3-1 and their Egyptian forward is fired up by the thought of scoring the winner this time around and helping his team claim their sixth European Cup.

"I hope I can play the full game this time. I'm very excited," Salah told reporters on Tuesday. "I hope we can right what happened last season, get a good result and win the competition.

"(Scoring the winner is) not just dream. I hope it becomes a reality and I score in the final."

Salah also said Liverpool had learnt their lessons from last year's disappointment and that the team was better off for the experience. "This is our second final in a row," he added. "We lost the first but everything feels better this time around and we have more experience than last time.

"I hope we can win it. It will be tough. This is a final and no opponent would have been easy... It is harder because (Tottenham) is an English side."

(Source: Mirror)

## Players hear of match-fixing risks ahead of Women's World Cup

Norway's preparations for the Women's World Cup in France took a turn last week when the players were given a presentation about what to do if they are approached to fix a match.

The session took place at their pre-tournament training camp in Oslo at the behest of world governing body FIFA, who are insisting all 24 nations taking part in the World Cup inform their players of the risks involved.

Though it is considered highly unlikely that their players would be approached to fix a game at such a high-profile event, the players still need to be aware, the Norwegian FA's legal advisor Emil Waters told Reuters. "My experience is that the players and team leaders have a great understanding for the necessity of knowing about the problems related to match-fixing and other questions related to gambling," Waters said.

"The information to the players was explained simply and based on the three headlines that FIFA have brought up. They are recognize and be alert to any approach, resist by saying no to match manipulation, and do your duty by reporting any approach."

There have been several high-profile match-fixing trials in Nordic soccer leagues in recent years, with poorly-paid players in the lower divisions offered bribes by fixers.

Players in the women's game earn a fraction of the wages of their male counterparts, leading to fears that they could be targeted.

"It's important to be crystal-clear about the responsibilities one has, and the most important one is to report it if you are contacted by anyone seeking to affect a game," Waters said.

The Women's World Cup begins on June 7 when hosts France meet South Korea in Paris, with Group A rivals Norway taking on Nigeria the following day.

(Source: Guardian)

## Lopetegui: I didn't abandon the national team

Being sacked by Spain just days before the World Cup is not something that Julen Lopetegui will forget anytime soon and he feels the decision to dismiss him was unjust.

It became known that the coach would take the Real Madrid job after the international tournament had concluded, which didn't sit well with the RFEF.

"Those 24 hours were hard to forget," Lopetegui confessed to Movistar Plus' Universe Valdano show.

"It was surreal. Unfair to both me and my team. It seems like I abandoned them, but I didn't.

"It was my only responsibility, my dream. They threw us out, we didn't leave. I can remember the five-hour return from Moscow without speaking to my coaching staff - we couldn't believe it.

"I wouldn't have been willing to pay that price."

The downhill spiral continued for the coach though, even after succeeding Zinedine Zidane at Real Madrid.

"The team had just won the Champions League, but even with Cristiano [Ronaldo] they had been a long way behind Barcelona and Atletico Madrid in LaLiga Santander," he said.

"The diagnosis was that we had to improve collectively.

"We had three weeks of bad luck, but over 12 months those things would have become balanced."

Lopetegui was soon relieved of his duties at the Estadio Santiago Bernabeu but despite results not going to plan, he was never unhappy with the effort shown by his players.

(Source: Marca)

# Warriors seek more NBA history as Raptors hunt first title



"It hasn't been done for a reason. It's really difficult," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said.

"I can't say enough about the competitive drive of these players and the culture they have built. This group has a fiber about them. When guys go down, they find a way to play harder and win. The experience of having won titles helps you come through."

The Warriors have proven that during

While the Golden State Warriors try to cement their legacy as the NBA's greatest dynasty in half a century, the upstart Toronto Raptors made history just reaching the NBA Finals.

Thursday's opener in the best-of-seven championship showdown will be the first NBA Finals game played outside the United States, the Canadian contest coming in the same city where the first league game was played in 1946.

Three-point sharpshooter Stephen Curry attempts to lead the injury-hit Warriors to their third consecutive NBA title, a feat last achieved by the Los Angeles Lakers in 2002, and Golden State could become the first team to win four crowns in five seasons since the 1969 Boston Celtics.

"Four more wins defines your season and brings you a championship," Curry said. "We have to stay locked in."

Blocking their path is a Raptors team powered by Kawhi Leonard, obtained in a trade with San Antonio last July. He has sparked a squad that was ousted by Cleveland in the playoffs each of the past three years, creating a breakthrough campaign.

"They are the champions. We've got to go in with mental focus and accept the challenge," Leonard said. "We're in the finals and we're not done yet."

Golden State's five consecutive NBA Finals appearances is the second-best run in history trailing only Boston's epic run from 1957-66.

## Davis Cup exile and food allergy: Laaksonen eyes Djokovic shock



Once banished from the Davis Cup and seeing his career plunged into crisis by a mysterious food allergy, Henri Laaksonen finally gets his moment in the Grand Slam spotlight on Thursday when he faces Novak Djokovic at Roland Garros.

Think Swiss men's tennis and the thought process is dominated by 20-time Grand Slam title winner Roger Federer and Stan Wawrinka, who has three majors to his name.

Not many think of 27-year-old Laaksonen, the Finnish-born world number 104 who got into the French Open main draw as a lucky loser when America's Sam Querrey pulled out.

He made the most of his unexpected stroke of fortune by registering his first win in the tournament by seeing off Spain's Pedro Martinez.

Next up, a battle with world number one Djokovic on Thursday for a place in the third round.

However, fortune and favour have not always smiled on Laaksonen.

Back in 2013, he was dropped from the Swiss Davis Cup team for "bad behaviour".

"His behaviour in training was unacceptable, he showed a total lack of respect," said team captain Severin Luthi.

Laaksonen was eventually fined before being welcomed back into the fold although he was to play no part in Switzerland's 2014 final triumph over France.

Last year, he was laid low when he developed a sudden and painful allergy to seafood, despite having consumed it virtually every day for most of his life.

He started developing pain in his ligaments and joints after eating seafood and was often confined to bed.

He won just one match in a six-month period last year before deciding to see if his favourite food was at the root of his problems.

"I ate it (fish) and directly the next day I got a fever again (38 degrees), and all the tendons, ligaments... I had pain," Laaksonen told ATPTour.com this week.

However, when he swore off fish, he could practice and play.

In January, a rejuvenated Laaksonen won his first ever match at a major when he came through qualifying to reach the second round at the Australian Open.

On Thursday, he will meet one of the 'Big Three' for the first time when he tackles 15-time major winner Djokovic who is bidding to hold all four Slams at the same time for a second time.

"I don't know too much about him, to be honest," said Djokovic, the 2016 champion.

"I never played against him, and I did watch him play maybe once or twice. I'm going to have to do my homework and see what happens."

(Source: Eurosport)

## Milan great Maldini lined up for new role after Leonardo, Gattuso exit



AC Milan legend Paolo Maldini could be set for a new role in the club after chief executive Ivan Gazidis said Wednesday he wanted to convince the former Italy defender to become technical director.

Brazilian Leonardo stepped down as sporting director on Tuesday, along with head coach Gennaro Gattuso, amid reports of financial cutbacks at the seven-time European champions.

The former European heavyweights finished one point behind Inter Milan in Serie A in the battle for the fourth and final qualifying spot.

Gazidis said in an interview with Gazzetta Dello Sport, that with the help of Maldini, they could "bring Milan back to the top".

Maldini retired in 2009 after a glittering 24-year career during which he won seven Serie A titles and five Champions League crowns. The defender was also Milan's record appearance holder with 902 matches.

The 50-year-old returned to the club last August as their sporting strategy and development director.

"I want Maldini as the technical director. I admire him very much," former Arsenal chief executive Gazidis told Gazzetta.

"I would really like Paolo to stay with us and help me in this great challenge with an increasingly central and important role. He is ideal for managing the technical area.

"Paolo asked for time to reflect and understand if he has the right energy to start

rived in 2016 -- scrappy defensive work and pinpoint 3-point shooting courtesy of Curry and Klay Thompson plus expanded roles for Draymond Green and Andre Iguodala as well as other reserves.

"We set that culture from the beginning and it manifested itself during the season," Curry said. "You've got to have guys step up. Everybody with a jersey on is going to help out."

Green says Golden State's well prepared reserve role players are a major reason the Warriors went 5-0 in the playoffs without Durant.

"We have a bunch of guys committed to winning," he said. "No matter what bump in the road we hit, we know what the goal is. When you have that kind of commitment, great things happen."

Kerr calls Green "a wrecking ball out there, destroying everything in his path" and has praised the efforts of 23-year-old backup center Keon Looney as a "foundational piece" and "cornerstone" for the Warriors in the playoffs since Durant absent.

Looney has averaged 7.5 points and 4.9 rebounds and provided solid minutes inside, where he will test Spanish stars Marc Gasol and Serge Ibaka for Toronto in the finals.

"We're going to rely on him in the finals," Kerr said. "He's a hell of a player."

(Source: AFP)

## 'Never so nervous' Osaka, Halep survive Roland Garros horror shows

World number one Naomi Osaka was just two points from a sensational Roland Garros exit on Tuesday before securing her place in the second round where she was joined by defending champion Simona Halep who also needed three sets to survive.

Top seed Osaka, bidding to add the French Open to her US and Australian Open titles, defeated Slovakia's Anna Karolina Schmiedlova 0-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-1.

However, she came within a whisker of becoming only the second top seed to lose in the first round in Paris in the modern era after Angelique Kerber in 2017.

"I think this is the most nervous I have ever been my entire life during a match," said Osaka.

She was also totting up the reasons why she was so under-powered. "First time playing a Grand Slam as No. 1. I have won the last two, so I kind of want to win this one really bad.

"Also I have never played on the Chatrier court before. This was my first time. And, yeah, I kind of feel like I'm having the thought of wanting to prove myself again, so..."

World number 90 Schmiedlova, who hadn't won a match at the tournament since 2014, twice served for victory in



the 10th and 12th games of the second set.

At one stage, she was just two points away from a famous victory. "It hurts that I lost so many chances," said Schmiedlova. "She's the number one, it was not easy in my head."

Osaka, who had arrived in Paris still feeling the effects

of a hand injury suffered in Rome, raced through the final set and will face former world number one and two-time major winner Victoria Azarenka.

Osaka ended the match with 10 aces, 36 winners and 38 unforced errors -- just four of those coming in the decider. Azarenka, a semi-finalist in 2013, reached the second round for the first time since 2015 with a 6-4, 7-6 (7/4) win over 2017 champion Jelena Ostapenko.

Third seed Halep overcame a second-set blip against Australian Ajla Tomljanovic to win 6-2, 3-6, 6-1.

Halep, who won her maiden Grand Slam title in Paris last year after three previous final defeats, will next face Poland's Magda Linette.

"There were nice emotions to be back on this court," German fifth seed Alexander Zverev, a quarter-finalist in 2018, battled past Australia's John Millman 7-6 (7/4), 6-3, 2-6, 6-7 (5/7), 6-3 in a shade over four hours.

The champion in Geneva last weekend fired 57 winners past world number 56 Millman who stunned Roger Federer at the US Open last year.

(Source: ESPN)



# Everyone has a chance to play in Team Melli: Marc Wilmots

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Newly-appointed coach Marc Wilmots says everyone has a chance of playing in Iran national football team.

The Belgian coach penned a 3.5-year deal with Iran on Wednesday. The former Belgian striker has reportedly signed a \$1.2 million (1 million euros) a year deal with Iran. The contract runs until the end of the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

Wilmots took over from Portuguese coach Carlos Queiroz who stepped down after eight years in charge in January following Iran's semi-final exit in the Asian Cup when they went down 3-0 to Japan.

"From now on, Iran is my country and we have to work together to achieve a successful outcome. I've visited here in the past days and I have to say Iran is a developed country. We are going to qualify for the 2022 World Cup, that's why we are here," Wilmots said in his first press conference.

"We need to display a level of tactical maturity. The friendly matches will help us to do that. It's a good opportunity for coaching staff to watch out the foreign based players in the friendlies. I've already worked in national teams and clubs and need to work hard to reach our goals," Wilmots said.

With one week until the first friendly match in charge of Iran, Wilmots says each player has an equal chance of being selected.

"Iran will meet Syria and South Korea and it will be a good opportunity for the coaching staff to analyze the team's performances. Every player has a chance of playing in the national team. There is no guarantee for the players who play abroad. After these two matches, I can talk more," the 50-year-old coach stated.

"I've chosen Vahid Hashemian as my Iranian assistant since he has worked in Bundesliga and is fluent in German. It can facilitate the connections. Manu Ferrera is my first assistant since we've worked together for 25 years. However, the match analyst has yet to be selected," he added.

"I am proud of being here to coach the Iranian football national team. My family didn't agree with me but it is my decision to take charge of Iran and it's part of football," Wilmots concluded.



## 2019 VNL: Iran to face strong Italy

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iran will take on Italy in Pool 1 of the men's 2019 FIVB Volleyball Nations League at the Jiangmen Sports Center Gym in Jiangmen, China on Friday.

Iran, Italy, Germany and hosts China will try to score their first points in the run towards the spots at the final six tournament in Chicago, playing against each other in one of the four pools of the first competition weekend from May 31 through June 2.

Interestingly, three of the four teams finished the 2018 preliminary round practically "holding hands" in the final standings. Italy finished eighth with eight wins, followed by Germany and Iran in ninth and tenth, respectively, with seven wins each. All of them missed out on advancing to the finals in Lille, but showed their potential to succeed in an intensive competition.

Iran are certainly keen on performing at a higher level than last year and producing better results than their 10th place in the 2018 VNL and 13th place at the World Championship.



Experienced players like Mir Saeid Marouf, Amir Ghafour, Mohammad Mousavi and Farhad Ghaemi,

have been training hard alongside a fresh flow of young athletes at the national team preparation camp, with more star volleyballers expected to join as their club season duties come to an end.

Montenegrin coach Igor Kolakovic has expressed his satisfaction that "the team is already in a better physical condition than last year; the VNL is a very attractive and difficult competition and Iran will give their best."

Italy have the upper hand and much more confidence against Iran since the Azzurri have won five of their last six encounters with Iran at world level major competitions. The only exception in this run was a 3-2 defeat at the 2017 Grand Champions Cup, fivb.com reported.

Iran (8th) are the highest ranked Asian team on the FIVB World Ranking coming into the 2019 Volleyball Nations League, while Italy are the highest ranked European team on the FIVB World Ranking in third place.

## Is Alireza Jahanbakhsh misused by Brighton?



Alireza Jahanbakhsh. £17m, Brighton and Hove Albion's record buy and yet last season he contributed a grand total of zero goals and zero assists from 25 appearances.

To anyone who's had the pleasure – or should that be pain – of watching him regularly this season, he has looked like a bloke who's won a cornflake competition to spend a year as a Premier League footballer.

He doesn't appear to have the skill of Anthony Knockaert. He doesn't have the pace and purpose of Solly March. He doesn't have the unpredictability of Jose Izquierdo.

The only thing of note he has done since arriving at the Amex, other than add loads of followers to the club's Instagram feed, is to hit the bar against Southampton at home.

Jahanbakhsh's Iranian supporters certainly seem to think so. One Twitter account, Persian Futbol, has gone so far as to publish the 'evidence' which it claims proves it.

They recently posted two heat maps which show where Jahanbakhsh spent the majority of games positioned in his first season in an Albion shirt compared to where in his final season with AZ Alkmaar when he scored 22 times to

be the Eredivisie's leading scorer and claimed 14 assists.

That's in stark contrast with his Albion heat map. The first is that Jahanbakhsh is very clearly a right winger. Both Albion supporters and Iranian fans have been banging the drum of him looking so poor because he needs to play through the middle, either as a striker or a number 10.

The heat map disproves that theory. Jahanbakhsh very clearly excelled in the Netherlands when he was played out on the right or occasionally by coming inside in an area around the edge of the opposition penalty box. He very rarely entered the defensive third of the pitch for Alkmaar.

That's in stark contrast with his Albion heat map. Jahanbakhsh seems to have spent quite a bit of his time inside his own half, which will hardly come as a surprise given Hughton's conservative approach, especially away from home.

The theory goes that he is being wasted by being asked to do such a defensive job. With more freedom to attack, we'll see more out of Jahanbakhsh apparently. That might be true, but if the formation and tactics under Hughton were so restrictive, then how comes March and Knockaert didn't have the same issues?

(Source: WeAreBrighton)

## Milad Ebadipour: For Iranian people life is volleyball



Milad Ebadipour, one of the key players on Iran's roster for the men's 2019 FIVB Volleyball Nations League, is psyched about the opportunity his team will get to improve on their 10th place finish in 2018.

His optimism is fueled by the fact that Iran will host as many as two pools in the preliminary round of the upcoming second edition of the VNL.

"In my country, almost all people live with volleyball," the 25-year-old outside spiker told fivb.com ahead of the 2019 VNL kick-off. "For them, life is volleyball. They show a lot of respect for all the players and that is why it is a pleasure to play for the national team."

Unlike last year, when Iran had to travel from one continent to another every week, before eventually playing the last weekend of the preliminary round on home soil in Tehran, this year, they not only get to play two tournaments at home – in Urmia (Ebadipour's hometown) in week 3 and in Ardabil in week 4, but also their only trip outside Asia is to not-so-distant Bulgaria in week 5. To the further benefit of the fans in Iran, they will get to see their team host both last year's finalists Russia and France, as well as reigning world champions Poland.

But Milad Ebadipour is not humbled

by any of these big names. "For us, it is not important which team we play against. What is important for us is to give our 100 per cent - in every game, against everyone," he stated.

In 2018, Iran finished 10th on a 7-8 win-loss record and Ebadipour does not think this was good enough. "Of course, this wasn't a satisfactory result for our national team, but we had to accept it, given the difficult situation with all the travelling we had to do," he said. "For sure this year is different and we have a very good opportunity to do much better."

However, the Iranian player stopped short of naming a specific goal. "First, we have to know that we have to win any given match, and then we can think about other things," he commented.

Ebadipour achieved great individual results in the 2018 VNL. He was the third best scorer of the preliminary round with 193 points (166 spikes, 14 aces, 13 stuffs) to his name, but he was also Iran's best ranked player among the attackers, the servers, the diggers and the receivers. A year earlier he was named on the Dream Team of the FIVB World Grand Champions Cup, to add to the numerous accolades he has received at a continental level.

(Source: FIVB.org)

## Esteghlal confirms negotiations with Stramaccioni in Turkey

**MNA** — Esteghlal managers have held a four-hour-long negotiation with the Italian coach Andrea Stramaccioni on Tuesday in Turkey.

According to the official website of Esteghlal FC, the club's president Amirhossein Fathi and sporting director Ali Khatir have held a four-hour-long negotiation with Andrea Stramaccioni and his agent.



Former Inter Milan coach showed that he knows the Iranian team very well and is aware of interesting technical details about the team's players, noted the report, adding that Stramaccioni will reveal the results of talks on June 1.

Esteghlal suspended the German Winfried Schäfer in late April due to team's failure in the Iran Professional League (IPL) and also in the 2019 AFC Champions League. Assistant Farhad Majidi, a former striker of the team, replaced him till the season ends. According to reports, the German coach has signed a contract with UAE's Banyyas SC.

Esteghlal finished this season's IPL no better than the 3rd place with 57 points, while their arch-rival Persepolis, with 61 points, claimed the title for the third consecutive year.

## Vahid Hashemian appointed as Iran assistant coach

**TASNIM** — Former Bayern Munich forward has been appointed as assistant coach of Marc Wilmots in Iran national football team on Wednesday.

The Belgian coach has also chosen Spanish coach Manu Ferrera as his first assistant.

Hashemian gained B and A coaching licenses when playing in Germany.

On 26 October 2012, he was appointed as coach of Regionalliga side SV Halstenbek-Rellingen in the Hamburg Oberliga but after a successful run with the team, he announced his resignation at the end of the season.

In 2014, he continued his UEFA Pro License under Pep Guardiola at Bayern Munich.

## Anthony Stokes faces arrest if he sets foot in Scotland

FORMER Celtic star Anthony Stokes is wanted by cops over an alleged seven-month stalking campaign against an ex.

A sheriff issued an arrest warrant after the footballer, 30, failed to attend court to face a string of charges including abuse and harassment.

Stokes, now playing in Iran, is accused of causing "fear and alarm".

The footie ace will be lifted by cops if he sets foot in Scotland again, it's claimed.

Stokes is accused of stalking the woman on various occasions between July 13, 2018 and February 8 this year.

Court papers allege he repeatedly phoned and left voicemails. The calls were claimed to be threatening.

He is also said to have bombarded her with abusive and sexual texts and social media messages.

A source close to the Irish striker revealed he made the switch abroad after being plagued by headlines here.

They said: "When I heard he was playing overseas, it made sense. "Playing for his current side allowed him to get back enjoying the game away from the hassle that often goes hand in hand with the raised profile modern professionals have."

But they warned: "He faces arrest if he sets foot back here."

Stokes is also accused of banging on the alleged victim's door in Shots, Lanarkshire, and elsewhere last July.

Prosecutors claim he shouted through her letterbox and waited outside her home in his motor.

The footballer allegedly stood in the road and blocked a car being driven by a man who had taken his ex-home.

Charges state Stokes shouted, swore and gesticulated at him and the occupants of the vehicle. He then allegedly kicked the motor, while shouting and swearing at the woman.

Stokes is further said to have shouted and sworn at the woman in various locations in Glasgow on September 30 last year, before following her home and entering her property uninvited.

He then allegedly asked her mum about her whereabouts. And Stokes is said to have returned to shout and swear at his former partner through a window on October 9.

(Source: Scottish Sun)

## Bahrain begin preparations

Bahrain Football Association announced that the national team will play seven friendly matches in July, ahead of their FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and AFC Asian Cup 2023 Qualifiers.

They are scheduled to leave to Portugal, head coach Helio Sousa's home country, for a training camp from July 8 to 27, where they will play a series of friendly matches against yet-to-be decided opponents.

Sousa will officially join the squad on June 25, after his commitment with coaching the U-20 Portugal team, who are currently competing in the FIFA U-20 World Cup in Poland.

However, several Bahraini internationals have gathered and began training in Riffa with Sousa's assistants. By mid-June, training will intensify and Bahrain will then play a tune-up match before their Portugal training stint.

(Source: the-afc)



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What you can do with continence is not trifling, for, how can an admirable act be trifling?

Imam Ali (AS)

“The Last Fiction” named best animation at Chilean film festival

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iranian director Ashkan Rahgozar’s acclaimed movie “The Last Fiction” was picked as best animation at the 3rd Southern Cone International Film Festival-FICCSUR, which was held in Valparaiso, Chile from May 23 to 26.



Ascene from “The Last Fiction” by Iranian director Ashkan Rahgozar.

The film is based on a story from the Shahnameh, the epic masterpiece of the Persian poet Ferdowsi. It is about Zahak’s treacherous rise to the throne of Jamshid in Persia. The young and naive hero Afaridoun wants to save the kingdom and its people from darkness. But he must first conquer his own demons in this portrayal of Persian mythology that reveals human nature.

Vocalist Shahram Nazeri has sung the closing credits song in “The Last Fiction” and members of an all-star cast, including Parviz Parastui, Leila Hatami, Hamed Behdad, Baran Kowsari, Askhan Khatibi, Akbar Zanjapur and Farrokh Nemati, have lent their voices to the characters in the project.

“As the Earth Turns” by Richard H. Lyford from the U.S. won the award for best film, while “Days of Madness” by Damian Nenadic from Croatia was selected as best documentary.

The award for best short film went to “Sac de Merde” by Greg Chwerchak from the U.S., and “The Eve” by Luca Machnich from Italy was honored with the FICCSUR grand prize for best short.

Musicians sign petition to repeal new law on concert box office

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — A large number of Iranian musicians have signed a petition asking the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance to repeal a new law that allows the office to take a 10-percent share of the proceeds of concerts in big cities for transfer into the state treasury.

The petition has been signed by 2,000 musicians, including Keivan Saket, Hossein Alizadeh, Ali-Akbar Shekarchi, Hamid Motabassem and Fereidun Shahbazian.

The law was passed by the Majlis (Iranian Parliament) in February.

The Iran House of Music also expressed its opposition against the recent law in an open letter published on Tuesday.

Cannes winner “Parasite” captures rich-poor gap in ‘basic unit of life’: director

**SEOUL (Reuters)** — The South Korean director of “Parasite”, the darkly comic movie that won the top Palme d’Or prize at this year’s Cannes Film Festival, described his film on Tuesday as “a candid portrayal of the rich and the poor.”

“Parasite” is a wickedly humorous suspense movie about class struggles set in modern South Korea, following a down-on-its-luck family of four who worm their way into jobs in a wealthy household.

“I think we’re touching on courtesy toward human beings, human dignity. Whether one becomes parasitic, or symbiotic and coexistent in the best sense, I think might depend on how much courtesy one has toward human beings,” director Bong Joon-ho said in a press conference in Seoul.

The unanimous decision to award “Parasite” the top prize at Cannes on Saturday partly came down to its unexpected mash-up of genres, as the darkly comic tale doubles up as a thriller, with flashes of violence.

It was the first Palme d’Or at Cannes for a South Korean film.

Bong said he conceived and began writing “Parasite” in 2013, when he was filming the critically-acclaimed movie “Snowpiercer” starring Chris Evans and Tilda Swinton.

Iranian official visits Moscow Museum of Great Patriotic War

**C U L T U R E d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Poetry and Fiction Foundation director Mehdi Qezeli visited the Museum of the Great Patriotic War in his recent trip to Moscow, the foundation announced on Wednesday.

Plans to organize literary meetings, book fairs and film screening sessions in the two countries were discussed during a meeting held between Qezeli and the director of the museum, Alexander Shkolnik.

Shkolnik spoke of his interest in boosting cultural relations with Iran, and said that directors of several war museums are members of the international committee of the Museum of the Great Patriotic War and he invited the director of Iran’s Islamic Revolution and Sacred Defense Museum to join.

Qezeli also said that visiting Volgograd, the Russian city that was once the site of WWII’s Battle of Stalingrad, and the southwestern Iranian city of Khorramshahr, which was the site of a major liberation campaign during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, would be interesting for artists from the two countries.

He also proposed that each year one Persian and one Russian book on war and patriotism would be selected and translated.



Iranian Poetry and Fiction Foundation director Mehdi Qezeli (3rd L) and Iranian cultural attaché Qahreman Soleimani (4th L) visit the Museum of the Great Patriotic War in Moscow.

National Orchestra to go on stage with guest conductor Sohrab Kashef



The National Orchestra performs at Shahriar Hall in Tabriz on January 10, 2019. (Mehr/Vahid Abdi)

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iran’s National Orchestra plans to give its first concert following the resignation of permanent conductor Fereidun Shahbazian under the baton of guest conductor Sohrab Kashef.

The orchestra will perform accompanied by vocalist Hesameddin Seraj at Tehran’s Vahdat Hall on June 21, the orchestra announced in a press release on Wednesday.

A repertoire of best Persian songs, including “The Night of Ardent Lovers” and “Sunrise” by Homayun Rahimian, will be performed during the concert.

The repertoire also includes Heshmat Sanjari’s “Dance of the Circle” and Morteza Hannaneh’s “Hezar Dastan”.

The orchestra also is scheduled to repeat the performance at the same hall on July 5.

Earlier on May 19, the Rudaki Foundation announced that Shahbazian resigned as permanent conductor and artistic director in compliance with a law that bans the re-employment of retirees.

Shorts from Iran to compete in Palm Springs festival



A scene from “Birthday Night” by Omid Shams.

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — A lineup of five Iranian films will go on screen at the 25th Palm Springs International ShortFest in the U.S. city.

Among the films is “Dissect” by Siavash Shahabi, which is about a police investigation into the sudden death of a schoolchild.

“Birthday Night” by Omid Shams about two close friends who face a dramatic situation on their birthday night, and “Umbra” by Saeid Jafarian about a young woman who is looking for her missing partner at midnight will also be screened.

The lineup also includes “The Role” by Farnush Samadi about a couple that is forced to face their crucial decisions and dilemmas, and “Ceremony Night” by Behnam Abedi about a worker who falls from the top of a Ferris wheel.

The Palm Springs International ShortFest will be held from June 18 to 24.

Stressed “Game of Thrones” star Kit Harington getting treatment

**LOS ANGELES (Reuters)** — “Game of Thrones” actor Kit Harington is undergoing treatment after the end of the HBO television series in which he starred as the heartthrob Jon Snow, his representative said on Tuesday.

“Kit has decided to utilize this break in his schedule as an opportunity to spend some time at a wellness retreat to work on some personal issues,” a representative for the British actor said in a statement.

Harington, 32, went from virtual unknown to world stardom in “Game of Thrones”, in which he played the role of the courageous Snow, whose actions in the final episode were one of the show’s biggest shockers.

The statement did not give details of his issues, but The New York Post’s “Page Six” column said Harington was hard hit by the ending of the show and was being treated



Actor Kit Harington arrives for the world premiere of The Death and Life of John F. Donovan at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) in Toronto, Canada, September 10, 2018. (Reuters/Mark Blinch)

for stress, exhaustion and alcohol use.

Page Six added that he checked into a clinic in the United States help several weeks before the medieval fantasy series came to an end on May 19. The finale attracted a record 19.3 million viewers in the United States alone.

Harington, who married his “Game of Thrones” co-star Rose Leslie in 2018, told Variety earlier this year that he had previously found it hard to deal with the fame and attention the show brought, calling it “terrifying.”

“I felt I had to feel that I was the most fortunate person in the world, when actually, I felt very vulnerable. I had a shaky time in my life around there - like I think a lot of people do in their 20s,” he told Variety in an interview published in March.

Iranian cultural delegation visits Istanbul university



Dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Fatih Sultan Mehmet Foundation University Mehmet Husrev Subasi (C) holds a meeting with an Iranian cultural delegation at his office in Istanbul, Turkey.

**C U L T U R E d e s k** **TEHRAN** — An Iranian Cultural delegation paid a visit to the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Fatih Sultan Mehmet Foundation University in Istanbul, Turkey, Iran’s Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO) announced on Wednesday.

The delegation composed of Cultural attaché Kurosh Moqtaderi, Islamic School of Art director Mohammad-Hossein Navvab and the director of the Quran Center of the Endowment and Charity Affairs Organization, Mostafa Hosseini, held a meeting with the dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts, Mehmet Husrev Subasi.

Plans to expand cultural relations between the academic centers of the two countries were discussed during the meeting.

Plans to hold joint calligraphy exhibitions and meetings between artists of the two countries in the field of Islamic arts were also discussed.

Galleries from Iran to participate in Armenia Art Fair



An untitled painting by Tayyebeh Dejdoost whose works will be put on display by Vista Gallery at the Armenia Art Fair.

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Vista and Saye, two major galleries based in Tehran, will be participating in the 2nd Armenia Art Fair, which will be running at the Yerevan Expo Center from May 31 to June 3, the organizers have announced.

Vista Gallery will take a collection of works by emerging artists Teyyebah Dejdoost, Setareh Hosseini, Gandom Amiri and Sormeh Arab to the art fair, which is scheduled to showcase a large number of artworks from across the world.

Thirty-five galleries and curators representing contemporary artists from different countries, including Armenia, Belarus, Ukraine, U.S., Spain and the UK, will also participate in the art fair.

The organizers also plan to hold sessions and workshops in a program titled “Art Week”, during which various fascinating subjects such as the relationship between art and new technology, developing trends in new art markets, and exploration of the relationship between art and data will be discussed.