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Washington concerned about Iran's power: Zarif

TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif believes that the U.S. has exerted greatest pressure on Tehran because of Iran's power in the West Asia region.

"Today, Iran has the utmost power in the region. We are not in a difficult situation and the U.S. exerts pressure against Iran because it is concerned about Iran's power in the region," he told Al-Alam News Network in an interview aired on Friday.

Zarif said Iran draws its power from people.

"We have not reached this power through imposition of force on people. We have reached this power through right choice. This choice has always been the people. We have chosen the people and countered terrorism and extremism. So, we have power," he pointed out. He went on to say that Iran has an "open" attitude towards the Persian Gulf Arab states. [→2](#)

Iran, Tajikistan push for close ties in line with mutual interests

TEHRAN — Tajikistan's Foreign Minister, Siroddin Mukhriddin, held separate talks on Saturday with President Hassan Rouhani and his Iranian counterpart Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

Rouhani said, "We have to try hard to develop Tehran-Dushanbe relations in different fields to the benefit of both nations' interests".

Noting that the two countries enjoy common cultural, historical, and linguistic features, Rouhani said, "The Islamic

Republic of Iran has always favored stability, full security and development of Tajikistan."

The president added, "We are ready to provide Tajikistan with more technical-engineering services and transfer experiences in implementing projects."

According to the president's official website, Rouhani said, "It is an honor for Iranian companies and private sector to provide our friendly countries with the best of activities and services." [→2](#)

Two European diplomats arrested at sinful party in Tehran

TEHRAN — Two European diplomats were arrested at a mixed-gender party in Tehran in the early hours of Friday and were released after identification.

According to Tasnim news agency, a British and a Dutch diplomat were

arrested in a sinful mixed-gender party and were handed to police which later released them.

The party was held in Tehran's Velenjak neighborhood and was attended by a large number of people, Tasnim added.



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ARTICLE

Yusuf Abdullah
Islamic scholar
from Nigeria

The international Quds Day

In the name of Allah who states "Glory be to Him Who made His servant to go on a night from the Sacred Mosque to the remote mosque of which We have blessed the precincts, so that We may show to him some of our signs; surely He is the Hearing, the Seeing" Q17:1

Peace and blessings of Allah be upon His chosen servant, our master Muhammad and his purified progeny.

While giving an open invitation to Muslims and the world on August 7th, 1979 to observe the day, Imam Khomeini of blessed memory said "I invite Muslims all over the globe to consecrate the last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan, which is a day of fate and which could also become the day on which the fate of Palestinian people might be determined as Quds day and to proclaim the legitimate right of the Muslim people of Palestine" The day expresses solidarity and global support to Palestinians, and indeed all other oppressed.

Observed through processions, conferences and rallies by nations, human rights activists and civil liberties organizations, this insightful declaration of the Imam evidently received borderless acceptance.

Established after World War II, Israel was promulgated and recognized by Western powers in 1948. Zionism as a movement developed in late 1800's which united Jews and saw the forceful creation of the illegal state in place of Palestine, then occupied by only 5% Jewish inhabitants. To quote from Zariani Abdul Rahman's book - HITLER AND THE WANDERING JEW, 1994. Just a few days ago, the diplomacy of the dignified and handsome Semitic Prince Faisal Abdul-Aziz al-Saud was lost on the hysterical crowd of New York Jews who were bent on literally spitting HRH.

Nine centuries ago, while Christian Crusaders were burning Jerusalem's Jews alive in their synagogue, it was the Muslim Saladin who kindly brought back Jews to Jerusalem, along with his Muslim followers. And 800 years later, within the UN headquarters in flushing Meadow, New York, this was how the Muslims were paid back for their past kindness to the Jews.

America was the apparent negotiator and chief architect of all road maps regarding the domination of Palestinians by Israel or what others ignorantly refer as incessant Mid-east conflict. [→7](#)

Ayatollah Khamenei condoles martyrdom of cleric in Kazerun

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei offered condolences over the martyrdom of Hojattolislam Sheikh Mohammad Khorsand, the Friday prayer leader of Kazerun.

In a message on Saturday, Ayatollah Khamenei offered his condolences to the people of Kazerun and the family of Hojattolislam Khorsand over

the martyrdom.

Calling him an "active and successful" clergyman, the Leader said Khorsand's reunion with God on the Laylat al-Qadr and right after hours of supplication and invocation shows the great divine reward for that pious and industrious cleric.

The Friday prayer leader of Kazerun was murdered on May 29.

Khorsand, 52, was stabbed in the abdomen by an attacker outside his home and succumbed to injuries after being taken to the hospital.

The assailant, identified as Hamid Derakhshandeh, fled the scene but was arrested by police a few hours later.

Kazeun is located in the southern province of Fars.

Protesters set fire to U.S. embassy in Honduras

TEHRAN — Protesters torched the access gate to the U.S. Embassy in the Honduran capital on Friday during a second day of major protests against President Juan Orlando Hernandez.

The protesters set fire to the entrance of the building in downtown Tegucigalpa with about a dozen tires after dousing them with fuel, Reuters witnesses and fire services officials said. A fire department official said there were no damage to the embassy apart from the access gate.

The attack came on the second day of protests over decrees by Hernandez that his critics argue

will lead to the privatization of public services.

The demonstrators were pushed toward the embassy after being dispersed from a nearby commercial zone by police nearby, though it was not immediately clear why they attacked the building, Reuters reported.

The protesters chanted "American trash, American trash" outside the embassy, which was not being guarded at the time.

A court filing earlier this week showed that Hernandez had been investigated by U.S. authorities as part of a drug trafficking

and money laundering probe linked to his brother. The president has not been charged with any crime.

Hernandez has faced stiff opposition in Honduras since he claimed a second term in a highly divisive election at the end of 2017 which was heavily criticized by international observers and which his opponents say he stole.

Hernandez, a conservative ally of the U.S. government, rode out protests against his re-election after he was recognized as the victor by countries including the United States.

Virginia shooting leaves 12 dead at municipal center

TEHRAN — The shooter who opened fire indiscriminately in a Virginia Beach city building Friday afternoon, killing 12 people and sending at least four others to the hospital, was a disgruntled employee, a Virginia government source briefed on the investigation told CNN.

The shooter, a public utilities worker, died after a long, moving gunfight with officers, Police Chief James Cervera told reporters.

Four people were in surgery Friday night, the

chief said. Hospital officials said three people are in critical condition and one is in fair condition.

"This is the most devastating day in the history of Virginia Beach," said Mayor Bobby Dyer. "The people involved are our friends, coworkers, neighbor, colleagues."

Cervera said one person was shot in a car and the gunman fired indiscriminately as he went through all three floors of Building 2 at the city's municipal center.

An officer involved in the gunfight was shot.



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300,000 expected to attend Imam Khomeini's memorial

TEHRAN — The 30th anniversary of the demise of Imam Khomeini, founder of the Islamic Republic, will be held at his mausoleum in south Tehran on Tuesday, according to the secretary of the Central Committee of Commemoration of Imam.

Speaking at a press conference on Saturday, Mohammad Ali Ansari said some 300,000 mourners are expected to take part in the event, IQNA reported. [→3](#)



ARTICLE

Setareh Behroozi
Tehran Times Journalist

Media literacy and Gen C: How to deal with?

Encountering a kid holding a cellphone or tablet in the hand is not a strange picture for us. Nowadays, people are born with smart phones and tablets, which connect them to cyberspace, a place which is a part of our everyday life.

Agree or not, we are now citizens of another type of world, we are real people in a space which has no border and very little limits and this fact makes it hard for parents more than any other group to control their children, who should learn ethical and legal codes for living in the cyberspace.

In 2012, the digital analyst Brian Solis defined Generation C as the "Connected Consumer." He pointed out that anyone who integrates technology into their daily routine, regardless of age, shares certain qualities.

Depending on whom you talk to, the "C" in Gen C can refer to everything from "collaboration" to "community," "computerized," and "content." At the most fundamental level, however, I like to think that Gen C stands for connectivity.

Keep in mind that Gen C is not considered as an age group at all and it includes people who are not merely online--they're active and engaged in online communities, from the familiar social networks to product review sites.

The digital transformation--and all the cultural changes that have accompanied this upswing in connectivity.

However the point is that for members Gen C, which includes children and young adults, web and cyberspace interactions are the main reliable sources.

But what could parents do to deal with this problem? The answer is media literacy. This competency can save lives of our children.

Media literacy is the ability to identify different types of media and understand the messages they're sending. Kids are bombarded with text messages, memes, viral videos, social media, video games and advertising take in a huge amount of information from a wide array of sources, far beyond the traditional media.

However all the media have a common point, someone create the content for some reason. As a responsible parent you should understand the reason and teach your child to understand it as well. This is the basis for media literacy. [→11](#)

As a powerful country Iran does not need to hide anything: IRGC chief

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — The commander of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has called the United States the root cause of all tensions in the Middle East, rejecting accusations raised by the U.S. and its Arab allies that Iran was behind the attacks on four vessels off the coast of the United Arab Emirates.

Major General Hossein Salami on Friday categorically denied Iran's involvement in the vessel attacks in Fujairah port, saying, "Iran is a powerful country. We do not need to hide anything. If we do something, we'll announce it publicly."

He made the comments in reaction to allegations by U.S. National Security Advisor John Bolton and some Saudi and Emirati officials that the IRGC launched the attacks through its "proxies".

Speaking to Press TV on the sidelines of the International Quds Day rallies in Tehran, General Salami said, "Iranians don't take the Arab states' anti-Iran stances and remarks seriously."

"Some primitive Arab regimes in the Persian Gulf are sidekicks of the U.S. and under total control of Washington, and their comments and messages are not even worthy of any response," he added.

Saudi summits serve as political face-off with Iran: official

TEHRAN (MNA) — An Iranian parliamentary official, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, said Saudi Arabia's "ungenuine" summits are in fact a "political face-off" with Iran.

In a tweet prior to the Saudi-hosted emergency summits in Mecca on Friday, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, advisor to the Parliament speaker for international affairs, censured the Saudi kingdom for convening "ungenuine" OIC summit, as well as Arab League and PGCC summits instead of "addressing Quds liberation and Palestine."

He said the Saudi summits are in fact a "political face-off" with Iran.

Tehran believes in logic and action, not show-off, he said, while maintaining that it was Iran and its allies which "powerfully defeated Takfiri, Wahabbi, Zionist terrorism in the region."

Persian Gulf and Arab leaders convened at two emergency summits on May 30 in Mecca, hosted by Saudi Arabia's King Salman. The Saudi foreign ministry cited reasons for the summits as "sabotage attacks" on four oil tankers, including two belonging to Saudi Arabia, off the coast of Fujairah in the UAE, as well as the retaliatory drone strikes carried out by Yemeni army forces on two major oil pumping stations in the kingdom. The summits' final statement leveled unfounded accusations against Iran on both accounts.

Iran has condemned the statement, saying Saudi Arabia's attempt to rally neighboring and Arab countries against Iran is "the continuation of a futile process that the United States and the Zionist regime are pursuing against the Islamic Republic."

Lavrov: Russia ready to facilitate non-aggression pact between Iran and Persian Gulf states

By staff and agency

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Friday that Moscow is ready to facilitate a non-aggression pact between Iran and other Persian Gulf states.

"I think, Tehran's initiative on signing a non-aggression pact is a step in [the right] direction. I know that not everyone, but a number of member countries of the (Persian) Gulf Cooperation Council are willing to consider the initiative. We will be ready to facilitate this process," TASS quoted him as saying.



Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on May 26 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.

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

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.

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 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.

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.

Hezbollah chief warns war on Iran will 'burn entire region'

Nasrallah calls deal of century 'void' and 'historic crime'

POLITICAL d e s k

TEHRAN — The head of the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement warned on Friday that any war against Iran would cause the Middle East to "erupt".

Hassan Nasrallah said that the United States "knows well that any war on Iran will not remain confined to Iran's borders. The entire region will burn", leading to all U.S. forces and interests in the region being "annihilated", Aljazeera reported.

The head of the resistance movement made the comments in a televised speech as emergency meetings of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council, the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation and Arab League took place in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

The meetings were held in order to counter what Saudi Arabia has called Iran's growing influence in the region. They take place amid escalating tensions between the U.S. and Iran.

In the year since President Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from a landmark 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and several other world powers, Washington has steadily been ratcheting up pressure on Tehran: reimposing sanctions, moving to cut the country's oil



exports to zero, blacklisting Iran's Revolution Guard Corps as a "terrorist group" and deploying U.S. military units to the Persian Gulf in response to an unspecified threat. Hezbollah has fought several wars with Israel.

Despite his warning, Nasrallah said the idea of war in the region is "far-fetched" as Washington and its allies know they would pay

a heavy price for aggression against Tehran.

Nasrallah also said that Hezbollah has enough precision-guided missiles to "change the face of the region", but denied that the group had factories producing them.

■ Rejecting the 'deal of the century'

During his lengthy address, Nasrallah also slammed a proposed U.S. peace deal to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that

Trump had dubbed the "deal of the century".

"It's a void deal ... a historic crime," he said of the plan, which has already been rejected by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas as it is expected to largely favour Israel, a U.S. ally.

"This deal is a loss of Palestinian, Arab and Islamic rights," Nasrallah said.

Thousands of Iranians joined annual rallies in support of the Palestinian cause on Friday, also rejecting the U.S. peace plan.

Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, has been drafting the long-awaited peace plan, the economic aspects of which are set to be presented at a conference in Bahrain.

The United Nations earlier on Friday said it would not be taking part in the meeting on June 25 and 26 in Manama.

In December 2017, Trump broke with decades of bipartisan policy to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital in a move that prompted Palestinian officials to cut all ties with his administration.

The Palestinians demand Jerusalem's eastern sector as the capital of their long-promised state, while Israel insists that the whole city is its "eternal, indivisible capital".

Iran, Tajikistan push for close ties in line with mutual interests

Rouhani says Iran can serve as the best and safest transit route for Tajikistan's goods

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The president also pointed to the importance of Chabahar Port for transit of goods, saying, "Iran can be the best and safest transit route for Tajikistan's goods". Chabahar Port in southern Iran is being developed by India.

■ Terrorists leaving Iraq and Afghanistan may become active in Central Asia

Rouhani also pointed to the menace of terrorism and challenges of foreign intervention in the region, saying today the region is in a special condition.

"With terrorists leaving Iraq and Syria, there are concerns that they may become active in the Central Asia and Caucasus, therefore Iran and Tajikistan can increase cooperation in fighting terrorism".

■ 'Increasing ties with Iran very important for Tajikistan'

For his part, Mukhriddin said, "Development of relations between Tehran and Dushanbe is very important for us". Underlining that Iran's policy of combatting terrorism

and extremism has had effective impacts, he said, "We believe that the existence of terrorist groups is a very serious headache for regional nations and we need to cooperate in fighting terrorism".

He referred to the Tajik president's official invitation to Rouhani, expressing hope that Iran can attend the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), which will be held in Dushanbe in the near future.

Earlier the day, Mukhriddin met with Foreign Minister Zarif. In their meeting, the two chief diplomats touched upon the political and strategic significance of relations between the two friendly and brotherly countries, according to the Iranian Foreign Ministry's website.

They also stressed the need to boost mutual cooperation in bilateral, regional and international domains.

High on the agenda of the talks were the enhancement of political, parliamentary and economic relations as well as cooperation between friendship groups of both countries.



They also conferred on promotion of cooperation in water management, energy and transport, holding political and consular consultations, expansion of bilateral and international cultural cooperation, especially within the UNESCO, and countering extremism and terrorism.

Washington concerned about Iran's power: Zarif

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In an indirect reference to Saudi Arabia and the UAE, he said, "Unfortunately, there are two or three countries in the Persian Gulf that have chosen another path. We believe that the way they have chosen is not effective and is dangerous and harmful to themselves."

Foreign Minister Zarif said on May 26 that he has proposed the "regional non-aggression pact" with Persian Gulf Arab countries during his three-day trip to Iraq.

■ 'We pay attention to actions, not words'

Zarif also said that the U.S. administration sometimes speaks harshly and sometimes positively, however, what is important to Iran is actions and not words.

The U.S. has launched an economic war against Iran and threatens others if they seek to have relations with Iran, he said.

"This is a policy that the U.S. must abandon. This policy must be stopped. This is the policy of bullying and economic terrorism that must be stopped," he insisted.

The chief diplomat said such policy



will not work against Iran.

However, Zarif said that Iran is so powerful that it can stand against any threat.

Elsewhere, he said that the issue of talks with the U.S. should be decided by the country's top officials.

"We believe that the prerequisite to this issue is that negotiation should have a meaning. Dialogue makes sense when the

other side abides by its commitments. We held talks with the U.S. for several months. We do not see any difference between the former government of the U.S. and the current one. Certain people think that we have problems with Mr. Trump. It is not so. As I said, we negotiated with the U.S. administration but it did not fulfil its obligations. During Obama's tenure, the

U.S. did not fulfill all of its obligations. During Trump's time, the U.S. administration clearly left the nuclear deal. It shows that there is no administration that we can hold talks with," he lamented.

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

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

On 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.

Pompeo says U.S. will not stand in the way of INSTEX

By staff and agency

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that Washington will not stand in the way of a system Europeans are developing to shield companies dealing with Iran from the U.S. sanctions, so long as it provides only humanitarian and other permitted goods.

"When we think about INSTEX, if it's aimed at facilitating the movement of goods that are authorized to move, it's unproblematic," AP quoted him as saying after a meeting with German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas on Friday.

■ Pompeo seeks channel of communication with Iran

Pompeo started a Europe tour on Thursday to seek support and a potential diplomatic climb-down to ease rising tensions between the U.S. and Iran.

According to AP, he was traveling to Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Britain to assure European leaders that the U.S. is not looking for conflict, press them to do what they can to cool the situation, and perhaps open a channel of communication with the Islamic Republic.

After a brief stop in Berlin on Friday to make up for a meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Pompeo will make an unusual and extended stop in Switzerland, the country that has long represented Washington's interests in Tehran and has in the past been an intermediary between the two. His three days in Bern will be the first visit to the Swiss capital by a secretary of state in more than two decades and comes amid public signals from President Donald Trump that he wants to talk with Iran.

■ Special purpose vehicle

On January 31, France, Germany and Britain, the three European parties to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, 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.

Iranian Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Committee Chairman Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh said on Tuesday that Europeans are acting passively to preserve 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.

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

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

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.

Iranian diplomats mark Quds Day, slam ‘deal of century’

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian ambassadors to Bulgaria, Belarus, and Bosnia and Herzegovina have marked International Quds Day held worldwide on Friday and condemned the Zionist regime’s brutality against Palestinian people, ISNA reported on Saturday.

Speaking at a conference, Iranian Ambassador to Bulgaria Mohammad Javad Rasouli described International Quds Day as a clever initiative launched by the late Imam Khomeini to focus on the Palestinian cause.

The initiative has turned into a unifying force to fight the Zionist regime’s occupation, apartheid, massacre and creation of discords and crises in the region, Rasouli stated.

He then pointed to the so-called “deal of the century”, saying according to U.S. behavior, the move would only lead to the destruction of the Palestinian cause and unilateral support for the Zionist regime.

Iran’s Ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina Mahmoud Heidari also described the day as a unifying element for the Islamic world against the atrocities committed by the

Zionist regime in Palestine, including Gaza. “Fortunately, Quds Day is marked in many countries today,” he said.

On deal of the century, Heidari said the systematic efforts by some major powers in support of the occupant regime of Israel necessitates greater support for the Palestinian cause.

Mostafa Oveysi, Iran’s ambassador to Belarus, called into attention the importance of marking Quds Day and raising awareness in the Islamic world about the oppressed people of Palestine and the crimes of the Zionist regime and the U.S. against them.

Oveysi pointed to the remarks by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei about the imminent collapse of the deal of the century and called on Muslims to resist against the oppression and tyranny of the world’s hegemons.

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 Jew-

ish people also attend the rallies in order to draw a line between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism.

IAEA report proves Iran’s support for multilateralism: envoy

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iran’s ambassador and permanent representative to the Vienna-based international organizations said on Friday night that the International Atomic Energy Agency’s latest report shows Tehran’s goodwill in preserving multilateralism in international relations.

The remarks by Kazem Gharibabadi came immediately after the IAEA issued its quarterly report confirming that Iran has stayed within the main restrictions of the JCPOA and was abiding by the main terms of the accord, including the most sensitive issues of its stockpile of enriched uranium and level of enrichment.

Gharibabadi said the IAEA’s fifteenth consecutive report which confirmed Iran’s compliance with the 2015 nuclear agreement (JCPOA) signifies that the Islamic Republic has honored its international commitments, Tasnim reported.

“This report, like the fourteen previous ones from the [IAEA] director general, affirms that the agency has continued to monitor and verify Iran’s nuclear commitments under the JCPOA since the first day of the implementation of the JCPOA,” Gharibabadi remarked.

He stated that the report has explicitly mentioned the



order by Iran’s Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) to stop implementing certain JCPOA commitments under the clauses 26 and 36 of the accord, and has also cited the resumption of heavy water production at Iran’s Arak nuclear facility after a two-month hiatus for preventive maintenance.

The envoy added that Iran’s cooperation with the IAEA is in a “constructive course” despite the developments surrounding the JCPOA.

However, Gharibabadi said, the other parties’ failure to take “tangible and practical” measures to honor their commitments is threatening the fate of the accord.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran is determined and serious in taking the steps announced in its recent decision,” he emphasized. In order for the JCPOA to survive, he continued, the remaining parties must take immediate and appropriate measures within a defined timetable to ensure Iran’s interests under the deal.

Back in May 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump pulled the U.S. out of the JCPOA and ordered sanctions on Iran. This happened despite the fact that the IAEA had issued numerous reports, confirming Tehran’s full commitment to the multinational agreement.

A year after the U.S. withdrawal, the SNSC issued a statement declaring partial suspension of its undertakings under the JCPOA. The SNSC said if the remaining parties to the pact fail to reach an agreement to remedy for the sanctions, Iran will take the next steps. The ultimatum is for two months.

Ambassador predicts closer Iran-Kazakhstan ties under next president

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iran’s ambassador to Kazakhstan anticipates that the close relations between Tehran and Astana will continue to grow during the next Kazakh president’s term.

In an interview with Tasnim, Majid Saber outlined the status of political and economic relations with Kazakhstan.

Asked about the future of bilateral ties after the abrupt resignation of Nursultan Nazarbayev as president in March, the envoy hailed him as a prominent, influential and smart politician whose term marked a growing trend in the friendly relations between Iran and Kazakhstan.

Saber said the recent political developments in Kazakhstan have taken place within the framework of its constitution, noting that Iran supports the legal processes in the Eurasian country.

“The relations between Iran and Kazakhstan are deep-rooted, age-old and



based upon mutual interests. At present, Kazakhstan has a major position on Iran’s regional strategy as the most important and most stable republic in Central Asia,” the envoy underlined.

He said that apart from close political

interaction, the two countries work in co-operation in regional and international organizations such as the United Nations and affiliated bodies, Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), and Asian and international parliamentary forums.

The Kazakh officials have supported the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and have also voiced opposition to the U.S. unilateral sanctions against Tehran several times, the ambassador stated, adding that the two nations enjoy close economic, political, cultural and military cooperation.

Saber further explained that a review of plans of the current presidential candidates suggests that Kazakhstan is not going to make any significant change to its policies towards Iran.

“We are confident that the good relations

between the two countries will continue to grow more firmly than the past under the next president,” Saber concluded.

Nazarbayev abruptly announced his resignation in March, 29 years after taking office.

In a televised address, the 78-year-old said he has made the “difficult” decision to terminate his authority as president, but did not give a specific reason for the shocking decision.

Nazarbayev, who was elected for a fifth five-year term in 2015, said the speaker of the Central Asian country’s legislative upper house, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, will serve as the interim head of state until a new election is held.

Nazarbayev has led oil-rich Kazakhstan since 1989, when it was still part of the Soviet Union. He came to power as the country’s Communist Party chief and was then elected president in 1991 weeks before the Soviet breakup.

Team Obama to Iran: Don’t take Trump’s bait

A number of former Obama administration officials have quietly urged Iranian government officials to keep their cool in the face of the Trump administration’s maximum pressure policy against Tehran.

According to the Daily Beast, the former U.S. officials have reached out to their contacts in the Iranian government, including Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif to tell them: Don’t take Trump’s bait. Stay calm.

Conversations between former Obama officials and Iranian government officials have been ongoing since November 2016. Zarif, who visits the U.S. every year for the UN General Assembly in New York, usually meets with lawmakers, think tanks, journalists, and former officials when he is in New York.

But the recent round of conversations, which took place over the phone and in person over the last two months, came as lines of communication between the U.S. and Iran, through intermediaries in Europe and elsewhere, deteriorated.



Tensions between Iran and the U.S. have grown in recent weeks, especially after the latter deployed an aircraft carrier strike group, B-52 bombers, and 1,500 more American troops in the region, citing unidentified Iranian “threats”.

On Wednesday, Iran’s Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said, “We are aware that evident elements are trying to put America into a war with Iran for their own goals.”

He said U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton and “other warmongers” are plotting against Iran.

“War would be a disaster for everybody in the region. We hope that wisdom will prevail in Washington, that they do not make this biggest mistake in the region ever. But we are fully prepared for that scenario,” Araqchi said.

Washington withdrew last year from the international nuclear deal, and it has ratcheted up sanctions in efforts to shut down Iran’s economy by ending its international sales of crude oil.

Ambassador: Sanctions will fail to bring Iranians to their knees

TEHRAN (IRNA) — The Iranian ambassador to Cuba has underlined that the U.S. administration’s cruel sanctions cannot bring the Iranian people to their knees.

Speaking in an interview with Radio Havana Cuba, Rashid Bayat Mokhtari referred to Iran’s civilization, culture, and geopolitical location and said the victory of the Islamic Revolution and its liberation from colonialism and imperialism are the

main reasons for the U.S. confrontation against Iran.

He added that the U.S. banking and oil sanctions on Iran are against international commitments and are aimed at pressuring ordinary people.

Referring to the Holy Quds Day and the role of colonial states in establishing illegitimate state of Israel and the Zionists’ crimes against humanity, oppressed people of Palestine and

Muslims in the region, he said colonialism is aimed at dominating the strategic and wealthy Middle East.

The Iranian envoy appreciated Cuban people and government for their support of freedom seekers.

Elaborating on Iran’s next act in the event the other JCPOA signatories do not comply with their commitments, he said Iran could achieve great potentials

in peaceful nuclear technology, but totalitarian countries have accused Iran of acquiring nuclear weapons.

Commenting on bilateral relations between Iran and Cuba, Bayat Mokhtari said since the victory of the Islamic Revolution, both countries have unconditional support in international communities and could achieve high-level goals by exchanging their domestic technology.

Rezaee says Iran will surely overcome U.S. economic blockade

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Mohsen Rezaee, secretary of the Expediency Council, has voiced certainty that Iran will finally defeat the economic blockade imposed by the United States.

“There are great potentialities in Iran that will be activated by this economic blockade and we will proudly pass through the current situation,” Rezaee said, ISNA reported on Saturday.

Pointing to U.S. President Donald Trump’s anti-Iran measures, he said the Iranian nation’s response to such moves is “resistance”.

Rezaee also said the White House is hesitant about implementing its plans against Iran because of the “serious problems” that will emerge.

“The nature of the U.S. is lies and deceptions,” the former IRGC chief said, adding, “They may try to cover their intentions by humanitarian coating but America’s nature is based on lie and trickery.”

Rezaee, who contested presidential post in the 2009 elections, further said Trump has realized that his policies toward Iran are wrong and that he will regret his decisions in the future.

Tension has been rising between Iran and the U.S. since the Trump administration ended sanctions waivers for the remaining importers of the Iranian oil and the Pentagon sent the USS Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group and a bomber task force to the Persian Gulf and made military threats against Iran.

Fire incident at Kalleh Company in Iraq was ‘intentional’: CEO

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Gholam-Ali Soleimani, the CEO of Kalleh Dairy, has described as intentional the fire incident at the company’s branch in Iraq’s Karbala which occurred on Tuesday.

Soleimani estimated the damage caused by the incident at \$80 million, but added that the company will not leave Iraq’s 80-billion-dollar market because of the incident, the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture reported on Saturday.

He further said that the reconstruction of the Kalleh branch in Iraq will begin soon.

Kalleh is an Iranian dairy, food and drink company headquartered in Amol, the northern province of Mazandaran. It has been ranked by the market research company Euromonitor International as one of the top 50 brands in the world.

Tehran names new ambassador to Portugal

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The Foreign Ministry has named Morteza Damanpak Jami as Iran’s new ambassador to Portugal.

Damanpak Jami was proposed by Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and endorsed by President Hassan Rouhani, Mehr reported on Saturday.

Damanpak Jami is among the Foreign Ministry’s senior diplomats. He has served as Iran’s Permanent Representative to the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) from 2006 to 2009, and as ambassador to Denmark and Ethiopia.

IRGC busts 660kg of illicit drugs in Sistan-Baluchestan

TEHRAN (MNA) — The combat squads of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) have seized 660 kilograms of illicit drugs in the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan in a single operation.

According to the public relations of IRGC’s local office, the intelligence forces, keeping a round-the-clock watch on the offenders, busted the big consignment during a midnight gun battle, when a gang attempted to smuggle the drugs into the country in the Bon Sar region, near Saravan borders.

Two offenders were busted during the operation. Four pickup vehicles and Four AK 47 rifles were also confiscated by the police.

The Islamic Republic has been actively fighting drug-trafficking over the past three decades, despite its high economic and human costs. The war on drug trade originating from Afghanistan has claimed the lives of nearly 4,000 Iranian police officers over the past four decades. The country has spent more than hundreds of millions of dollars on sealing its borders and preventing the transit of narcotics destined for European, Arab and Central Asian countries.

300,000 expected to attend Imam Khomeini’s memorial

I → Ansari said all preparations have been made to hold the memorial.

He said 300 Iranian and over 50 foreign reporters will be covering the event.

Every year, the anniversary of Imam Khomeini’s demise is marked with a ceremony at his mausoleum with Leader of the Islamic Revolution and other officials in attendance.

Also, large crowds of Iranians travel to Tehran from different parts of the country to take part in the ceremony and pay tribute to Imam Khomeini at his shrine.

Foreigners also attend the annual memorial service.

Ayatollah Ruhollah Mousavi Khomeini, better known as Imam Khomeini, engineered Iran’s 1979 Islamic Revolution, which ended the monarchy of the U.S.-backed Shah of Iran.

Imam Khomeini passed away on June 3, 1989, at the age of 87.

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	222387.4
IFX	2785.44

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,023 rials
GBP	53,079 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$61.99/b
WTI	\$53.50/b
OPEC Basket	\$68.84/b
Gold	\$1,306.70/oz
Silver	\$14.64/oz
Platinum	\$797.10/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Russian Central Bank seen cutting rates in June as economy slows

Russia’s Central Bank is now seen cutting rates in June, sooner than previously expected, as inflation is slowing amid sluggish economic growth, a monthly Reuters poll showed on Friday.

As per breccorder.com, the average forecast among analysts and economists from 22 banks and companies polled in late May was for the key rate to be lowered to 7.50 percent from 7.75 percent at the central bank’s board meeting on June 14.

The previous monthly poll in late April predicted a first rate cut in the third quarter of this year.

Most of the forecasts in the Reuters poll are based on at least 10 individual projections.

Market expectations for a rate cut have grown after central bank officials said several times in May that a rate cut was likely in the second or third quarter.

By the end of the year, the central bank is seen cutting the key rate to 7.25 percent, the monthly poll showed.

Full-year inflation in 2019, is now seen at 4.6 percent, below the 4.7 percent level predicted a month ago. Inflation is set to reach the central bank’s target of 4 percent next year, the poll showed.

The poll also revealed a slightly negative change in the economic outlook. Gross domestic product (GDP) is seen growing by 1.3 percent this year, with forecasts ranging from 0.7 percent to 1.7 percent.

The April poll predicted a 1.5 percent GDP growth in 2019 after a 2.3 percent expansion in 2018.

In 12 months, the rouble is seen at 66.00 versus the dollar and at 74.94 versus the euro.

The previous poll foresaw exchange rates of 65.65 and 77.58, respectively.

The “rouble remains vulnerable amid falling oil prices and a rise in concerns about trade wars,” Nordea Bank said.

On Friday, the rouble’s official exchange rates, set by the central bank, were 65.06 per dollar and 72.42 per euro, with the Russian currency under pressure from falling crude prices.

Shrinking China factory activity, faltering exports inflame economic anxiety

China’s factory activity in May slumped into a deeper contraction than markets had expected, heaping pressure on Beijing to roll out more stimulus to support an economy hit hard by a bruising trade war with the United States.

Friday’s weak manufacturing readings, which follow a recent raft of soft data across the retail, export and construction sectors, could inflame concerns about the risk of a global recession and push more central banks to adopt an accommodative monetary stance.

The official Purchasing Managers’ Index (PMI) fell to 49.4 in May from 50.1 in April, data from the statistics bureau showed. Analysts surveyed by Reuters had forecast the PMI to be down a notch at 49.9, below the 50-point mark separates expansion from contraction on a monthly basis.

Factory output expanded at a slower pace as new orders – a gauge of domestic and foreign demand – fell for the first time in four months. Export orders extended their decline for the twelfth straight month with the sub-index pulling back significantly to 46.5 from April’s 49.2, suggesting a further weakening in global demand.

“Export orders dropped back particularly sharply, which suggests that Trump’s latest tariff hike may already be undermining foreign demand,” said Julian Evans-Pritchard, senior China economist at Capital Economics.

While China’s exporters are feeling the pinch, Friday’s data showed import orders also contracted at a quicker pace, reflecting softening demand at home despite a flurry of growth-supporting measures that were rolled out earlier this year.

Some economists believe more stimulus is needed, likely through further cuts in the amount of cash banks hold as reserves and fiscal spending.

The downbeat data reflects insufficient demand that has become a “more prominent problem” and adds urgency for the government to intervene, Zhang Liquan, an analyst with the China Federation of Logistics and Purchasing (CFLP), said in a note.

Central bank governor Yi Gang, however, has suggested the room for further monetary easing had become more limited, while economists also expressed concerns about rising debt risks.

(Source: hellenicshippingnews.com)

‘\$8b allocated to supply basic goods in 2 months’

By Ebrahim Fallahi

TEHRAN – Central Bank of Iran (CBI) has allocated \$8 billion for importing basic goods in the first two months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21- May 21). Deputy Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade told the Tehran Times on Saturday.

“According to CBI, some \$8 billion has been allocated for importing basic goods in this year’s first two months which is significantly higher than that of the last year’s same period,” Abbas Ghobadi said in a press conference which was held at the Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry building in Tehran.

The official stated that the country’s total foodstuff turnover stands at about \$100 billion of which the share of imports is only \$10 billion.

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

Elsewhere in his remarks Ghobadi noted that regarding the basic goods, the country is well supplied and even for some commodities like red meat the government no longer provides the importers with foreign currency at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials. The government provides importers of



basic goods with foreign currency at an official exchange rate of 42,000 rials to support foreign trade and to help supplying basic goods into the country.

Mentioning the unjust U.S. sanctions on the country, Ghobadi said the government is taking all necessary measures to mitigate the economic consequences of these sanc-

tions for people.

Earlier in May, Deputy Director of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) said following a directive by President Hassan Rouhani, IRICA is providing new facilities for importers of basic goods which makes them able to clear their commodities in less than an hour, IRNA reported.

‘Over \$476m allocated to renovating 1000 wagons, locomotives in a year’

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN**— The head of Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAI) announced that 20 trillion rials (about \$476.1 million) has been allocated to renovation of 1000 passenger and freight wagons and also locomotives through benefitting from domestic capabilities in the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 21), IRIB reported on Saturday.

Saeed Rasouli said this amount has been allocated by the Planning and Budget Organization.

In this year, which is named as the year of “Pickup in Production” by the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, all efforts of RAI are for renovating the railway fleet of the country by relying on domestic producers, the official further stressed.

According to Saeed Mohammadzadeh, the previous head of RAI, develop-



Saeed Rasouli, the head of Islamic Republic of Iran Railways

ment of Iranian railways requires more than 32,000 wagons and locomotives in the next four years when the railway infrastructures are developed in the country.

“The national network fleet needs over 30,000 cargo wagons, 2,000 passenger wagons and 650 locomotives in the next four years”, the official has previously announced.

Monthly sponge iron output up 14% year on year

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN**—Production of sponge iron in Iran rose 14 percent during the first month of current Iranian calendar year, Farvardin (March 21-April 20), compared to the same month in the past year, IRNA reported.

As reported, domestic producers produced 2.542 million tons of the product during the first month of this year.

While production of sponge iron witnessed growth in the first month, the export of this mineral fell 10 percent to 44,000 tons.

Iranian mining sector witnessed some prominent growth both in production and export during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2019).

According to the data released by Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO), the value of Iran’s minerals and mining industries’ exports stood at



\$9.226 billion in the past year.

The rising trend of growth in this sector is planned to be continued in the current calendar year, as IMIDRO Managing Director Khodadad Gharibpour has announced that projects worth \$3 billion are planned to be inaugurated in Iran’s mining sector in the current year.

The official has previously announced that projects worth \$2.17 billion have been put into operation in this sector during the past year.

Iran, Ukraine discuss more co-op between chambers of commerce

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN**—In a meeting between Gholam-Hossein Shafeie, the head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA), and Serhii Burduliak, Ukraine’s ambassador to Iran, the two sides explored the ways for boosting cooperation between the two countries’ chambers of commerce, ICCIMA news portal published.

In the meeting held in Mashhad on Friday, Shafeie mentioned the potentials available for the expansion of economic transactions between the private sectors of the two countries in a bid to strengthen Iran-Ukraine economic relations.

“Some measures have been already conducted for boost-

ing agricultural cooperation between the two sides. Your country enjoys high potentials in this field which could be a proper ground for more bilateral cooperation”, the ICCIMA head noted.

The official also stressed the need for the expansion of ties between the provinces of Iran and Ukraine.

Burduliak for his part welcomed expansion of cooperation between the provinces of the two countries and said that some provinces of Ukraine have strong chambers that can set up relations with the Iranian chambers.

He also said that the head of Ukraine’s Chamber of Commerce is willing to visit Iran again.



ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafeie (L) and Serhii Burduliak, Ukraine's ambassador to Iran, met in Mashhad on Friday.

Infrastructure is where India needs to act

By Sukumar Rajah

After months on the campaign trail, Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) emerged victorious, to secure his second term as prime minister. We expect positive market reaction to be mostly limited, as the BJP victory seemed largely priced in.

Although we believe some obstacles remain on the pathway to the economic reforms Modi has promised, we think he’ll push for policy continuity with his initiatives. Modi’s manifesto included a \$1.44 trillion boost to infrastructure, and a \$10.5 billion cash injection into the farming industry. He pledged to double farmers’ incomes by 2022, in response to growing anger from farmers over low crop prices, which had a detrimental impact.

He also unveiled plans to continue to simplify the Goods and Services Tax (GST), remove certain products from the list of items subject to the higher tax rate of 28 percent, and to increase investment in infrastructure, which could introduce new jobs. In our view, policies implemented during his last administration are established enough to withstand any potential short-term challenges.

Investors should focus on fundamentals and improving earnings elements that lead us to be optimistic about India’s long-term prospects.

■ **A global slowdown in growth**
A global slowdown in growth could af-



fect aspects of the Indian economy that are more dependent on exports. That being said, rising domestic consumption has tilted India’s economy to be less reliant on the export sector.

We think it’s likely India will be less vulnerable to adverse global factors. Fundamentals such as favorable demographics, infrastructure investment, urban consumption growth and increasing income levels all continue to drive growth.

Many of the initiatives are at the state level, where we’ve seen resources drive Modi’s ambitious infrastructure program, particularly for transport such as roads, railways, waterways and airports. The push to improve water management will also provide

a critical step in developing several cities. It involves installing infrastructure that can create hydropower from large dams and provide reliable irrigation for land.

We also see signs that could lead to an increase in corporate investment through rising capacity utilization, which indicates demand in the economy.

An increasing number of foreign companies are either looking to, or have increased, their manufacturing capabilities in India. This is partially as a result of Modi’s “Make in India” initiative, but also a way to diversify supply chains away from trade concerns over Chinese-manufactured products.

More demand for loans should bolster some banks, particularly as the financial

services sector is recovering from a period of bad loans and excessive leverage.

■ **Savings and investment**

We’ve seen a structural shift in how households view savings and investment. Many have been moving away from reliance on physical assets such as gold and property alone. We’ve seen more inflows into domestic equities as a direct reflection of this shift. We don’t expect this to continue at a rapid pace.

In addition, a growing middle-class population has more disposable income, and there is greater access to financial products. We think the financialization of savings could foster a supportive environment for domestic Indian equities.

We continue to see structural opportunities beyond consumption growth and infrastructure upgrades. A shake-up in major sectors such as telecommunications after a mass consolidation left smaller companies with no choice but to either merge or exit the industry. The same has also happened with major cement companies, creating just a handful of large players in the market.

We think the reach and size of these private players could help with company margins and boost these particular domestic stocks. As Modi enters another term, we’d expect to see a continuation of India’s development as one of the world’s fastest-growing emerging market economies.

(Source: gulfnews.com)

Iran, Tajikistan seeking expansion of water, energy ties

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** — Iran and Tajikistan are exploring avenues of cooperation in water and energy sectors, IRNA reported quoting Iranian energy minister as saying on Friday.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran and Tajikistan are seeking to expand their relations in water and energy sectors, while the two countries can also expand their economic relations in fields such as agriculture, transit and joint ventures,” Reza Ardakanian said after a meeting with Tajik Minister of Foreign Affairs Sirodjidin Mukhriddin in Tehran.

The official noted that Tajikistan is a rich country in terms of water resources in Central Asia, and Iran has had good relations with the country for many years.

He further called on the Tajik minister for taking all necessary measures for making use of the two countries' capacities for expanding economic relations.

Ardakanian, who is also the chairman of Iran-Tajikistan Joint Economic Committee, added: “Iranian companies are currently active in various sectors in Tajikistan, especially in



Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian meet with Tajik Minister of Foreign Affairs Sirodjidin Mukhriddin in Tehran on Friday.

the construction of dams and power plants.” “This cooperation can be expanded into other fields, considering the two countries’

broad areas for mutual work,” the official added.

The minister said Tajikistan holds near

15 percent of world's total capacity of hydroelectric power plants, so Iran is ready to provide Tajikistan with networks and necessary infrastructure for transit energy in the region.

■ 13th Iran-Tajikistan Joint Economic Committee meeting

Mukhriddin for his part, mentioned the “positive negotiations” between the two sides, saying “the cooperation between the two countries’ private sectors should be strengthened.”

According to the Tajik official, the two sides also discussed holding the 13th Iran-Tajikistan Joint Economic Committee meeting which is due to be held in Tehran in the upcoming months.

Currently, the Ministry of Energy is responsible for Iran's joint economic committees with several countries including Tajikistan, Russia, Afghanistan, and Armenia, and the ministry is in direct communication with the neighboring countries, not only in water and energy sectors but also in other areas of mutual interest.

IRENEX to hold offering of 2m barrels of gas condensate on Monday

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN**— Offering two million barrels of gas condensate produced in Iran's South Pars gas field will be held at Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX) on Monday, Shana reported.

As announced by National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), the base price for this round of offering will be \$67.14 per barrel.

This is the first round of condensate offering based on the new directive of the Oil Ministry in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21).

The least amount of loading for road transportation will be 1000 barrels and the purchasers can receive the cargos by three months as of the deal time.



The first gas condensate offering at IRENEX was done on February 13, which failed to attract customers.

Offering condensate at IRENEX came after the successful offering of crude oil at this market.

Since the U.S.'s withdrew from Iran's nuclear pact in May 2018, vowing to drive Iran's oil exports down to zero, the Islamic Republic has been taking various measures to counter the U.S. actions and to keep its oil exports levels as high as possible.

One of the main strategies that Iran chose to execute to help its oil exports afloat has been trying new ways to diversify the mechanism of oil sales, one of which is offering oil at the country's stock market.

Wind energy in Spain: first offshore wind farm project

Equinor will invest more than 860 million euros to install in the Canary Islands first large offshore wind power farm in Spain, a decision adopted after the Norwegian company has been authorized to settle in the Canary Islands Special Zone (ZEC).

According to evwind.es, as reported by the regional government, this investment is the result of actions undertaken in recent years to publicize the ability of the islands to become a benchmark for the development of offshore wind turbines in Spain and Europe.

Also, the interest of Equinor suffered in December 2017 after the contacts of the Canarian president, Fernando Clavijo, and the Minister of Economy, Industry, Trade and Knowledge, Pedro Ortega, with companies from the offshore sector that develop their activity in the national market as in the European.

Ortega said that the future installation of the multinational “is an important support to the energy policy that we have developed from the government of the Canary

Islands in order to move forward to consolidate a more sustainable model and position the Canary Islands as a spearhead in the development of technology offshore wind, taking advantage of the endogenous advantages of the archipelago and the interest that the companies in the sector have in investing in new R + D + i projects”.

In addition, the counselor added that apart from Equinor there are more applications from companies that are interested in using the Canary Islands as a test bank.

The company Equinor follows the trail of other companies in the sector, linked to development and research, which have chosen the Canary Islands to test and test new prototypes of offshore wind only in the world, taking advantage of the advantages offered by the islands for the development of this type of energy.

This is the case of the first marine wind turbine in Spain, with 5 MW of power, which is installed in front of things in Jinámar (Gran Canaria), and the first floating wind platform in Spain designed by a consortium

of international companies and funds European, that same month will be tested in the experimental area of the Canary Oceanic Platform.

For its part, the floating marine park projected by Equinor includes an installed capacity of 200 MW, which is equivalent to one third of the total renewable power installed on the islands.

In the case of starting the formalities for its construction this year 2019, as planned by the company, its implementation could take place in 2024 and generate between 120 and 200 jobs during the 20 years of life of the park, in addition to jobs of a temporary and limited nature that would involve the previous phase of processing and construction.

For this, it is necessary to delimit the offshore wind areas in the Canary Islands as soon as possible, in which the exploitation and use of the wind resource should be centralized, without affecting the development of other complementary marine activities.

BP, ExxonMobil to contribute \$20 million toward licensing of Alaska LNG project: official

North Slope producers BP and ExxonMobil have agreed to contribute \$20 million to help the state of Alaska complete a federal licensing process for the proposed \$41 billion Alaska LNG Project, Platts quoted Alaska Lieutenant Governor Kevin Meyer as saying on Thursday at an industry conference in Anchorage.

If built, the project could export up to 20 million mt of liquefied natural gas from an LNG plant in south-central Alaska. Gas would be shipped from the North Slope through an 800-mile, 42-inch-diameter pipeline that is also planned.

“This is a step forward, but it doesn't get us a project yet,” Meyer said in an interview. For Alaska LNG to be built, customers and financing would be needed. But to allow the project to falter now, so late in the licensing process, would be huge setback, Meyer said.

Three major North Slope producers -- ConocoPhillips as well as BP and ExxonMobil -- were in a consortium with the state's AGDC until 2016, when the companies withdrew due to falling energy prices and a mixed outlook for LNG demand.

■ Work on FERC licensing

Former Alaska Governor Bill Walker opted to continue work on the FERC licensing and the required environmental impact statement with the producers' encouragement, and a draft EIS is expected this summer.

Although technical work on the EIS and license has proceeded and is now far along, the state's own financial problems, stemming from a drop in oil revenues, have depleted AGDC's reserves to the point that there will be insufficient money to get through the licensing work planned for 2020, officials of the corporation have said.

Governor Mike Dunleavy, who replaced Walker last December, has been working to get the major Slope producers back in as Alaska LNG partners and investors and the \$20 million in funding is the first indication that Dunleavy's efforts may be bearing some fruit.

ConocoPhillips, which participated in funding the early conceptual and preliminary engineering, is not part of the current effort. The company has its hands full in developing and financing new North Slope oil discoveries and at this point would prefer to sell its gas at the wellhead to the AGDC project rather than be involved in its ownership, company spokesperson Natalie Lowman said earlier.

■ A technical assistance

Earlier this year BP and ExxonMobil signed a technical assistance agreement with AGDC and meetings have been underway on ways of reducing the current \$43 million cost estimate.

The three major Slope producing companies own the 35 Tcf of North Slope gas along with the state itself, which owns about one-fourth of the gas through its royalty and tax share of future production.

Meanwhile, a potential investment and LNG sales deal with three Chinese companies engineered by former governor Walker that would have involved three-quarters of Alaska LNG's production is on the back burner amid the current U.S.-China trade battle.

A final agreement between the state and a consortium of Sinopec, Bank of China and China Investment Corporation was to have been signed last December but was not.

When the potential China deal was announced, AGDC had hopes of getting sales contracts and financing secured in early 2020, with a start of construction in 2021 and completion and first LNG shipments in 2024 or 2025.

Second Announcement



Khuzestan Steel Company
IN THE NAME OF GOD

INVITATION TO INTERNATIONAL TENDER

No.: 398128

KHOUZESTAN STEEL COMPANY INTENDS TO PURCHASE

REFRACTORY FOR STEEL-MAKING LADLE SLIDE GATE

INTRESTED BIDDERS MAY OBTAIN SET OF DOCUMENTS, CONTAINING:

- 1) THE RELEVANT TERMS AND CONDITIONS BY SUBMISSION OF A WRITTEN APLICATION;
- 2) ALL BIDS MUST BE DELIVERED TO THE BELOW ADDRESS ON OR BEFORE THE CLOSING DATE **03.jul.2019** .THE OPENING DATE OF TECHNICAL OFFER ENVELOPES WILL BE AT **11 AM ON THE 07.jul.2019** IN THE BUYER'S CONFERENCE ROOM LOCATED AT THE HEAD OFFICE OF KSC AHWAZ-IRAN AND THE BIDDERS OR THEIR AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVES CAN ATTEND THE MEETING OF THE TENDER.
- 3) THE OFFERED PRICE SHOULD BE VALID UP TO **4 MONTH AFTER OPPENING DATE** .
- 4) FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT TO BELOW CHANALE:

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EMAIL: j.ghorbani@ksc.ir ; z.mokhtari@ksc.ir

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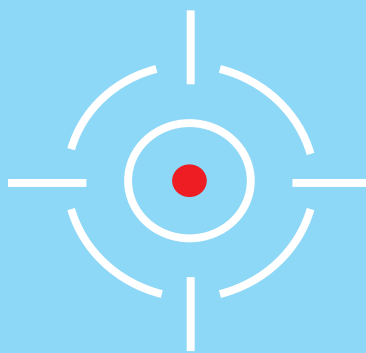
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Second Announcement



National Iranian Oil Company
IRANIAN OFFSHORE OIL COMPANY
INVITATION TO COMMON BID

TENDER No. AT/97/131
Pre-Qualification
1398.1282

Iranian Offshore Oil Company (IOOC) intends to tender for " **Replacement, damaged subsea cables platform AB to platforms AA & A18 in Aboozar complex(Kharg Island)**

The required services include the following

Replacement, damaged subsea cables platform AB to platforms AA & A18 in Aboozar complex(Kharg Island)

Location:

Iranian waters in Persian Gulf - Kharg Island

Performance Period:

16 months

Provision:

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Poverty in Britain

TEHRAN (FNA)

— All is not good in Britain. According to the United Nations, Britain is a country where a fifth of the population lives in poverty.

The world body says many people have to choose between eating or heating their homes and children go to school hungry. Homelessness is rising and basic services are in crisis, leaving many struggling to cope.

This is the damning indictment, delivered by a UN official, not of a developing economy or a war-torn nation that was turned into a failed state by the United States and its Western allies but the UK — the world's fifth biggest economy.

The UN's Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Philip Alston, says the UK government's austerity-driven policies in the years since the 2008 financial crash have created "a harsh and uncaring ethos" that has removed the social safety net and is driving up poverty. No wonder Prime Minister Theresa May had to resign. This wasn't just about Brexit.

However, the report comes after he visited the UK and spoke to many British people to assess the state of the country.

This should stun no one. A fundamental overhaul of the benefits system and widespread cutbacks have placed increasing pressure on already stretched and underfunded services including the police and doctors. The punitive, mean-spirited and often callous approach taken by government to supporting society's most in need has driven further inequalities. Add to this the ever-increasing military budget for foreign wars and you have a recipe for social disaster.

This includes:

- Significant increases in homelessness and rough sleeping in the years since 2010 — the charity Shelter estimates 320,000 people in Britain are now homeless and research by another charity, Crisis, suggests 24,000 people are sleeping rough, more than twice the government's estimate.
- The shortfall in social housing being built — there are 1.2 million people waiting for social housing.
- Over a tenth of the population experiencing fuel poverty.
- Widespread use of food banks, with more than 2,000 in the UK today compared to just 29 at the height of the financial crisis.
- Children are so hungry they are eating from bins.

Nor is that all. The government has failed to acknowledge the seriousness of the plight caused by poverty in the UK, which doesn't monitor in a comprehensive way. Instead, it's busy helping other countries like Saudi Arabia to create a similar situation in desperate places like Yemen.

The British government should hold its head in shame. It is free to claim the UN report is poorly researched. However, those who have lived in Britain know it better than anyone else that the situation is worse than what the UN had to say.

This includes women and single mothers selling themselves to feed their children, school children having no money to buy food, and many more who have to go to bed hungry with just one meal a day, most of which is cheap and unhealthy processed food anyway.

The UK's growing social inequalities and struggles to deliver inclusive growth are highlighted in the World Economic Forum's Inclusive Development Index 2018 as well, which says the country is lagging behind many of its peers. It ranks 21st overall, falling near the bottom on many of the key indicators including healthy life expectancy and income inequality. So much for the world's fifth biggest economy.



What is Nigel Farage looking for?

Look at the victory of the Brexit Party in the European elections

By Saeed Sobhani

TEHRAN — Although about one week has passed since the European Parliamentary elections, analysts of international affairs are still analyzing the election. The victory of the Brexit Party in Britain is one of the most important issues that has been addressed in this regard. In this regard, we review some articles published in the Western media (on the victory of the Brexit Party).

What to Make of the European Elections Yascha Mounk wrote in The Atlantic that Right-wing populism is still growing—and has already established itself as a fixture on the political stage.

THE SHEER SCALE of the European elections, coupled with the huge differences among the parties that were on the ballot from Sweden to Greece, makes it possible to find evidence for just about any story about the results. Perhaps because the rise of far-right populism has, three years after the surprise victory of Brexit and the shock election of Donald Trump, come to look rather old hat, many publications have opted for a more refreshing narrative: What we saw on Sunday, they say, was a populist wave that ended "in a ripple," or, more simply, "the populist surge that wasn't."

This narrative points to some important facts. Far-right populists had a disappointing night in a number of big countries, including Germany and Spain. Their advance slowed or went into reverse in a few smaller countries where they once looked as though they could pose a real threat, including Denmark and the Netherlands. And though their overall ranks have swelled, they are in no position to take down the European Union anytime soon.

At the same time, these facts only add up to an optimistic takeaway if one's baseline for populist success is unmitigated triumph. The real story here is that right-wing populists are still growing—and have already established themselves as a fixture on the political stage.

WHEN THE FAR-RIGHT Freedom Party joined the Austrian government as a junior coalition partner in 1999, the shocking news of its ascent dominated European headlines for months on end. Statesmen across the continent vowed that they would never treat extremists as legitimate leaders of European nations. The member states of the EU unanimously imposed diplomatic sanctions on Austria.

There were good reasons to hope that the populists' success in Austria would remain a strange aberration. In that year's elections for the European Parliament, far-right extremists failed to break into the double digits in any other country; no-



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where did they win an outright majority.

Twenty years later, it is painfully obvious that the events in Austria were a harbinger of things to come. Movements that are every bit as extreme as the Freedom Party are now in government across large chunks of Europe, from Hungary to Italy. In Sunday's elections, they posted their best results in the history of the European Parliament, entrenching themselves as a major presence in virtually every country across the length and breadth of Europe, and claiming the top spot in some of its most influential states.

In France, Marine Le Pen's National Rally beat Emmanuel Macron's En Marche. In the United Kingdom, Nigel Farage's newly founded Brexit Party took a significantly greater share of the vote than Labour and the Conservative Party combined. In Poland, the far-right Law and Justice bested a broad alliance of moderate politicians. And in Hungary, where Viktor Orbán has already amassed so much power that the country's election results should be interpreted with a healthy dose of skepticism, his Fidesz party once again crushed the opposition.

The results in Italy were especially striking. By engaging in ever more extreme demagoguery against immigrants, Matteo Salvini has transformed the Northern League, a small separatist party fighting for northern independence, into the dominant force in national politics. When he entered government last year, his party was the junior coalition partner to the Five Stars, a populist movement with roots in the political left. Now he has eclipsed his rivals, winning six times as many votes as he did five years ago, and twice as many as he did last year. In the process, he has cemented his position as the likely next prime minister—and radically transformed Italy's political geography.

For 100 years, Tuscany was one of the most reliable strongholds for Italy's left. In the bitter years of Benito Mussolini, brave anti-fascist partisans used to find refuge in the woods that cover the nearby mountain. When democracy returned to Italy, local peasants and tradesmen voted for mayors who proudly belonged to the Italian Communist Party. Even when the parties that had shaped the postwar period disintegrated amid a giant corruption scandal in the early 1990s and Silvio Berlusconi rose to power, most Tuscans dutifully transferred their allegiance to the center-left Democratic Party.

Throughout this period, far-right parties such as the Northern League had little support in the region. As recently as 2014, it barely scratched 3 percent of the vote in the province of Grosseto.

But this century-old tradition has now come to an abrupt end. In Arcidosso, where I have spent a part of every summer for the past dozen years, the Northern League took 39 percent of the vote in Sunday's European elections. In Castel del Piano, a beautiful hilltop town I can see out of my kitchen window, it surged to 41 percent. In Seggiano, a picturesque village I look at from my garden, it got 48 percent.

The cumulative impact of these right-wing-populist victories in Tuscany, in Italy as a whole, and throughout Europe is evident in the overall composition of the European Parliament. While the center-right European People's Party (EPP) has long enjoyed the loudest voice in Brussels, its influence will now be rivaled by the far right. If you add up the different factions of right-wing populists, they now outnumber the EPP. If this is what it looks like when

the populist wave crests, then I suppose we've all become used to living underwater.

It's tempting to imagine that some of the progressive parties that are now in the ascendant across Europe might be able to stem the right-wing tide. As they have shed the radicalism of their founding period, the Greens have, for example, become ever more popular in Germany. Five years ago, they took 11 percent of the vote, finishing third. This time around, they doubled their share of the vote, comfortably taking second place. For the first time in history, they have beaten Germany's Social Democrats in a nationwide election. And Germany's Greens are part of a wider trend: Their sister parties also posted significant gains in France, Portugal, and the United Kingdom. Meanwhile, liberal parties, which tend to pursue more pro-market policies but have similar views on many social issues, performed strongly in Britain, Spain, the Netherlands, and parts of Scandinavia.

But while they have proved very powerful in urban centers and among the highly educated, these parties struggle elsewhere. Young students in Berlin and London feel seen by Germany's Greens and Britain's Liberal Democrats. But a huge cultural and economic gulf separates these parties from the older workers in Wolverhampton, the middle-aged electricians in Gelsenkirchen, and the young shop assistants in Arcidosso who once favored traditional left-wing parties. Despite the success of the Greens, the left across Europe now captures a smaller share of the vote than it did five years ago. (In 2014, the three left-wing factions in the European Parliament held 293 seats between them; now their share has shrunk to 260.)

Thinking of those hills and valleys of Tuscany I love so deeply, and of the locals who have always been so kind and welcoming to me and my friends, I cannot help but hope that they will soon come to regret their support for Salvini's demagoguery. But I also fear that none of the parties that are currently on the political menu in Italy, or in other parts of Europe, is doing very much to lure them back.

Traditional parties have disappointed too many people, too many times. The Greens and the liberals speak a different language, directed at a different audience. For now, only Salvini directly addresses the disenfranchised voters of the Monte Amiata. Unless that changes, he may be able to count on their support for many years to come.

Brexit party in talks to join far-right group in EU parliament

Jennifer Rankin and Angela Giuffrida wrote in The Guardian, that Nigel Farage's Brexit party has been in talks to join the far-right group in the European parliament and is keeping its options open about its future allies, a spokesman for the party has said.

The talks between the Brexit party and Italy's far-right League were first revealed by Marco Zanni, a League MEP, who said talks were going well and could be wrapped up next week.

He told La Repubblica newspaper: "Yes, the talks [with Farage] went very well, we hope to wrap things up next week. We're at a good point. Obviously he has to say that he has more [than one] option, but it's a good agreement and would be beneficial for us all to be together."

But the Brexit party played down Zanni's remarks, saying Farage wanted to maintain a separate Eurosceptic grouping, the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD).

Here was Nigel unplugged. His narciss-

ism and self-deceit exposed

Also John Crace wrote in Guardian that a spokesman for Farage confirmed a meeting had taken place. "Yes, Nigel met former EFDD group member Marco Zanni MEP in public in Place du Luxembourg [next to the European parliament in Brussels] and had a coffee. Farage is working to maintain EFDD. He has lots of meetings today and next week."

Asked whether Farage would rule out joining the Salvini group, the spokesman said: "We will keep our options open. Our first priority is to maintain the group, but we are speaking to all parties and we are keeping our options open."

He said Farage was also in talks with Italy's Five Star Movement (M5S), the Brexit party's current ally in the European parliament. "We haven't ruled anybody out."

Salvini, Italy's deputy prime minister, hopes to bring Farage and his Brexit party MEPs into a far-right grouping that already includes Le Pen's National Rally, Austria's Freedom party and Belgium's Vlaams Belang. The Finns party and the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) are also expected to join.

While the group does little EU work, it has a common agenda of hostility to immigrants and foreigners. With Salvini at the interior ministry, Italy has turned away boats carrying people rescued at sea, and announced measures to discriminate against late-night grocery stores, which are often run by immigrants.

The former AfD leader Frauke Petry said German border police should be allowed to shoot at refugees crossing the border illegally. National Rally and the Freedom party, which have roots in antisemitic movements, have both been embroiled in corruption scandals, while presenting themselves as anti-elite parties.

Farage has previously ruled out working with Le Pen because he did not want his former party, Ukip, associated with her party, the former Front National.

The Brexit party is one of the largest national delegations in the European parliament, with 29 MEPs, as many as Angela Merkel's centre-right CDU-CSU alliance.

However, being the largest national party does not count for much in Brussels and Strasbourg without membership of a pan-European group, the conduit to greater funding and longer speaking slots. Ukip's success stemmed partly from access to EU funds and the platform of the European parliament. Both were magnified by being part of a bigger Eurosceptic group.

Under EU rules, a group must have at least 25 MEPs from seven member states, a threshold that has traditionally made it harder for non-mainstream parties to form alliances.

Farage currently leads the EFDD, which also includes Italy's populist M5S and smaller Eurosceptic parties. But M5S is seeking new allies, risking the breakup of the Farage-led coalition.

Farage's leadership of the group has given him prime-time speaking slots in European parliamentary debates with EU leaders.

If Farage joined the Salvini-Le Pen "League of Leagues" it would be a coup for Italy's populist leader, making the far-right group the fourth-largest in the European parliament.

Known as the Europe of Nations and Freedom, the group has 58 MEPs and is one of the smallest in parliament, behind the centre-right, centre-left, liberals, greens and Tory-led Eurosceptic group.

Salvini name-checked Farage in his victory speech on Sunday night, after his League party topped the EU election polls in Italy.

"Not only is the League the first party in Italy, but also Marine Le Pen is the first party in France, Nigel Farage is the first party in the UK ... It is the sign of a Europe that is changing."

But if Farage moves his forces into the Salvini group, there are no guarantees he would have a leadership role.

Speaking in Brussels, the newly re-elected Brexit party MEP Jonathan Bullcock said his preference was to keep the EFDD going.

It is unclear whether Brexit party MEPs would back a move to join Salvini and Le Pen. Of the 29 Brexit party MEPs, 26 will be new to the European parliament.

Le Pen, who has tried and failed to work with Farage, said before last weekend's elections she did not know whether the Brexit party leader would join her group.

Speaking at a far-right rally in Milan earlier this month, Le Pen said: "Nigel Farage leads the EFDD group, we don't know if this group will be able to maintain itself as all the cards will be reshuffled after the elections."

Zanni was elected to the European parliament in 2014 for M5S and became part of Farage's group. But he later defected to join the League, making the switch to the far-right group in the European parliament.

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The international Quds Day

1 → Among other questions arising: was any tangible achievements made in the over seven decades of peace talks? Any optimism in the future? To what extent is the negotiator accused of double standard? Then, in whose interest does America work in the process? The other side of the conflict reveals the gainful arms trade to American and other European manufacturers.

On the ambitious liberation of Palestine, many thought the Arab league formed in 1945, with the aim of strengthening ties among member states, could coordinate their policies and protect their common interests. But what were the achievements of the league? To what extent did the league and its sister Palestinian liberation organization (PLO) achieve their stated objectives?

The question is how could the Arab league and PLO, established on the basis of Arabism or Nationalism lead to emancipation of Palestine while the same Nationalism was used to destabilize the grand Ottoman Empire and establish Israel in its place? No doubt, Quds Day is the only measure relevant for Quds liberation; the third holiest mosque and the first direction of Muslims.

Unity is the force behind the call of this great Islamic personality, and ultimate hope for liberation of Palestine and other world oppressed. George Curzon, the British Secretary of state for foreign affairs, 1911-1921 said "we must put an end to anything which brings about Islamic unity between the sons of the Muslims.

As we have already succeeded in finishing off the caliphate, so we must ensure that there will never arise again unity for the Muslims, whether it be intellectual or cultural unity" "And hold fast, all together, by the rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves" Q3:103. That is why the spiritual leader of the Islamic revolution in Iran, Ayatollah Sayyed Ali Khamenei maintains that the ISIS clearly serves the American interest in the Middle-east accusing any cooperation with the U.S. to resolve the Iraqi or Syrian situation of sowing discord and divisions in the region.

In a borderless sympathy, the day basically sympathizes with Palestinians and other oppressed regardless of all odds, and to fight oppression and injustice as common enemies. The Imam bitterly debunked



Since the unfortunate 2015 Zaria massacre, and non-response of the government, endless questions are raised; what was the actual rationale behind the attack on the Islamic movement? On what ground was the Sheikh arrested?

apartheid and helped Nelson Mandela in the fight against it. On the other hand, Mandela said "the independence of South Africa was incomplete without the freedom of Palestine". And on his first visit to Tehran after release from long incarceration, he appreciated the fatherly role of the Imam and Iran's historic support. Late Hugo Chavez observed the day where he would be seen in the forefront of the events among other protesters in his country.

The world is aware of the unfortunate Saudi military campaign against Yemen since 2015. Ironically, it's a deliberate aggression by the richest and most influential Muslim Arab nation against the poorest and closest neighbor. The consequence of the aggression in Yemen is what the united nation described as the worst humanitarian crises in contemporary history. We use this occasion to champion the cause of other world oppressed in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Nigeria, and Central Africa among others.

Since the unfortunate 2015 Zaria massacre, and non-response of the government, endless questions are raised; what was the actual rationale behind the attack on the Islamic movement? On what ground was the Sheikh arrested? In whose interest are the elderly and ailing Sheikh, his wife and other disciples being detained? What is the government's stand on the Federal High Court verdict?

Why does the government disregard calls of millions of Nigerians on the need to take him abroad for medication? And to what extent will the detention continue? What is the stand of the government on the over one thousand Nigerians killed in Zaria, Kano, and Abuja evidently recorded, and related incidences? This also exposes the lies of the so called developed nations who claim leading positions in protection and promotion of fundamental human rights across the world.

What a double stand! If peace, unity and progress of this country were the uncom-

promising yardsticks to assess significant relevance of the citizenry, who can dare to compare his eminence, the indefatigable leader of the Islamic Movement, Sheikh Ibraheem el-Zakzaky with any scholar, politician or else in our contemporary history?

With the access of the London-based Islamic Human Rights Commission; an august umbrella of about 30 Islamic and other nongovernmental organizations of global network for justice, to the ailing Sheikh and his wife last month, an assessment of their health was made by a team of experts mainly from India. The development was consequent to the Sheikh's lawyer's incessant notice on their clients health in court sessions as known to all for which the judge mandated the exercise for the duo.

It is imperative to acknowledge the effort by the people wishing peace to reign and justice to prevail all over the world. As emphasized by the Imam "the Quds Day is a universal day. It is not an exclusive day for Quds itself. It is a day for the oppressed to rise and stand up against the arrogant."

Presently, the world is aware of the US and its allies heightening pressures on Iran fuelling fears for a possible war. The Iranophobia is meant to limit its growing might and influence in the region which is apparently non-achievable. America's withdrawal from JCPOA, continuous moral and military support to Israel and incessant interference in the region is not unconnected with Iran's impressive role in its security and wellbeing. There is no doubt that there is always limit to oppression. At this juncture, the famous words of Sheikh el-Zakzaky, as he gave hope to oppressed especially Palestinians are relevant "Israel was created by terrorism. No matter the years of oppression, it will crumble"

While sympathizing with the Palestinians on this day, we denounce the enemies' unending brutality and bloodshed especially in Yemen, Somalia and Nigeria among others. We use the same medium to emphasize the urgent need for the unconditional release of Sheikh Ibraheem el-Zakzaky (H) and his disciples. As we mark the day of the oppressed, we also appreciate the role of all justice seeking and concerned individuals and organizations on the plight of Palestinians and other oppressed.

The Pence Prophecy: VP Predicts Perpetual War at the West Point graduation



By Maj. Danny Sjursen

ANTIWAR — Time was that a stint, or even a career, in the military did not necessarily translate into any serious combat duty. That may seem hard to believe eighteen years after 9/11, but this middle-aged middling major is just old enough to remember such a bygone era. As a cadet at West Point (2001-05), having joined the army just months before the September 11 attacks, most of my professors and tactical officers had never been to war. The colonels had joined in the early 1980s and, at worst, saw limited combat in the petite (and absurd) conflicts in Panama and/or Grenada. The captains and majors commissioned in the early 1990s. As such, most just missed Persian Gulf War 1.0, a few deployed to Somalia or the Balkans, and most hadn't seen the elephant at all.

Back then, soldiers trained for war but didn't necessarily expect to fight in one. The Cold War, post-Vietnam army was built as much to contain America's enemies, and to deter war, as it was to actually engage in combat. Those days seem charmingly quaint from the viewpoint of 2019. Indeed, when I entered the U.S. Military Academy on July 2, 2001, my expectation was to travel the world and maybe do some light peacekeeping in Bosnia or Kosovo, not to fight extended wars. How naive that seems now.

Instead I spent a career training for and deploying to wars across the Greater Middle East. Hell, that's been the story of my entire generation of soldiers. When I graduated in 2005, this still seemed unique and profound. More than a decade later it's simply the mundane way of things. So it was, this past week, that Vice President Mike Pence addressed the graduating class at West Point, and reminded them to prepare for ever more war.

The content of this bellicose, and banal, speech should have been remarkable; should have raised Americans' collective "spidey-sense." Instead, hardly anyone noticed that Pence, like a Punxsutawney groundhog, was veritably predicting many more years of winter (read: warfare). Still, the vice president's oratory was disturbing on a number of levels.

First off, he bragged about President Trump's absurd military budget and explained that the cadets should be honored to join "an Army that's better equipped, better trained, and better supplied than any United States Army in the history of this country." Evidence for such an assertion was glaringly absent, and none in the audience had the opportunity to ask why this unsurpassed army hasn't won a single war in this century. Also absent was any discussion of the tradeoffs inherent in ballooning defense spending, the opportunity costs of such largesse, or an explanation as to why the US spends more on its military than the next seven nations combined. And why should he have brought any of this up? Defense spending is politically popular; it's the one type of public outlay that draws essentially no criticism.

Next, Pence engaged in some genuine truth-telling that revealed the nature of military service in a time of forever war. He informed the cadets that "It is a virtual certainty that you will fight on a battlefield for America at some point in your life. You will lead soldiers in combat. It will happen." This should have been a controversial statement, an alarming prophecy of perpetual war. Only in 2019 that's the norm for military members and their families. They should expect combat, because almost no mainstream political figures demonstrate the capacity or intent to reign in the American war machine.

Pence went further, though, and actually listed out where these newly minted officers should expect to fight. Sure he listed the usual suspects — "Some of you will join the fight against radical Islamic terrorists in Afghanistan and Iraq" — so apparently the war on terror will roar on indefinitely. However, Pence also listed a few other places where the young officers will join "the fight," including the "Korean peninsula," the South China Sea, and Europe (against "an aggressive Russia"). Mind you, there are — as of yet — no actual shooting wars in any of these locales, thus labeling them ongoing "fights" is both provocative and irresponsible.

Nevertheless, the true surprise, and most distressing of all, was the VP's casual assertion that "some of you may even be called upon to serve in this hemisphere." This was a clear reference to Venezuela, Washington's stated policy of regime change there, and to the recent kick off of Cold War 2.0 with what John Bolton labeled the "troika of tyranny" — Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua. Never mind that not a single one of these tinpot tyrannies presents a significant threat to the US, Pence still gleefully paraded the old ghost, and villain, of "socialism." It was all so 1980s!

Pence's retro foreign policy, and outrageously pugnacious rhetoric befit the actions of an empire, not a republic. His casual assumption that today's young graduates — most of whom were kindergarteners on 9/11 — will see combat in both ongoing and future wars reflects life in an increasingly militaristic and unhinged society. That such crazy is so routine is even more problematic.

The normalization of war can be just as detrimental to a republic as war itself. The barbarians are not at the gates, folks. War is not a foregone conclusion or a national necessity. Each successive occupant of the White House only needs you to believe that in order to centralize the power of an increasingly imperial presidency, stifle dissent, and chip away at what remains of civil liberties.

Seen in its proper context, Pence's speech would have raised alarm bells in a healthy, functioning republic. But America in 2019 is far from that. Instead, the VP's staggeringly absurd speech registered as barely a blip on the media's 24-hour news cycle. After eighteen years of perpetual conflict, members of the military, and the populace at large, have grown immune to the inertia of war. As such, the republic's bleeding is internal, as American Democracy dies a slow, opaque death from the inside out. It may be too late to reverse course, and one wonders if a distracted and apathetic public even notices...

Trump no longer has hope for Washington!

By Ali Azimi

TEHRAN — After the victory in the 2016 presidential election, the president of the United States tried to bring some of the country's constituencies into the presidential election in 2020. Trump and his entourage believed that their victory in some blue states (Democrats), Could ensure the victory of the President of the United States in the upcoming presidential election. But Trump's calculations were wrong!

Not only Trump is not hoping for victory in these states, but also fearing loss of victory in some key states!

For example, Hillary Clinton carried Washington by a half-million votes in 2016, a margin almost entirely built in populous King County. In a new survey, done for the Northwest Progressive Institute, PPP found that 35% of Washington voters approve the performance of our 45th president, while 61% give Trump a thumbs-down. Just 4% are unsure.

If the election were held today, 34% would vote for Trump while 59% would vote for his Democratic opponent. Another 7% are not sure. The President's base was -- you guessed it -- 35% a year ago.

Public Policy Polling has Democratic roots, but was famous for delivering bad news on Obama approval ratings, and predicting the "shellacking" (Obama's word) received by the Dems in the 2010 and 2014 midterm elections. The PPP poll in Washington was done for a liberal net-roots organization.

A poll is a snapshot in time, and presidents can rebound from first term lows. Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton and Obama all trailed in trial heats during the second and third years of their administrations

With Trump, however, there has been a narrow range. He has -- nationally -- a base of support of 40-42%. During periods of low tweets and high economic growth, he has climbed to the mid-40s. The lowest Trump has fallen is 39%.

The President rallies his base in states where it is larger, particularly the "Rust Belt" states of Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania that were keys to his 2016 victory.

Washington hasn't been a target since George W. Bush made a serious effort here in 2000. Ronald Reagan, in 1984, was the last Republican presidential candidate to carry the Evergreen State.

The PPP figures pose a challenge to Republicans in key 2020 races in this state. Statewide candidates will need to substantially surpass the base Trump vote -- without making it mad -- if they hope to win.

The Republicans' bid to recapture the 8th Congressional District, lost in 2018 after 38 years of Republican House members, will be complicated by its big King County vote. King County elected rookie Democratic U.S. Rep. Kim Schrier.

"Trump's presence on the ballot next year could be like an anvil that drags the entire ticket," said Andrew Villeneuve of Northwest Progressive Institute.

The Republicans hold three of the state's 10 U.S. House seats, and the Secretary of State and State Treasurer offices. State Sen. Phil Fortunato, an outspoken Republican conservative, is looking at a race for Governor.

In other hand, Trump's approval rating among registered voters stands at 44 percent, while a majority of voters, 56 percent, say they disapprove of the job he is doing, a new Hill-HarrisX survey found.



The May 24-25 poll showed Trump's approval rating unchanged from the previous May 13-14 survey. Overall, Trump's approval rating is down slightly from April Hill-HarrisX surveys, which had the president at 46 percent approval.

The primary reason for the shift appears to be a decline in support for Trump among self-described political independents. In the latest survey, the president received the support of 35 percent of independents, down from the 43 percent who supported him in the previous May 13-14 survey and from his most recent high of 50 percent in early February.

Hill-HarrisX research has also shown a recent decline in respondents who "somewhat approve" of Trump. In the May 24-25 survey, 20 percent of voters said this, down from 24 percent who said the same in the April 14 poll.

"It's not enough, he has to have some sort of play to those who consider themselves independents here," Republican pollster BJ Martino told Hill.TV on Wednesday, adding that Trump should start emphasizing the nation's economy more than other issues.

The lower numbers for the president come amid ongoing clashes with congressional Democrats, with the White House refusing to turn over subpoenaed documents to House Democrats and Trump seeking to put pressure on lawmakers to end oversight inquiries into the administration and his personal finances.

Trump's rating among registered Republican voters remains high in the latest poll, with 83 percent saying they like his job performance. Similarly, the number of respondents who "strongly approve" of the president has remained at about 24 percent in recent months, according to the poll.

In less-populated areas, Trump continues to receive majority support. Fifty-four percent of respondents said they approved of his job performance, higher than the 43 percent of suburban residents and 37 percent of urban res-

idents who agreed.

The president continued to receive low marks from Democratic respondents, only 17 percent of whom said they liked how he is doing his official duties.

The latest Hill-HarrisX survey was conducted online from a statistically representative panel of 1,001 registered voters with a 95 percent confidence level and a 3.1 percent sampling margin of error.

The President of the United States has been working hard to win the next presidential election these days! Trump's recently announced immigration proposal is designed to attract independents for 2020, Republican pollster B.J. Martino said in an interview that aired Wednesday on Hill.TV.

"I think this immigration proposal, as I said, is a campaign document," Martino, a partner at the Tarrance Group, told Hill.TV's Jamal Simmons on "What America's Thinking."

"They are proposing keeping the level of immigration overall the same, which to the president's base and some of those on the anti-immigration side wanted to see that number come down, at least in a nominal way. And they refused to in this document," he said.

"The things that they put forward here they know are unacceptable to the left, and to the House," Martino added. "Nothing is going to get out that looks like this president's bill, but he's talking to those independent voters here saying, 'We need to have a higher educated immigrant with more job skills who can integrate into this new modern new economy that we have.'"

Trump rolled out what he called a merit-based immigration plan earlier this month. The proposal favors highly skilled workers over migrants with family members living in the U.S.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) said the plan would be "dead on arrival" in the Democratic-controlled House, adding that the plan was "not a remotely serious proposal."

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NASA's Curiosity rover locates a whole lot of clay on Mars

Scientists sent NASA's Curiosity rover looking for clay, and according to the latest mission update, the spacecraft obliged. It turns out, the target region known as the "clay-bearing unit" boasts a whole lot of clay.

Curiosity recently analyzed a pair of freshly drilled rock samples, dubbed "Aberlady" and "Kilmarie." The samples were tested using the rover's mineralogy instrument, called CheMin. The test results revealed the highest concentration of clay minerals yet measured in rock samples collected by Curiosity.

Because clay often forms in water, finding and studying clay deposits on Mars could help better explain the Red Planet's watery past, as well as the potential for Mars to host extraterrestrial life.

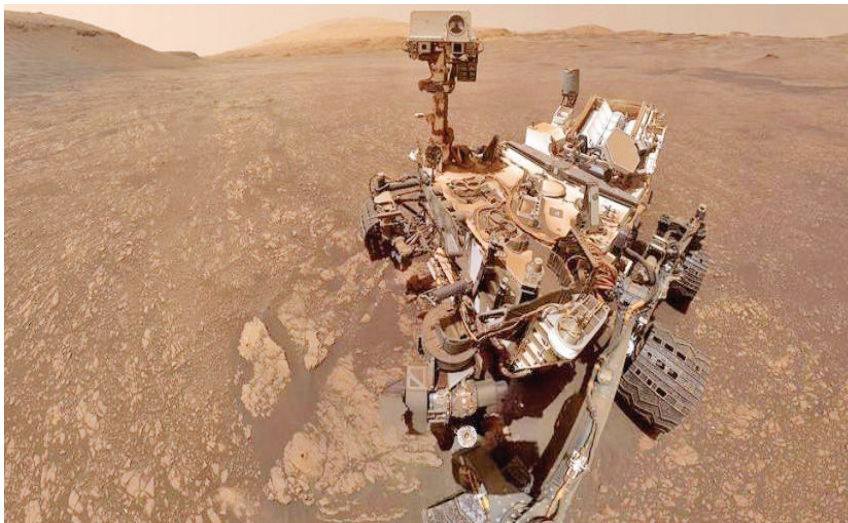
The confirmed presence of large amounts of clay in Gale Crater, where Curiosity and the clay-bearing unit are located,

suggests the crater was once filled with water. Scientists suspect the clay formed as sediments and water interacted over long periods of time. The rocks formed as layers of lake-bottom mud became compressed over millions of years.

The Mars 2020 mission will also focus on the Mars geologic history, specifically its history of water and its potential habitability. This week, NASA shared an image of the landing site for the Mars 2020 mission, Jezero Crater.

Like Gale Crater, scientists suspect Jezero Crater was once filled with water. Its watery history is visible in the sedimentary formations that texture its interior surface, as well as its outer contours. Like Curiosity, Mars 2020 is likely to find clay deposits when it finally lands in Jezero Crater.

(Source: UPI)



Why these human-sized beavers suddenly died out 10,000 years ago

Giant beavers the size of black bears once roamed the lakes and wetlands of North America. Fortunately for cottage-goers, these mega-rodents died out at the end of the last ice age.

Now extinct, the giant beaver was once a highly successful species. Scientists have found its fossil remains at sites from Florida to Alaska and the Yukon.

A super-sized version of the modern beaver in appearance, the giant beaver tipped the scales at 100 kilograms. But it had two crucial differences.

The giant beaver lacked the iconic paddle-shaped tail we see on today's modern beavers. Instead it had a long skinny tail like a muskrat. The teeth also looked different. Modern beaver incisors (front teeth) are sharp and chisel-like; giant beaver incisors were bulkier and curved, and lacked a sharp cutting edge. The species suddenly became extinct 10,000 years ago. The disappearance of the giant beaver coincides with that of many other large-bodied ice age animals, including the iconic woolly mammoth. But until now scientists didn't know for certain why the giant rodent had died out.

We need to understand how the giant beaver lived in order to explain how and why it died out. For example, did it run out of food? Did it get too cold or too hot for it to survive?

Other studies found the giant beaver thrived when the climate was warmer and wetter. They also noticed that giant beaver



fossils were most commonly found in sediments that come from ancient wetlands. But no one knew if the giant beaver behaved like the modern beaver. Did it also cut down trees? Or did it eat something completely different?

From a chemical perspective, you are what you eat! The food an animal consumes contains chemical signatures called stable isotopes that are incorporated into body tissues such as bone.

These isotopic signatures remain stable over time, for tens of thousands of years, and provide a window into the past. No other studies have used stable isotopes to figure out the giant beaver's diet.

We studied fossil bones from giant beavers that lived in the Yukon and Ohio between 50,000 and 10,000 years ago. We looked at the stable isotope signatures of the ancient bone tissues.

The isotopic signatures linked to woody plants are different from those associated with aquatic plants. We discovered that the giant beaver was not cutting down and eating trees. Instead, it was eating aquatic plants.

This strongly suggests that the giant beaver was not an "ecosystem engineer" like the modern beaver. It was not cutting down trees for food or building giant lodges and dams across the ice age landscape.

Instead, this diet of aquatic plants made the giant beaver highly dependent on wetland habitat for both food and shelter from predators. It also made it vulnerable to climate change.

Towards the end of the last ice age 10,000 years ago, the climate became increasingly warm and dry and wetland habitats began to dry up. Although the modern beavers and the giant beaver co-existed on the landscape for tens of thousands of years, only one species survived. The ability to build dams and lodges may have given the modern beaver a competitive advantage over the giant beaver. With its sharp teeth, the modern beaver could alter the landscape to create suitable wetland habitat where it needed it. The giant beaver couldn't.

This all fits into the puzzle that many research groups have been working on for decades: we all want to know what caused the global megafauna extinction event that occurred at the end of the last ice age and why so many species of large-bodied animals — woolly mammoths, mastodons and giant ground sloths — disappeared at roughly the same time. Current evidence indicates that a combination of climate change and human impact were the driving causes behind these extinctions.

Studying the ecological vulnerabilities of long-extinct animals certainly poses its own unique challenges, but it is important to understand the impact of climate change on all species, past or present.

(Source: Live Science)

This seawater is 20,000 years old, remained untouched since the last ice age

Twenty thousand years ago, life on Earth was a lot cooler. It was the tail end of a 100,000-year ice age — also called the Last Glacial Maximum — and massive sheets of ice covered much of North America, Northern Europe and Asia. (If they had been around at the time, New York City, Berlin and Beijing would all have been entombed in ice.)

Scientists are used to studying this chilly spell in Earth's history by looking at things like coral fossils and seafloor sediments, but now a team of seafaring researchers may have found a piece of the past that blows all the others out of the water: an actual sample of 20,000-year-old seawater, squeezed out of an ancient rock formation from the Indian Ocean.

According to the researchers, who described the find in a study to be published in the July 2019 issue of the journal *Geochimica et Cosmochimica Acta*, this find represents the first direct remnant of the ocean as it appeared during Earth's last ice age.

The researchers found their watery prize while drilling sediment core samples out of the underwater limestone deposits that make up the Maldives archipelago in South Asia. After hauling each core onto their research vessel, the team sliced up the rock like a tube of cookie dough and put the pieces into a hydraulic press that squeezed any remnant moisture out of the pores.

When the researchers tested the composition of these fresh-pressed water samples aboard their ship, they were surprised to find that the water was extremely salty — far saltier than the Indian Ocean is today. They did more tests back on land to look at the specific elements and isotopes (versions of elements) that made up the water, and all the results seemed out of place in the modern ocean.

In fact, everything about these water samples indicated that they came from a time when the ocean was significantly saltier, colder and more chlorinated — exactly as it is thought to have been during the Last Glacial Maximum, when ice sheets sucked up ocean water and dropped sea levels to hundreds of feet below current levels.

"From all indications, it looks pretty clear we now have an actual piece of this 20,000-year-old ocean," lead study author Clara Blättler, an assistant professor of geophysical sciences at the University of Chicago, said in a statement.

If these results indeed hold water, the new samples provide the first direct look at how the ocean reacted to the geophysical swings of the last ice age. This understanding could lead to improved climate models to help understand our own changing world, Blättler said, as "any model you build of the climate has to be able to accurately predict the past."

(Source: Live Science)

70% of world's macadamia can be traced back to single Australian tree

The small Queensland town of Gympie has been identified as the origin of 70% of the world's macadamia nuts.

New research into the fatty seed has revealed the world's dominant commercial cultivar — grown in Hawaii — originated from a single tree in southern Queensland from the 19th century.

Native to Australia, macadamia trees are only found naturally in southern Queensland and northern New South Wales. The Hawaiian macadamia industry was grown from one cultivar from Australia that was repeatedly cloned.

This means the commercial macadamia tree has an incredibly low genetic diversity, and researchers hope their findings will spur the discovery of wild trees and more "novel genes".

Genetic diversity would improve crop productivity, increase disease resistance and enable macadamia to be grown in new places, said one of the researchers, Dr Craig Hardner. By looking

at genetic markers, Hardner, from the University of Queensland, and Dr Catherine Nock, from Southern Cross University, traced the origins of Hawaii's whole industry back to Queensland.

The Hawaiian cultivar had distinctive gene markers in common with a tiny crop of trees in the small locality of Mooloo, near Gympie, 160km north of the state capital Brisbane. Historical records showed that seeds from these trees were taken to Honolulu in 1896.

Despite being found in a narrow band of subtropical rainforest, Australia's native macadamia had a rich diversity compared with the commercial crops, Hardner said.

This means there is hope for diverse genes to be discovered in Australian forests and even in backyards.

"There is a really strong geographic pattern," he said. "All the diversity that exists comes from south-east Queensland and northern NSW.

Certainly the Hawaiian germplasm is very narrow, so it has only come from one locality."

The researchers found that some unique genetic markers in commercial trees could not be matched with known wild trees.

Hardner said this meant either those diverse genes had been lost in the wild, through land clearing, or that they continued to exist in domestic cultivated plants.

"We suggested maybe some of that diversity that has been lost is in cultivated plants, parks, gardens or people's backyards," he said.

The oldest known cultivated macadamia tree is in Brisbane's city botanic gardens, first planted in 1858. Hardner said the next step was to focus on forest conservation.

Macadamias are a major export crop for Australia. In 2017, they made up 14% of the value of all horticultural exports.

(Source: The Guardian)

NASA picks three companies to send cargo to the moon

Three small companies that built robotic lunar landers are getting big business from NASA.

Texas-based Intuitive Machines, Astrobot of Pittsburgh, and a group called OrbitBeyond were each selected by NASA to deliver science and research cargo to the moon. The companies could complete their first missions within the next couple of years, executives and NASA officials said Friday.

The cargo will include devices that will help map and navigate the lunar surface, measure radiation levels, conduct scientific investigations, and assess how human activity impacts the moon, NASA said in a press release.

The partnerships are part of the US space agency's Commercial Lunar Payload Services, or CLPS program, which was announced last year and includes up to \$2.6 billion worth of contracts.

For this first batch of awards, Astrobot will get \$79.5 million, Intuitive was awarded \$77 million, and Orbit Beyond will receive \$97 million. Astrobot and Intuitive plan to launch their first missions in 2021, while Orbit Beyond expects to land on the moon by September 2020.

"Today, NASA becomes a customer of commercial partners who will deliver our science instruments and our lunar technology to the moon," NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine said in a video about the announcement. "The landers and instruments they deliver — and the science, technology and research that will be done in the immediate future — will prepare the way for humanity's return to the moon by 2024," he said.

NASA has been publicly pushing its plan to return astronauts to the moon within five years. The program is called Artemis, and it would mark the first crewed deep-space mission in nearly half a century. The program, however, faces political hurdles, and it's not clear where the money will come from.

The space agency wants commercial companies to play a big role in reaching its lunar goals. NASA is separately looking to the private sector for a lunar lander capable of ferrying humans to and from the lunar surface. Boeing (BA), Lockheed Martin (LMT), Elon Musk's SpaceX, and Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin are among the companies vying for those contracts.

For the CLPS program, however, NASA is focused only on lunar landers that can haul cargo — not people.

Because the landers were privately developed, Astrobot, Intuitive and OrbitBeyond will still own their technology and be able to sell their services to other commercial companies. NASA will just be another customer.

Right now, there aren't a lot of business opportunities on the moon, said Laura Forczyk, a consultant and founder of research firm Astralytical. So NASA contracts are a key lifeline startups hoping to get into this line of work.

But that could change.

NASA and others want to create a lunar outpost that would require large amounts of infrastructure and the technology to do things like convert the moon's water ice into rocket fuel. There's also valuable resources on the moon that could be mined for a variety of uses. Ultimately, it could become a hub of commercial and government activity.

"NASA's vision for human habitation on the moon will drive the cislunar economy to grow exponentially," OrbitBeyond partner TeamIndus wrote in a recent blog post. "OrbitBeyond estimates it to exceed a \$3 billion annual market in 5-7 years."

(Source: CNN)

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Iran showcasing tourism at China fair

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — A number of Iranian travel-associated businesses, tour operators, artists and artisans represent the Islamic Republic at the CMT China, a fair for holidays and leisure, which opened in Nanjing on Friday. Iran runs ten stands at the three-day exhibit with the aim of presenting investment opportunities, national legends and tourist destinations to the visitors, CHTN reported.



“China is a top priority of Iran’s target markets,” Mohammad-Ebrahim Larijani, the director of advertising and marketing office of the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, said earlier in May. On the whole, the organizers of the CMT China welcomed about 447 exhibitors from 31 countries. The fair offers a wealth of interesting travel offers and expert advice with tips on travel preparation and route planning for your personal vacation planning.

A zip line off of the Eiffel tower is opening in Paris for a limited time

Daredevils looking to get a mesmerizing view over Paris could have the lucky chance to take a zip line off of the second floor of the Eiffel Tower. Perrier is back with its popular attraction, Smash Perrier, inviting people to whizz from the monumental tower to the 18th century 7^{ème} arrondissement, this June. The attraction is opening to align with both the French Open, which takes place through June 9, and the 130th anniversary of the Eiffel Tower this year, inviting lucky winners to take a ride at speeds of 90 km (about 56 miles per hour). The zip line, which mimics the speed a tennis ball can have after a powerful serve, gives riders a view of the city at a height of over 377 feet. Take a look at the video to see what the thrilling ride is like: Those interested in getting the one-of-a-kind aerial views of the City of Light are invited to apply for the free spots through random drawings on Perrier’s Instagram. Drawings are open from May 29 through June 2, with participants asked to post a story using the Smash Perrier stickers, tagging their location, and mentioning @perrierfr for a chance to win. Be sure to be on the lookout though, as the company will be notifying winners through direct message on the platform to secure the winning spots. For those who visit Paris, the Eiffel Tower also hosts a restaurant on the first floor where diners can enjoy multi-course meals while taking in panoramic views of Palais de Chaillot and the tower’s architecture from its interior. (Source: travelandleisure.com)

ROUND THE GLOBE Monastery of the Hieronymites and Tower of Belem

Standing tall at the entrance to Lisbon harbor in Portugal, the Monastery of the Hieronymites – construction of which began in 1502 – exemplifies Portuguese art at its best. The nearby Tower of Belem, built to commemorate Vasco da Gama’s expedition, is a reminder of the great maritime discoveries that laid the foundations of the modern world. The serial property has been inscribed on UNESCO World Heritage list since 1983.



The Monastery of the Hieronymites is a royal foundation that dates back to the late 15th century. It was commissioned by King D. Manuel I and donated to the monks of Saint Hieronymus so that they would pray for the King, and pay spiritual assistance to seafarers that left the shores of Lisbon in quest for the new world. The monastery was also built to perpetuate the memory of Prince Henry the Navigator. Its very rich ornamentation derives from the exuberance typical of Manueline art. Being symbolically linked to the Age of Discoveries, the monastery still preserves most of its magnificent structures, including its 16th-century Cloister, the friars’ former Refectory, and the Library. Created by the royal dynasty of Avis at its height, the complex of Belem is one of the most representative examples of Portuguese power during the Age of Discoveries. The Monastery of the Hieronymites and Tower of Belem are a unique and exceptional testimony to a 15th and 16th-century civilization and culture. They reflect the power, knowledge and courage of the Portuguese people at a time when they consolidated their presence and domain of intercontinental trade routes. (Source: UNESCO)

New tourism destinations should be made known: official

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran’s deputy chief of tourism has suggested that lesser-known travel destinations should be properly introduced to people in order to have a balanced domestic tourism. “We can advise people about the right manners of traveling. The public are accustomed to [go on] spontaneous solo trips that bear high costs, while they can be ushered to quality travels, [which can be] arranged by the private sector,” CHTN quoted Vali Teymouri as saying on Saturday. Talking about current state of domestic tourism in the country, the official said, “Though, the economic situation of people has been changed, traveling is still on the agenda for them [referring to the months of economic recession and sharp rises in the value of foreign currencies, which were triggered by the U.S.-imposed sanctions],” he explained. For instance, people continued to have [traditional] travels this Noruz [holidays] despite the economic pressure, countrywide flooding and rising floodwaters, he said, adding “It shows that traveling is still a priority for our people and is part of the household expenses.” “For the time being, it is important that we can provide further and cheaper travel [packages] for the people. The Cultural



Domestic travelers set up their tents in visits to Mazandaran province, northern Iran. Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization acts just as a planner and it cannot do anything about allocating funds for people’s travels.” Traditionally, millions of Iranians hit the roads heading for the provinces of Mazandaran and Gilan, Khorasan Razavi, Isfahan, Fars, Bushehr, Hormozgan, and Khuzestan in summertime and during Noruz holidays, which results in heavy traffics and extra rise of costs. Some 18 million people made domestic

travels during the two-week New Year (Noruz) holidays, starting March 21, which shows a six percent year-on-year increase, based on data compiled by the CHHTO. Commenting on ways to promote tourism, Teymouri said, “Lending to people is not a right and rational manner [to promote tourism]. In this context, an effective action is to give guidance... Instead of going to places that are lots of traffic jam and packed with tourists, people can change their destinations to where that there is still demand.” “In such destinations, costs are often cheaper than other places. This way, the main goal of the Tourism Organization, which is a balanced distribution of travelling in the country, can be achieved.” Earlier in March, CHHTO Director Ali-Asghar Mounesan estimated that domestic trips would grow by 20 percent in Noruz, 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.” Iran embraces a good number of ancient cultural heritage and monuments including bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, gardens, rich natural, rural landscapes as well as 22 UNESCO World Heritage sites.

Tehran street designated as accessible tourism destination for all

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — Si-e Tir, a historical stone-paved one-way street in downtown Tehran, has been designated as an accessible tourism destination for all people, deputy tourism chief has said. Introduced by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the creation of the international “Accessible Tourism Destination” aims to make sure that a destination can be enjoyed by any tourist, regardless of their physical, sensory or cognitive abilities. Development and implementation of the Accessible Tourism Destination(s), that shifts the focus on the availability of tourism services for people with disabilities and veterans, is jointly on the agenda of the UNWTO and the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, CHTN quoted Vali Teymouri as saying on Saturday. “Currently, entry to the operational phase of the project ‘Accessible Tourism Destination’ is being explored,” he said. “With the help of international support and cross-cutting interactions, including the abilities of decision-making bodies in this arena, we can use all of tourism facilities and services to be offered to all tourists, especially the handicapped and war veterans.” The official stated Si-e Tir St. is suitable for being an



People are seen at street cafes on historic Si-e Tir St. in downtown Tehran. “Accessible Tourism Destination”, saying “Hotels, travel agencies, museums and, in general, all tourist centers of this street can be equipped for the use of handicapped and veterans according to the UNWTO specifications.

Ancient people watched a volcano erupt. This may be their illustration of it

After a treacherous volcanic eruption during the Bronze Age, curious humans and their canine companions hiked closer to the volcano, where they left footprints in the fine-grained volcanic ash. The hydrovolcanic eruption, which occurred when a superheated mix of magma and groundwater exploded, was so impressive, the humans even illustrated it in ochre on a nearby rock in what is now western Turkey, according to a new analysis. “I think that people excited by the noise of the first hydrovolcanic eruption then started to approach the eruption site, walking on the wet hydrovolcanic ash and leaving the footprints behind,” study lead researcher Inan Ulusoy, an assistant professor in the Department of Geological Engineering at Hacettepe University in Turkey, told Live Science in an email. “Anyone can imagine that this is an event that one may face rarely in a lifetime. This may have given the inspiration to the Bronze Age people to leave the note behind.” Researchers first learned of the ancient footprints in the 1960s, when workers building the Demirköprü dam near Sındırlı village in Turkey noticed the well-preserved tracks. These prints are now known as the “Kula footprints” because they’re in Kula Volcanic Geopark, where Cakallar volcano rises in a majestic peak. Over the years, researchers have dated the Kula footprints, but not always correctly. The first attempt, in 1968, suggested the prints were 250,000 years old, prompting those researchers to attribute the tracks to Neanderthals (Homo neanderthalensis). Other attempts have led to more recent, but also iffy dating. To get to the bottom of the mystery, the researchers of the new study used two dating methods to pinpoint when the footprints were made. The first was radiogenic helium dating, which measures the decay of uranium and thorium into helium, to calculate the eruption age of tiny zircon crystals found at the site. The team also used cosmogenic chlorine exposure dating, which measures levels of radioactive chlorine that forms when cosmic radiation slams into calcium or potassium atoms. Cosmogenic chlorine exposure dating reveals the amount of time that volcanic rocks have sat near Earth’s surface. The results showed that the footprints were made 4,700 years ago, meaning it couldn’t have been Neanderthals (who went extinct about 40,000 years ago), but rather modern humans, who left them. “The two independent dating approaches showed internally consistent results and collectively suggest that the volcanic eruption was witnessed by Homo sapiens during the prehistoric Bronze Age, 4,700 years ago and 245,000 years later than originally reported,” study co-researcher Martin Danishik, a research fellow in Earth and planetary sciences at Curtin University in Perth, Australia, said in a statement. (Source: Live Science)

Second Announcement



Khouzestan Steel Company

IN THE NAME OF GOD

INVITATION TO INTERNATIONAL TENDER

No.: 403753

KHOUZESTAN STEEL COMPANY INTENDS TO PURCHASE

REFRACTORY MATERIAL OF DRI PLANT

INTRESTED BIDDERS MAY OBTAIN SET OF DOCUMENTS, CONTAINING:

- 1) THE RELEVANT TERMS AND CONDITIONS BY SUBMISSION OF A WRITTEN APLICATION;
- 2) ALL BIDS MUST BE DELIVERED TO THE BELOW ADDRESS ON OR BEFORE THE CLOSING DATE **03.jul.2019** .THE OPENING DATE OF TECHNICAL OFFER ENVELOPES WILL BE AT **11 AM** ON THE **07.jul.2019** IN THE BUYER'S CONFERENCE ROOM LOCATED AT THE HEAD OFFICE OF KSC AHWAZ-IRAN AND THE BIDDERS OR THEIR AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVES CAN ATTEND THE MEETING OF THE TENDER.
- 3) THE OFFERED PRICE SHOULD BE VALID UP TO **4 MONTH AFTER OPENING DATE** .
- 4) FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT TO BELOW CHANALE:

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EMAIL: j.ghorbani@ksc.ir ; z.mokhtari@ksc.ir

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P.O.BOX: 1378 - POST CODE: : 61788-13111

Public Relations of Khuzestan Steel Co

Media literacy and Gen C: How to deal with?

➔ Interestingly enough, it is not very much related to your technical literacy but a behavioral competency.

■ Teach your kid not to accept whatever they hear

She should learn to think critically in order to save her life from fake news, people and even events. The characteristic of cyberspace is that everybody can create any content and this make it very hard to recognize between good and bad. The point of view of the creator is very important. The recognition of this fact, makes it easy for the users to see the content in the appropriate context.

■ Do not label with right or wrong

Aside from your ethical values, define cyberspace as a place to share and interact ideas and beliefs. Do not restrict the ideas of your kid by making her to judge about every fact and categorizing it by good and bad.

■ A smart customer

One of the aims to content creation is marketing. This makes it necessary to analyze a content, which our children face in social media as a customer and know about the marketing tricks.

■ You cannot teach media literacy to children

Teaching media literacy as sit-down lesson is not applicable. You should incorporate with your kid in her everyday life activities. For little kids you can talk about commercials on TV, packages of her toys and food. Analyze it and ask her about what she thinks and what happens. With older one you can discuss viral and news that you see on social media.

According to a statistics released by the education ministry, about 20 million internet users out of 56 million users are below 18 in Iran.



A survey conducted by the ICT ministry revealed that only eight percent of Iranian parents monitor their children's online activity.

The survey revealed that Iran is not very successful in content creation for children and to control children's online activity.

■ Internet and users in Iran

As we mentioned, Generation C has not any limitation in age. According to a report released by the Statistical Center of Iran released a report on cultural behavior of Iranian families on the Iranian year calendar 1396 (March 2017- March 2018).

From 60,341,046 of people above 15 years old, a total of 53 percent, 31,978,910, are members of different social media.

According to the statistics, 94.5 percent are members of Telegram, 43.1 percent are members of Instagram and 34.3 percent are

members of whatsapp. Imo (4.7 percent), Facebook (3.8 percent), Google Plus (2.4 percent) and Twitter (1 percent) are on the bottom of the list.

Iranians spend an average of one hour and four minutes in the social media. Tehran Province is on the top with one hour and 31 minutes followed by Hormozgan Province with one hour and 18 minutes and Gilan Province with one hour and 11 minutes. On the bottom of the list is Sistan-Baluchistan Province with 32 minutes.

■ Media Literacy Index 2018: Common sense wanted

According to the Open Society Institute Sofia, the Northwestern European countries have the highest potential for resilience to the impact of fake news due to the quality of education, free media and high trust among people. At the other extreme are

the Balkan countries, which would be more vulnerable to the negative influence of fake news and the "post-truth" phenomenon mainly because of controlled media, deficiencies in education and the low level of trust among people.

These are the findings of a new edition of the Media Literacy Index by the European Policies Initiative (EuPI) of the Open Society Institute – Sofia. The index assesses the resilience potential to fake news in 35 European countries, using indicators for media freedom, education and trust in people.

According to the Index 2018 findings, the countries which are better equipped to deal with the impact of post-truth and fake news are the countries from North-western Europe – the Scandinavian states as well as the Netherlands, Estonia and Ireland. This coincides with the conclusions of other surveys and experts opinions, which single out these countries in regard to their capacity to tackle fake news. The countries with the lowest results are in Southeastern Europe – from Croatia to Turkey – along with their immediate neighbors Hungary and Cyprus. As a rule, the reasons for these results are the poor or mediocre performance in education as well as the controlled (not free) media. Such countries are most likely to be vulnerable to fake news and the ensuing negative effects.

■ Bottom line

As you see, behavioral competence is necessary for children to deal with cyberspace in daily life. Teach children to think critically to promise a future world full of interaction and authentic news and facts. Cyberspace is a part of today world, a big part which cannot be ignored!

Over 1.6 million domains registered in Iran: report

TECHNOLOGY DESK TEHRAN — A total of one million and 63,902 Iranian domains have been registered until the Iranian calendar month of Khordad, which began on May 22, Mehr reported on Saturday.

According to a report released by the Institute for Research in Fundamental Sciences, the ".ir", which is the internet country code top-level domain for Iran, is on the top list with one million and 55,386 registration and "net.ir", which is the least number of domain extension registration, is the final choice of Iranian users.

The number of registered domains was one million during last Azar month (November 22 - December 21) and about 968,000 domains registered at the end of the Iranian calendar year 1396 (March 20, 2018).

Iran is one of the pioneering countries in number of domain registration in the region with annual 45 percent growth, according to the report.

The global domain name registrar market by country code top-level domain (ccTLD) is expected to grow at CAGR 3.9%



during the forecast period 2019–2026.

Global Domain Name Registrar Market Report and Future Forecast (2016-2026) is the latest report published by Straits Research which is committed to delivering details of the Domain Name Registrar industry.

The competitive landscape of the Domain Name Registrar market is a highly crucial section of the report that creates a firm portrait of the market's key players and their rivalries. A reader can evaluate their position in the market by using this scale of reference, while extensively planning their future movements to counter the movements of the other players in the same areas.

Telecom center seeks help of AI companies to launch 5G network

TECHNOLOGY DESK TEHRAN — Iran Telecommunication Research Center has called on companies active in the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to cooperate for launching the 5th Generation (5G) of telecom network, Mehr reported on Saturday.

The center urged cooperation of all software-based groups and companies who are active in the field of AI in wireless telecommunication.

The invitation is due to the crucial role of software-defined networking (SDN), network functions virtualization (NFV) as well as AI technology development in operating and penitence of 5G network.

Last week, the information and communication technology (ICT) minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi wrote on his twitter account that "despite sanctions, we plan to establish the 5th Generation (5G) of telecom network".

According to research by GSMA, which represents mobile operators worldwide, 5G is forecast to account for as many as 1.2 billion connections by 2025, likely to cover one-third of

the world's population.

■ 5G networks demand AI

According to Network Computing, the biggest reason 5G networks demand AI is that they're far more complex than previous-generation networks.

At the level of network and service design, 5G also adds new layers of complexity. In previous networks, everything was tuned towards the same basic goal: high-quality voice and data experiences. 5G networks must support multiple use cases (enhanced mobile broadband, ultra-low-latency applications, machine communications), each serving different verticals with very different requirements.

Unlike previous-generation infrastructures, 5G networks are also far more dynamic. Network resources can now scale up or down—even at the level of individual network slices—in real time, in response to changing conditions. They're also non-deterministic, with performance fluctuating based on location, time, device, application, and other factors.

What are building blocks of a successful entrepreneur?

Are people born to be an entrepreneur or can you develop your "building blocks" in the pursuit of becoming an entrepreneur? Most likely, you can develop them. But learning to be an entrepreneur starts early in life with a high level of curiosity and evolves throughout your early work career. Quite a few of the characteristics that will make you successful in your career will make you successful as an entrepreneur. You absolutely need a growth mindset (meaning you can learn what you need to learn versus being stuck with what you were born with). You also need to be super optimistic and have a high degree of self-confidence.

While there isn't any "ideal" entrepreneurial personality for an entrepreneur who is successful, there are key building blocks. Serial entrepreneurs say that new entrepreneurs who have become successful will have some common characteristics, which are shared below:

- You will be passionate. This is the most significant characteristic that almost every entrepreneur has and for obvious reasons. They will be successful because they love what they do. These entrepreneurs put all the extra hours they have into the business to make it successful. They don't think of their startup as work. These entrepreneurs are always researching and reading things to find strategies on how they can make their business better or whether they need to pivot.
- Your work ethic will be strong. Entrepreneurs who are successful are not afraid of working. No four-hour workweek reality here. Most entrepreneurs will tell



you, in the early days, they worked 70-80 hours per week. But it does not feel like work when you are building your own company. It's not about the quantity of hours but the quality. You need to work smart.

- You developed strong people skills. A successful entrepreneur is someone who has excellent communication skills for selling the products or services to customers and motivating their employees. Skilled entrepreneurs will have the power to motivate their employees by communicating a strong mission with a clear vision. They also become very good at hiring people smarter than themselves.
- You will have doggedness. The successful entrepreneurs are never greatly impacted by the failures they encounter

on their startup journey. For them, failure is like an opening for a success story, and hence, they try again and again or they pivot. Moreover, these entrepreneurs are not wired to believe that some things are not possible and cannot be done. They believe that there is a solution for every problem.

- High creativity = problem solving. One of the main aspects of creativity is the ability to understand the complete problem, then to begin the hunt for solutions. Entrepreneurs usually come up with the solutions to these problems that are a combination of other insights. Learning to live with problems is a normal state of mind for an entrepreneur.
- Competition is good. The number of

companies started each month continues to rise. Competition is good. It helps grow an industry, provides trained talent and forces you to compete for your customers. You can also analyze, survey and watch your competitor's customers to gain insights. Having competitors also allows you and your team to focus on the competition as an additional motivator to strive towards success.

- You need to be confident. A successful entrepreneur never questions if they can succeed or if they are even worthy of success. They are highly confident that their knowledge, experience and network will help them make their business a success. And they radiate this confidence in everything that they do for the startup. That's why investors invest in the startup team, not always the solution.

- Discipline will be key. Successful entrepreneurs always focus their energy on making the startup work and eliminate the distractions or obstacles to their goals. They have overarching strategies that help them to reach the goals they have while they constantly adjust the plan to achieve the final outcome. Moreover, successful entrepreneurs are disciplined to always take the right steps each day towards the actual accomplishment of their objectives.

So, if you want to be an entrepreneur and have some of the above building blocks, then refine the ones you need to improve and perhaps look for a big problem to solve. If you are going to work for 30 years, might as well work for yourself.

(Source: forbes.com)

'Highway' innovation factory launched

TECHNOLOGY DESK TEHRAN —The second branch of Pardis Technology Park's innovation factory, dubbed Highway, has been established in Tehran.

With the capacity of 500 employees, the factory is located near Nobonyad Square. Twenty startup teams composed of 80 members are working at the factory.

The first branch of Pardis Technology Park's innovation factory, dubbed Azadi, was established in October 2017 in district 22. It homes to several startup teams, accelerators and venture capitals.

The startups, accelerators and venture capitals at the factory can benefit from technology parks' facilities after beginning their activities.

After the official opening, the number of teams will be increased to 100 ones, an official with Pardis Technology Park announced.



Mehdi Azimian said that venture capitals and marketing section has not begun their activities at the factory yet.

The startup teams currently working in the field of ICT, medical devices, management, content creation and agriculture, he announced.

The factory provides an opportunity for the startup teams to interact with each other as well as connecting to investors and venture capitals, he added.

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

Online businesses can connect to electronic authentication system

TECHNOLOGY DESK TEHRAN — Online business owners can apply for connecting to the national electronic authentication system, Shahkar, in order to prevent from fraud and impersonation in marketing, Mehr news reported on Thursday.

Online business, fintechs, and financial applications can have access to Shahkar system, the head of the Information Technology Organization of Iran, Amir Nazemi, said.

Other startups and applications can apply for their access to be examined by the organization, he added.

Shahkar system does not aim to authenticate the users for every activities in the cyberspace services, he said.

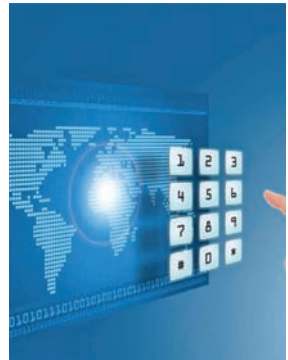
"All applications do not need to connect Shahkar system and in this way, we respect privacy of users."

Shahkar system is considered as an intermediate between telecommunication operators and authentication authorities.

The operators can obtain authentication of the users before providing services for them through this system and find out about the nationality of their users and in case it is verified they are authorized to provide services for them.

The users of telecom operators can get information about the phone numbers registered in their names through the Shahkar system, which is available on mobile government app.

Shahkar system also adapts the identifiers of the registered user and service by which, no one other than the owner of phone number cannot be registered in e-mobile software, mobile banks, online stores and other soft wares which, related to private information of users.



Researchers can now use AI and a photo to make fake videos

Researchers have come up with a method for creating realistic-looking — but fake — videos of anyone by using just a single image of them with a trained artificial intelligence system. It's a potentially worrisome capability in the runup to the 2020 United States presidential election, as falsified videos of candidates are expected to spread.

Researchers at the Samsung AI Center in Moscow and the Moscow-based Skolkovo Institute of Science and Technology explained the feat in a paper published this week to the arXiv, an online academic pre-print service. They said they were able to animate one or several photos of people by first training an AI system on a dataset of videos including many celebrities, so it could learn about key points on the face. After that, the AI system was able to combine that familiarity with one or more images of a person to come up with a convincing "talking head" style video of them.

A video the researchers posted to YouTube this week showed multiple examples of how convincing it can look, as well as how much work is yet to be done. Impressively animated versions of physicist Albert Einstein, actress Marilyn Monroe and surrealist painter Salvador Dali were generated from iconic images of them.

But each was missing something: Einstein's voluminous hairdo didn't quite move with his head, Dali's matchstick-thin mustache was cut short, and Monroe's famous mole was absent from her cheek.

The work is quite similar to deepfakes — a combination of the terms "deep learning" and "fake" — which are convincing fake videos and audio made using cutting-edge and relatively accessible AI technology. The research uses the same AI technique behind deepfakes, which is a machine-learning method known as GANs, or generative adversarial networks. But it's different, as deepfakes are generated by using video of a target person along with video of someone else acting the way the target will in the video, such as this one featuring actor and comedian Jordan Peele putting words in former President Barack Obama's mouth.

(Source: CNN)

140 swarms of desert locusts eradicated

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — Desert locust breakout contained in 400,000 hectares of lands and some 140 swarms have been eradicated, Esmaeel Najjar, head of Iran’s Crisis Management Organization has said.

Desert locusts from Saudi Arabia have so far penetrated into the provinces of Bushehr, Fars, Hormozgan, Kerman, Khuzestan, and Sistan–Baluchestan, which resulted in major losses on farming lands and gardens.



The responsible bodies to fight the swarms hitting agricultural lands are Iran Plant Protection Organization as well as Agriculture Ministry, while the situation is exacerbated all the related organizations must cooperate, he further highlighted, Fars news agency reported on Saturday.

So far, vast aerial and ground pest control operations have been carried out by national authorities since past 4 months, which have resulted in eradication of 140 swarms, he added.

He went on to say that some 100 billion rials (nearly \$2.3 million) have been earmarked to control the pest outbreak, and another budget amounting to 200 billion rials (nearly \$4.6 million) is also allocated to completely eradicate them.

It is anticipated that another outbreak of the pests will occur the country in next 12 days, he warned

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

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

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

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

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Compromise reached in ivory trading

(April 20, 2000)

At the Convention on Trade in Endangered Species held in Nairobi African nations agreed a compromise deal on the trade in ivory. The BBC’s East Africa correspondent Cathy Jenkins reported. After days of **behind the scenes** discussions the compromise deal was announced just as **CITES** delegates were about to start their debate on **ivory**. The four Southern African countries which had been **calling for** a limited trade in elephant **tusks** said that they had agreed to **withdraw** their request at least until the next CITES meeting in two years time, and until an efficient system is **in place** to monitor any illegal killings of elephants. The four countries - South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Namibia - made clear that they continue to believe that limited trade in **stockpiled**, taken from **culling** or from animals which have died naturally, is the way forward, but that they are prepared to wait.

The South African delegation said that a **one-off** sale of ivory which was allowed by the last CITES meeting had not led to an increase in **poaching**, but it was ready to listen to Kenya’s **plea** that all trade should be stopped until everyone was happy with the monitoring. Kenya and India had **adamantly** opposed any opening up of the ivory trade. The compromise deal was welcomed by campaign groups, which said that it gave them much needed time to **assess** elephant populations, and levels of poaching throughout Africa.

■ **Words**

behind the scenes: if something is done behind the scenes, it is done so that the general public is not aware of it
CITES: an acronym for Convention on Trade in Endangered Species
ivory: the substance which forms the tusks of elephants. It is valuable, and is often used to make ornaments
calling for: demanding that something happens
tusks: the tusks of an elephant, wild boar, or walrus are its two very long, curved, pointed teeth
withdraw: take back
in place: established
stockpiled: large quantities of something stored up for future use
culling: to cull a group of animals means to kill some of them in order to reduce their numbers
one-off: an informal word meaning something that happens or is made only once
poaching: catching animals illegally on someone else’s property
plea: an intense, emotional request for something
adamantly: stubbornly
assess: to consider a situation and make a judgment about it
(Source: BBC)



Euphrates softshell turtle threatened with extinction in Iran

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — Euphrates softshell turtle is endangered in the country mainly due to habitat loss and low precipitation, environmental expert Asghar Mobaraki told YJC on Friday.

The Euphrates softshell turtle (*Rafetus euphraticus*), also known as the Mesopotamian softshell turtle, is a species of softshell turtle in the family Trionychidae. It is found throughout much of the Euphrates–Tigris river basin in Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iranian Khuzestan province.

This freshwater turtle can weigh up to 20 kg (44 pounds), and it has a smooth leathery shell that can reach up to 68 cm (2.2 ft) in length. They are mainly found in a wide range of freshwater habitats such as rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, reservoirs and marshlands.

Despite its endangered status there are no specific conservations projects aimed at saving this species in most of its range, Mobaraki stated.

When basking on land they are very shy, retreating to water at the slightest hint of danger, therefore, estimating their population is difficult, he explained.

Referring to ways available to estimate the population of the species, he noted that determining an exact number of the remaining species requires advanced equipment as well as fund.

In the past that water level in major lakes and wetlands were lower, we could determine the species distribution, however, with recent heavy rainfalls, water level has increased and we are no longer able to count them, he also added.

He went on to say that in 1350s to 1360s (1971-1991), Euphrates softshell turtles



According to the IUCN anthropogenic fragmentation, alteration, and destruction of suitable habitat throughout its range are the main threats to Rafetus euphraticus.

had a stable population in the Shadegan wetland in Khuzestan province, while their population gradually shrank.

In past recent years, their population was shrinking due to low precipitation and recurrent drought haunting Khuzestan province, he regretted.

Although the primary threats are habitat loss and fragmentation, to lesser extent also pollution is to blame, he stated, adding, some lakes have been contaminated as waste and poisonous

sewage enters them.

In some cases, they are killed by fishermen due to being carnivorous and caught on fishing hooks, he further regretted, concluding, fishing nets, illegal boats and dams which alter levels of sediment and water temperature, are among the other major threats to the species in the country.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has listed Euphrates softshell turtle as engendered

Female Asiatic lion to join male companion

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran will play host to a female Asiatic lion from Ireland to accompany the recently returned male lion under a population management program aiming at endangered species reproduction by the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA), a veterinarian at Eram Zoo has said.

The female lion, born 4 years ago, now is coming back to its motherland after being extinct for 8 decades, YJC quoted Iman Memarian as saying on Saturday.

The 6-year old male lion was sent to Tehran Zoological Garden from Britain’s Bristol Zoo on May 1, he said.

He went on to say that the lion has undergone genetic tests and diagnostics under the EAZA supervision, and the results have showed that the animal is completely healthy.

Both will be kept at Tehran Zoological Garden separately for a period, and then will live together, Memarian concluded. On the International Union for Conservation of Nature



(IUCN) Red List, it is listed under its former scientific name *Panthera leo persica* as Endangered because of its small population size and area of occupancy. It was also known as “Indian lion” and “Persian lion”.

Historical records in Iran indicate that it ranged from the Khuzestan Plain to the Fars in steppe vegetation and pistachio-almond woodlands. It was widespread in the country, but in the 1870s, it was sighted only on the western slopes of the Zagros Mountains, and in the forest regions south of Shiraz. Some of the country’s last lions were sighted in 1941 between Shiraz and Jahrom in Fars province, and in 1942, a lion was spotted about 65 km northwest of Dezful. In 1944, the corpse of a lioness was found on the banks of Karun River in Khuzestan province.

Conflicts with humans, wildfires, poaching, canine distemper virus, decreases in population sizes of native ungulates are of the threats to the lions.

Tehran Municipality plans to build 4 new subway lines



SOCIETY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Tehran Municipality plans to construct four new subway lines in the capital after putting all the under-construction lines on operation, Mohsen Pourseyed Aqaei, deputy mayor for traffic and transport affairs has said.

By completing two lines of 6 and 7 which are partially operational, four new lines will undergo construction, he stated, Fars reported on Saturday.

The newly designed metro lines will link district 22, a suburban neighborhood in western and northwestern Tehran, to the capital, he said, adding that line 10 will have seven stations.

Ali Nozarpour the district’s mayor lamented that with a population of 650,000 residents, district 22 is far from the city center while there are no metro lines.

“We try to set up underground transport system for the area, so, we conducted assessment and designed the lines,” he said. Currently, we reached an agreement with Tehran Municipality to start construction project, after the last two lines of the capital are completely operational, he concluded.

Tehran metro line 6 covering 32 kilometers of the capital consists of 30 stations. Subway line 7 is 27 kilometers long with 22 stations. Both lines are partially opened, however, they are not fully operational.

Tehran subway system consists of five operational lines, stretching to 170 kilometers, and the lines 6 and 7 are under construction. The lines link south to north, east to west and are gradually covering more neighborhoods. By completing the two aforementioned lines 70 kilometers will be added to the current railways.

Second Announcement



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U.S. using border talks to target Hezbollah missiles: Nasrallah

TEHRAN— The secretary general of the Lebanese resistance movement Hezbollah Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah said Friday that a U.S. envoy tasked with mediating the land and maritime border demarcation issue between Lebanon and Israel was using his position to target Hezbollah's precision missile arsenal.

In his Friday remarks, Nasrallah also slammed Trump's so-called peace plan for the Middle East, and said what the U.S. describes as the "deal of the century" is a "void deal" and a "historic crime".

"This deal is a loss of Palestinian, Arab and Islamic rights," Nasrallah said.

"It is a religious, moral, national and political obligation to oppose [the peace plan], since this is a deal that is unjust and is contrary to the rights of the holy places."

He said "the responsibility is clear; we must confront this deal, and we are capable of obstructing it."



According to Nasrallah, the current situation shows that the plan is on its

way to failure. "The United States, Israel and other

regimes in the region are working to implement the deal, alongside an axis that opposes it," he explained. "There is a conflict between the two factions, and I hope we can prevent the historic crime that is liable to occur in our land."

Nasrallah also highlighted the military capabilities of the resistance front against the Israeli regime, saying, "The Palestinian resistance today is hitting Tel Aviv and what is beyond it, and it is capable of hitting all the Zionist settlements."

He said the Lebanese Hezbollah also has enough precision-guided missiles to "change the face of the region."

"We have in Lebanon precision rockets that are able to target certain posts in Israel and that would change the face of the region," he said, adding that the resistance movement would respond to any Israeli aggression on any resistance target in Lebanon "quickly, directly and strongly".

EU slams Israeli regime over seizing, selling humanitarian aid sent to West Bank

TEHRAN — The European Union has lambasted Israel for its apparent plans to sell humanitarian aid given to inhabitants of Bedouin villages in Palestine's occupied West Bank.

Shadi Othman, EU's spokesman in Jerusalem al-Quds, said on Friday that COGAT, a unit in Israel's ministry of military affairs that oversees civilian activities in the Palestinian territories, would put up EU-donated aid for auction within days.

The supplies include "two school structures that had been consigned to Ibbiq community, and two tents and three metal sheds to the al-Hadidiya community," Othman said, adding that the aid, worth 15,320 euros (\$17,100), had been confiscated by Israeli authorities in October and November last year.

On May 6, COGAT published an advertisement in the Maariv newspaper, detailing the sale of "seized property" from the occupied West Bank.

"In the case where the owners of these seized assets have not proceeded to request the return of their property within 30 days of the publication of this notice, the assets will be sold," the advertisement said.

However, Othman said that the EU made an official request for the return of the structures but received no response from the Israeli authorities.

The "EU missions in Jerusalem and Ramallah had called on Israeli authorities to return the confiscated items to their intended beneficiaries without precondition as soon as possible" or provide compensation, the spokesman added.

According to Press TV, the European body often finances humanitarian structures in Bedouin villages, which are frequently seized by Israeli authorities who claim the necessary authorization has not been provided.

Israeli authorities have been carrying out forced evacuations against Bedouins since 1949.

Sudan recalls ambassador to Qatar for 'consultations'

TEHRAN — Sudan's ambassador to Qatar has returned to Khartoum for consultations, the foreign ministry said Saturday, with the envoy set to fly back to Doha soon.

The diplomat was summoned "to Khartoum for consultations and...will leave to Doha in the coming hours" to resume his work, Sudan's ministry said, AFP reported.

Earlier in the day, a spokesperson for Qatar's foreign ministry denied claims on social media the ambassador had been recalled and said it received official notification only that he was on "short leave."

Sudan's decision to summon its ambassador came after the country abruptly shut down the office of Qatari broadcaster Al-Jazeera Thursday without giving a reason.

The news channel, which regularly broadcasts footage of demonstrations that have taken place in Sudan since December, is funded by Doha, a close ally of former president Omar al-Bashir.

Sudan's military in April ousted Bashir after months-long protests against his authoritarian, three-decade rule.

The ruling military council's head Abdel-Fattah al-Burhan is currently in Saudi Arabia after traveling for a string of summits. He has already visited Egypt and the United Arab Emirates.

The deputy head of the council, Mohammad Hamdan Dagalo, also visited Riyadh in May and met Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman.

Saudi Arabia and allies including the UAE and Egypt broke off diplomatic ties with Doha in 2017, accusing it of supporting terrorism, which it denies.

Sudan's generals, backed by key Arab powers, have resisted calls from African and Western governments to hand over the reins of power.

Thousands of protesters have remained camped out in front of the army headquarters in Khartoum to pressure the military to cede power.

U.S. heavily investing in Asia to counter China: Shanahan

TEHRAN — Acting U.S. Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan has accused China of undermining the sovereignty of other countries, warning that the administration of President Donald Trump is investing "significantly" in programs needed to ensuring stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

The acting Pentagon chief told Asia's premier defense forum, Shangri-La Dialogue, in Singapore that the region remained a priority for Washington amid threats from China and North Korea.

"The Indo-Pacific is our priority theater. We are where we belong. We are investing in the region," he said on Saturday.

"We want to ensure no adversary believes it can successfully achieve political objectives through military force," he said, noting that

the Pentagon has requested an all-time high of \$104 billion for research and development in the next fiscal year plus \$125 billion in operational readiness.

"When we talk about preparedness, we mean having the right capabilities in the right places to respond to crises, and to compete with and deter high-end adversaries," said the Pentagon chief on Saturday.

Shanahan then went on an extensive anti-China rant

by accusing "actors" of violating international rules in the region.

"Perhaps the greatest long-term threat to the vital interests of states across this region comes from actors who seek to undermine, rather than uphold, the rules-based international order," he said, without naming China.

"We're not going to ignore Chinese behavior and I think in the past people have kind of tiptoed around that," the acting pentagon chief added.

Shanahan then called for an end to Beijing's conduct, which he claimed "erodes other nations' sovereignty and sows distrust of China's intentions."

"If the trends in these behaviors continue, artificial features in the global commons could become tollbooths; sovereignty could become the purview of the powerful," he said, in what seemed to be a carefully-worded version of the longtime U.S. claim that China has been militarizing reefs and artificial islands in the South China Sea.

Washington has long challenged China's sovereignty claims over most of the strategic waters, which act as gateway to trillions of dollars in annual maritime trade. This is while the sea's other littoral states such as the Philippines,



Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia also claim parts of the sea.

Washington regularly dispatches its warships and warplanes to the waters to protect what it calls "freedom of navigation," a move which Beijing denounces as provocative.

During his first major speech since taking over as acting defense secretary in January, Shanahan said that his main priority would be "China, China, China."

'Most valued partner': NSA fed Israel intel for targeted assassinations, leaked docs show

TEHRAN — Frustrated by a legal ban on sharing intelligence with Israeli operatives conducting targeted assassinations against Hezbollah, the NSA crafted a loophole giving them total access even to U.S. citizens' data, leaked documents show.

The Israeli SIGINT National Unit (ISNU), the NSA's counterpart in Tel Aviv, convinced the Americans to circumvent the legal prohibition on providing surveillance data for

targeted assassinations during Israel's 2006 war with Lebanon, according to the newest revelation from the archives obtained by whistleblower Edward Snowden, RT reported.

Using the familiar rationale of "terrorism" to excuse cooperation they knew was illegal, the NSA and ISNU found a workaround using the Office of the Director of National Intelligence that provided the Israelis with all the intel they needed, according to an October 2006 article

in the NSA's internal publication.

"To ISNU, this prohibition [on sharing data for targeted killings] was contrary not only to supporting Israel in its fight against Hizballah but overall, to support the U.S. Global War on Terrorism," said an article in SID

Today.

Its author, whose name is redacted, details the "late-night, sometimes tense discussions" he had with ISNU officials who believed they

deserved an exemption from the U.S. prohibition on abetting targeted killings.

The documents don't include details of what "arrangement" was eventually worked out with the ODNI, but the Israeli military used American data to lay waste to Lebanon's civilian population, much like the tech-enhanced U.S. troops in Afghanistan and Iraq, whose kill-counts swelled with civilian victims after they received access to NSA targeting data.

Virginia shooting leaves 12 dead at municipal center

TEHRAN — Authorities are investigating a possible motive.

Edward Weeden, who works in the building, told CNN affiliate WAVY that people heard someone falling in a stairwell and went to investigate. He and his coworkers saw a woman who was down, blood all over her face.

One of Weeden's coworkers went up to the next floor and came right back. "Get out of the building. The guy's got a gun," the woman said.

Weeden said he was unsure at first how to react.

The costly Saudi defeat in Mecca

TEHRAN— Officials in the Saudi regime are extremely dissatisfied with the results of the Mecca summits. The meetings in Mecca showed that Riyadh was no longer in power in the region's equilibrium. On the other hand, the support of the United States and the Zionist regime from Saudi Arabia could not prevent the gradual death of the Saudis.

Al-Mayadeen wrote that the Mecca's tripartite summits showed that no one was with King Salman other than the United Arab Emirates and the Sudanese military council. Al-Mayadeen wrote, in a column entitled "Whether the three-party summits in Mecca are a sign of Saudi defeat," insisted that calculations by King Salman and crown prince of Saudi Arabia (Mohammed bin Salman) of impunity for tension with Iran have reached a dead end.

This column states: The choice of the city of Mecca for holding three summits was the most that Saudi Arabia could do, hoping that Riyadh would need to receive help to protect the holy places and gain the most support.

In the same vein, Saudi Arabia imagines that by accusing the Yemeni army and popular committees of the attack on the city of Mecca, it has targeted the Iranian marker, and therefore, in front of the eyes of the delegations participating in the Mecca summit, they also exhibited drone strikes. Which claimed to be Iranian and deserted in Saudi Arabia.

Kushner called Jamal Khashoggi 'a terrorist,' book claims

TEHRAN — U.S. President Donald Trump's son-in-law and adviser Jared Kushner has reportedly called Saudi dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi — who was murdered by the agents of the Saudi royal court last year — a "terrorist."



According to Newsweek, U.S. journalist Michael Wolff says in an upcoming book that Kushner said of the slain Khashoggi, "This guy was the link between certain factions in the royal family and Osama [bin Laden]. We know that. A journalist? Come on. This was a terrorist masquerading as a journalist."

Kushner reportedly made the comment in an off-the-record conversation with a reporter. It was not clear who the reporter was.

Khashoggi, a former advocate of the Saudi royal court who later became a critic of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, was killed and his body was dismembered by a Saudi hit squad after being lured into the Saudi consulate in Istanbul on October 2, 2018.

Kushner, a real estate developer-turned-White House adviser, is known to have close ties with Mohammed.

The Washington Post, for which Khashoggi was a columnist, reported in November last year that the CIA had concluded that Mohammed personally ordered his killing.

According to Press TV, Wolff's new book, titled "Siege," covers the second year of the Trump administration and is to be released on June 4. His first book, "Fire and Fury," revealed incendiary insider information about the Trump White House and has sold more than four million copies.

A spokesman for Kushner denied the reporting.

Russian embassy points to U.S. media crusade to discredit Damascus with dubious evidence

TEHRAN — The U.S. media is once again trying to discredit the Syrian government based on dubious evidence, the Russian embassy in the United States said in a statement.

"We paid attention to a series of publications in the American media [the New York Times, CNN] where the Syrian authorities were accused of misconduct against prisoners. As 'proof' they refer to an 'extensive archive of documents' belonging to the Syrian intelligence services that was collected by the cryptic organization known as the 'Commission for International Justice and Accountability,'" the statement reads.

"It is noteworthy that this NGO is extremely opaque - it is very difficult to find information about the organization in open sources [there is neither website, nor social network accounts]. We only know that it is sponsored by Western countries including the United States. Moreover, questions arise about the authenticity of the 'documents' allegedly removed from Syria - especially given the lack of public access to these materials," the Russian embassy pointed out, TASS reported.

"This is yet another attempt to discredit the Syrian authorities on the basis of dubious 'evidence.' Apparently, stoking anti-Syrian hysteria by the American media is necessary to divert public attention from the hardships that result from the illegal U.S. military presence in Syria. With humanitarian catastrophes in the internal refugee camps of Rukban and Al-Hol at the forefront," the statement adds.

Boris Johnson would make 'excellent' British PM: Trump

TEHRAN— U.S. President Donald Trump has said British former foreign minister Boris Johnson would make an "excellent" prime minister to replace Theresa May.

Trump was speaking ahead of the start of a state visit to Britain on Monday, during which he will meet May, AFP reported.

She is set to resign on June 7 over her failure to deliver a deal to bring Britain out of the European Union.

Asked by the British tabloid newspaper The Sun for his opinion on the 12 candidates to replace her, Trump said, "I think Boris would do a very good job. I think he would be excellent."

"I have always liked him. I don't know that he is going to be chosen, but I think he is a very good guy, a very talented person."

He added that several candidates in the Conservative leadership race had asked for his support, without revealing who.



A key Leave campaigner in the Brexit referendum, Johnson has said he is prepared to take Britain out of the European Union, "deal or no deal."

Tokyo 2020 torch relay route revealed, uniforms unveiled

Tokyo 2020 organisers on Saturday unveiled the uniforms to be worn by 10,000 volunteer runners during the torch relay and presented further details about the route the relay will take.

Organisers said the torch will travel through all 47 of Japan's prefectures - from Hokkaido in the north to the southern island of Okinawa - and most of the country will have the chance to see the torch with 98% percent of the population residing within an hour's distance from the route.

The 121-day relay will begin on March 16 at the J-Village in Fukushima, which is Japanese football's national training centre and a symbol of resilience during the 2011 earthquake and tsunami that killed almost 16,000 people.

Games organisers have sought to stress the importance of Tokyo 2020 as the 'reconstruction Olympics' and it was evident in the choice of the route, which will pass through Okuma, where part of the Fukushima nuclear complex is located, and past Kumamoto Castle, which suffered heavy earthquake damage in 2016.

"It is not just about places where people can come or around landmarks, but the torch will also visit areas affected by the Great Japan Earthquake and Kumamoto Castle, recovering from the Kumamoto earthquake," said Miho Takeda, a Tokyo 2020 committee member and five-time Olympic medallist in synchronized swimming. "The relay will go through areas of Japan that are working hard to recover from natural disasters."

The torch will also visit the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park and pass Mount Fuji before arriving at the National Stadium in Tokyo on July 24 during the Olympics opening ceremony.

The runners' uniform, designed by fashion designer Daisuke Obana, was unveiled by multiple Olympic gold medallist judoka Tadahiro Nomura. The uniforms, which are produced in part from recycled plastic bottles, incorporate a diagonally-draped red sash similar to those used as batons in Ekiden, Japan's famous long distance relay events.

(Source: Reuters)

Messi unsure if he'll play at 2022 World Cup

Argentina captain Lionel Messi has said he is unsure if he will represent his country at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

Messi has played at four World Cups with Argentina, and was named the tournament's best player in 2014, but the 31-year-old admitted he does not know if he will be fit enough for the rigours of a fifth tournament in three years' time.

"I don't know if I'll be in the next World Cup," he told Fox Sports Argentina. "I've got to see if my body holds up."

"Today I feel great, very well physically, but I'm [almost] 32 years old and I don't know how it's going to go."

"A lot of things can happen, I hope I don't have any serious injuries." Messi won Olympic gold for Argentina in 2008, but the best he has achieved at senior level over the course of his 129 caps is finishing as runner-up at the 2014 World Cup and three Copa America finals -- 2007, 2015 and 2016.

The Barcelona star will be part of the Albiceleste's squad at this year's Copa America, in which the triumph in 1993 was their last major trophy. "I want to finish my career having won something with the Argentine national team, or if not having tried as many times as possible," Messi said.

"I do not want to be left with the feeling that it did not happen and I let opportunities pass by."

Messi took an extended break from the national team after their elimination in the round of 16 at the 2018 World Cup, returning in a friendly against Venezuela in March.

(Source: Soccernet)

Italy's soccer club Fiorentina confirms sale process

Italian Serie A soccer club ACF Fiorentina said on Saturday its owners were negotiating a sale, confirming earlier media reports.

In a statement, the club said its board had resigned after being informed by the Della Valle family that a sale process was under way. A source close to the matter had told Reuters on Monday that Mediacom Chairman Rocco Commisso was interested in buying Fiorentina. The Della Valle's own luxury goods group Tod's and - since 2002 - the Florence-based club.

Italian-born U.S. billionaire Commisso, owner of the New York's Cosmos, made an offer last year to buy a controlling stake in AC Milan but no deal followed.

The New York Times reported earlier this month that Commisso was ready to pay \$150 million for Fiorentina, who on Sunday narrowly escaped relegation.

(Source: Goal)

Tsitsipas first Greek in 83 years to reach Roland Garros last 16

Stefanos Tsitsipas became the first Greek player in 83 years to reach the second week at Roland Garros on Saturday as he survived a scare in the third round against Filip Krajinovic.

The sixth seed led by two sets overnight, with the match suspended at 5-5 in the third due to darkness at 9:52 p.m. local time, and saw Serbia's Krajinovic launch a comeback.

Tsitsipas lost the set in a tie-break but sealed a 7-5, 6-3, 6-7 (5/7), 7-6 (8/6) success on Court Philippe Chatrier after overturning a 5-3 deficit and saving a set point in the fourth.

The 20-year-old will take on either former champion Stan Wawrinka or Grigor Dimitrov for a place in his second Grand Slam quarter-final, after their match was also suspended on Friday evening. "It's really tricky when you come back after a day. It's unusual, you don't do it that often," said Tsitsipas.

"It was important I saved those set points. Closing in the fourth set, it's important to save energy."

The last Greek player to reach the second week at Roland Garros was Lazaros Staliou in 1936.

Tsitsipas, who stunned Roger Federer en route to the Australian Open semi-finals earlier this year, had battled back from 5-2 down in the third set to keep his hopes of a straight-sets win alive.

World number 60 Krajinovic has good memories of the French capital, though, having reached the Paris Masters final in 2017, and forced a fourth set in a high-quality tie-break.

(Source: AFP)

Jose Antonio Reyes, Former Arsenal and Spain player, dies in car accident

Former Arsenal, Sevilla and Real Madrid star Jose Antonio Reyes has died in a car crash on Saturday morning at the age of 35.

Reyes was involved in a traffic collision in Utrera, the town of his birth located just outside of Sevilla.

According to Spanish TV channel Deportes Cex, the crash is believed to have happened on a road between Utrera and Seville and two more people were in the car. It is reported one of those, his 23-year-old cousin, has also died while the third occupant suffered burns.

A statement from Sevilla's English Twitter account read: 'We couldn't be confirming worse news. Beloved Sevilla star Jose Antonio Reyes has died in a traffic collision. Rest in peace.'

He had been playing in the Spanish second-tier since January after signing a five-month deal with Extremadura.

Reyes, who won 21 caps for his Spain, started his career with hometown club Sevilla and made his first team debut at the age of 16.

Reyes leaves behind two children and wife Noelia Lopez, who he married in June 2017.

He then signed for Arsenal during the 2003-04 'Invincibles' campaign for around £15million and went on to win the Premier League, FA Cup and Community Shield. He was the first Spaniard to win the English title.

Reyes left north London to return to Spain with Real Madrid on loan before joining their rivals Atletico Madrid on a permanent deal in 2007, where he went on to win the Europa



League twice.

He returned to Sevilla in 2012 and then represented Espanyol, Cordoba and Xinjiang Tianshan Leopards in China before signing for Extremadura in January. Reyes' final match was a 1-0 win at Alcorcon on May 18 and his team were due to play on Sunday against Cadiz but that been postponed until Tuesday.

Extremadura paid tribute to Reyes in a tweet, saying: 'With a shrunken soul and a broken heart we announced the death of Jose Antonio Reyes in a traffic accident. We



pray for his soul.'

Reyes holds the record for the player with the most Europa League titles. He won the competition twice with Atletico and three times with Sevilla.

Former Arsenal team-mate Thierry Henry led the tributes on social media, describing Reyes as an 'exceptional human being'.

The Frenchman wrote: 'I'm devastated to hear the sad news about Jose Antonio Reyes. 'Wonderful player, superb team mate and exceptional human being. I wish his

family and friends continued strength and courage to get through this difficult time. #takenfartoosoon'.

BT Sport presented Gary Lineker also tweeted, saying: 'How terribly sad. RIP'.

Arsenal also paid homage to their former player, tweeting: 'Everyone at Arsenal is devastated by the shocking news that our former player Jose Antonio Reyes has died in a traffic collision in Spain. Jose Antonio Reyes: 1983-2019 Rest in peace, Jose'.

North London rivals Tottenham, who are due to play in the Champions League final against Liverpool on Saturday night, also paid their respects.

They tweeted: 'We are all deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Jose Antonio Reyes. All of our thoughts are with Jose's friends and family, and everyone at Arsenal at this very difficult time.'

European governing body UEFA also tweeted a tribute to Reyes. It read: 'Everyone at UEFA is shocked & hugely saddened to learn that José Antonio Reyes has died aged 35. A Spanish international with 5 Europa League titles, Reyes will be sorely missed by the football world. Our thoughts are with his family & friends at this terrible time.'

Barcelona wrote: 'We want to express their deepest condolences for the death of footballer Jose Antonio Reyes, a brilliant and charismatic player; one of the most outstanding figures and with a longer trajectory of our football. Rest in peace.'

(Source: Daily Mail)

Federer and Nadal blaze into fourth round



After a cool first week the thermostat was turned up at Roland Garros on Friday as Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer both blazed a trail into the French Open fourth round for the 14th time.

They had shared that record with Budge Patty but moved above the American with two more dominant displays, although 11-times champion Nadal did drop his first set of the tournament.

Nadal pulverised the unfortunate David Goffin into the Court Philippe Chatrier dust for two formidable sets but was made to sweat buckets in the soaring temperatures as 'Le Goff' dug in.

The Mallorcan second seed was never in serious trouble, however, and came through 6-1 6-3 4-6 6-3 to set up a clash with Argentina's 78th-ranked Juan Ignacio Londero.

"The level that I kept during the first 45 minutes, you can't really maintain that," Nadal said. "It was almost the top level, the highest level I could play."

Federer's opponent was 20-year-old Norwegian Casper Ruud who had matched his father Christian's feat of reaching the third round in 1999 -- the year 20-times Grand Slam champion Federer made his debut at the French Open and lost in the first round.

The 37-year-old Swiss duly dispatched the youngster although he was pushed to a tiebreak in the third set on his way to becoming the oldest player to reach the fourth round since Nicola Pietrangeli in 1972 with a 6-3 6-1 7-6(8) victory.

"Very pleased how I'm feeling and how I'm playing, and still trying to stay true to playing freely and with nothing to lose," Federer, trying to repeat his 2009 title run having missed the last three French Opens, told reporters.

Like Nadal, he will also face an Argentine next in the form of Leonardo Mayer who knocked out French veteran Nicolas Mahut.

Karolina Pliskova became the highest seed to fall so far when the Czech second seed was well-beaten, 6-3 6-3, by Croatia's Petra Martic in the day's opener on Court Philippe Chatrier, a match played in front of hundreds of empty seats.

Former champion Garbine Muguruza continued to impress in the women's draw as she overpowered ninth seed Elina Svitolina 6-3 6-3 and set up a clash with last year's runner-up Sloane Stephens who needed three sets to beat Slovenia's Polona Herczog.

(Source: Reuters)

Chelsea boss Sarri close to Juventus switch



Chelsea manager Maurizio Sarri has told the club he wants to leave after a single season to join Italian champions Juventus, according to reports on Saturday.

Sarri has been an uncomfortable fit with fans at Stamford Bridge and despite winning the Europa League this week and finishing third in the Premier League, there is a perception the chain-smoking coach is unwilling to adapt tactics when things go wrong.

Sarri has been widely linked with Juventus, who are seeking a successor to Massimiliano Allegri, although sports daily Gazzetta reported Saturday that Tottenham boss Mauricio Pochettino was also on their radar. Sarri held talks with Chelsea director Marina Granovskaia on Friday and informed her that he wanted to return to his homeland, the reports in Britain and Italy said.

Granovskaia, it is said, has promised to talk to club owner Roman Abramovich about his future, but it would seem Chelsea will seek compensation from any suitor.

Sarri succeeded Antonio Conte as Chelsea manager last summer after spending three years at Napoli.

The 60-year-old enjoyed a tremendous start at Stamford Bridge as Chelsea went unbeaten in 18 games.

But Sarri endured consistent criticism from a significant portion of the club's supporters throughout the campaign and suffered heavy 4-0 and 6-0 defeats at Bournemouth and Manchester City.

Chelsea, however, reached the Carabao Cup final, which they lost on penalties to Manchester City, before finishing the season strongly.

Sarri claimed the first major trophy of his career when Chelsea beat Arsenal 4-1 in Baku on Wednesday to win the Europa League final, but refused to commit his future to the club, saying: "You know very well that I love the Premier League, the level of the competition, and I am lucky because I am at Chelsea, one of the best teams in the world."

"So at the moment I am happy, but of course I want to know if the club is happy, if we can improve. "It's normal I think; I have a discussion with the owner after every season with every club."

Chelsea are facing a transfer ban next season which could restrict their ability to attract a big name coach.

The club have been linked with their former midfielder Frank Lampard, now the manager of Championship side Derby, should Sarri leave Stamford Bridge.

(Source: Mirror)

Tunisian club win African title after final abandoned over VAR

Esperance won the CAF Champions League in Tunisia Saturday after Wydad Casablanca refused to continue playing on 60 minutes because VAR was unavailable to judge a disallowed equaliser.

The Tunisian side were leading 1-0 in the second leg of the final and 2-1 overall when play was halted, and after a 90-minute delay the referee awarded the match to the home side.

Tunisian media reported that officials were aware before the match that the VAR (video assistant referee) system was not working, but the players seemingly did not know.

It is the first time in the 55-year history of the elite African club competition that a match in the home-and-away final series has not been completed.

Wydad believed they had levelled on 59 minutes when Walid el Karti headed a cross into the net. TV replays confirmed he was onside, but might have fouled an opponent with his shoulder.

The Moroccan team insisted that the Gambian referee check with VAR, apparently unaware that the often controversial system was unavailable.

Wydad substitutes and 69-year-old coach Faouzi Benzarti joined in the protests and police foiled an attempted assault by a spectator wearing the red and gold of Esperance.

Plastic bottles containing liquid were also flung toward the Wydad players and coaches as tempers flared.

At one stage, CAF president Ahmad Ahmad and the bosses of Esperance and Wydad spoke on the side of the



pitch without succeeding in getting the match restarted.

The Wydad players and coaches eventually went to the changing room and, after a long delay, the referee indicated that Esperance had been awarded the match.

■ Debacle

There was widespread criticism of the debacle on social media with many tweets saying that calling off the club showpiece brought shame to African football.

The abandonment occurred just 20 days before an expanded 24-team Africa Cup of Nations kicks off in Egypt, with VAR scheduled to be used during the knockout phase.

VAR had played a major role in the first leg of the final in Morocco last weekend, with referrals ruling out a goal by Wydad and later appeals for a penalty by the Moroccans.

The Egyptian referee of that match was subsequently banned for six months with CAF saying his performance was "poor".

Three-time former champions Esperance took the lead on 41 minutes when Youcef Belaili curled a shot into the net from the edge of the box at the Stade Olympique.

The Tunisian outfit dominated the opening half and fully deserved to lead at half-time in the 60,000-seat stadium.

But the way Esperance ultimately won the competition for a second successive time took much of the gloss off the achievement.

They are only the fourth club after Al Ahly of Egypt, TP Mazembe of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Enyimba of Nigeria to achieve back-to-back Champions League triumphs.

And by going through their 2019 CAF campaign unbeaten -- equalling the achievement of the 1994 squad -- Esperance became the first club to win the competition twice without losing a match.

It was also a special night for 37-year-old coach Moine Chaabani, who became the first from north Africa to win two Champions League finals in a row.

Tunis citizens reacted to the triumph by pouring into the streets and screaming joyfully while cars and motorbikes crisscrossed the capital, honking horns.

Many Esperance supporters flocked to the district where the club was formed 100 years ago in a cafe of the same name.

(Source: AFP)

Iran sweep past China at 2019 Volleyball National League

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran eased past China 3-0 (25-22, 25-18, 25-21) in Pool 1 of the men's 2019 FIVB Volleyball Nations League week 1 at the Jiangmen Sports Center Gym in Jiangmen, China on Saturday.

Amir Ghafour scored 19 points for Iran, while Zhejia Zhang earned eight points for the Chinese team.

Iran, Italy, Germany and hosts China are in Pool 1 and try to book their place at the final six tournament in Chicago.

Igor Kolakovic's men will meet Germany on Sunday.

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.

The competition will be held between May and July 2019 and the final round will take place in the Credit Union 1 Arena, Chicago, United States.

This is the first edition of the World League or the Nations League to have the Final Round hosted in North America.

The 16 teams compete in a round-robin format with every core team hosting a pool at least once. The teams are divided into four pools of four teams at each week and



compete five weeks long, for 120 matches. The top five teams after the preliminary round join the hosts of the final round to compete in the final round.

The relegation takes into consideration only the four challenger teams. The last ranked challenger team will be excluded from the 2020 Nations League. The winners of the Challenger Cup will qualify for the next edition

as a challenger team.

The six qualified teams play in 2 pools of 3 teams in round-robin. The top two teams of each pool qualify for the semifinals. The pool winners play against the runners-up in this round. The semifinals winners advance to compete for the Nations League title. The losers face each other in the third place match.

Alireza Faghani to referee friendly between Iran and Syria

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Alireza Faghani has been named as the referee for the friendly match between Iran and Syria.

The match will take place in Tehran's Azadi Stadium on June 6. It will be Marc Wilmots's first match in charge as Iran coach.

Iran will also play South Korea five days later at World Cup Stadium in Seoul.

Iran are preparing for the 2022 World Cup qualifiers that begin in the second half of this year.

Faghani will be assisted by Reza Sokhandan and Mohammadreza Mansouri in this match.

Faghani has been also named as referee of the match between Shanghai SIPG of China and Jeonbuk of South Korea in the 2019 AFC Champions League Round of 16 by Asian Football Confederation.



Sokratis and Xhaka break Arsenal players' social media silence



Sokratis Papastathopoulos has vowed that Arsenal will come back stronger next season.

Roughly two months ago, the Gunners were favorites to seal a top four spot in the Premier League, but ended up missing out by a single point following an awful run of form which saw them win twice in seven games.

There was still time for some salvation and qualification for the Champions League in the form of the Europa League final.

Standing in the way was a Chelsea side they comfortably beat at the Emirates Stadium at the beginning of 2019 and seemed to have some squad issues ahead of the final in Baku.

However, a capitulation early in the second half left the Gunners facing a three-goal deficit and Alex Iwobi's goal proved to be a mere consolation as Eden Hazard capped off a 4-1 win and left Unai Emery's side empty-handed.

As a result, there's been a hush around the Gunners squad following that defeat but Sokratis has become one of the first to speak out and he has a message for the supporters.

"You all deserved better and I'm sorry that we couldn't give you what we all wanted," he tweeted. For every single Arsenal fan who was in Baku and around the world, we are sorry.

"We'll work to get stronger for next season to give this club the success it deserves."

Meanwhile, Granit Xhaka - who completed the full 90 minutes against the Blues - also had a message for the Arsenal supporters with an emotional post on Instagram.

"It really hurts that we couldn't bring you back this trophy," he wrote. "Thanks to everyone who came to Baku and thanks to you all for your support this season."

(Source: Football.london)

Christian Eriksen ready to follow Modric to Madrid



Former Real Madrid and Tottenham coach Juande Ramos has told ESPN FC that Christian Eriksen is ready to follow Luka Modric in leaving Spurs for a starring role at the Bernabeu.

Ramos briefly worked with Modric during his 12 months on the Tottenham bench a decade ago, with the Croatia midfielder moving to Madrid three years after the Spanish coach's short spell with Los Blancos.

Reigning Ballon d'Or winner Modric has won 15 trophies, including four of the past five Champions Leagues, during his seven seasons in Madrid, and Ramos told ESPN FC that Eriksen has shown he also has the level to make an impact at Madrid.

"Without [a] doubt Eriksen is ready to follow in Modric's footsteps and be a success at Madrid," Ramos said at the Santander Media House ahead of Saturday's Champions League final in the

Spanish capital. "He is a magnificent player who has been performing at a very high level. He is ready to play at any team in Europe.

"Current Madrid galactico Gareth Bale was a young player coming through at Tottenham during Ramos' time at the London club. He said the Wales winger had achieved a lot at the Bernabeu, but was now an easy target for fans and pundits unhappy with their disastrous 2018-19 campaign, and was likely to leave this summer.

"This season has not been good for Bale, but not his other seasons," he said. "Bale has scored big goals, in finals, has performed very well and won four Champions Leagues. But Madrid's last season was very weak. Now it seems the only guilty party has been Gareth Bale. I don't agree with that, but it is easier to blame the one who is leaving, of course."

(Source: ESPN)

Abbas Chamanian nominated for Iran U-23 football team

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — After Yahya Golmohammadi's refusal to lead Iran's U-23 football team, former U-16 coach Abbas Chamanian has been nominated to take charge of the Olympic team.

Iranian media reports suggest that Chamanian is a candidate to replace Zlatko Kranjcar, the Croatian coach who left the job in early May after one year in charge.

Under coaching of Kranjcar, Iran booked a place at the AFC U-23 Championship Thailand 2020 Final. However, the federation was not satisfied with the Croatian coach's performance.

The AFC U-23 Championship 2020 will be held in Thailand from Jan. 8 to 26.

It will act as the AFC qualifiers for the Olympic football tournament. The top three teams of the tournament will qualify for the 2020 Summer Olympics men's football tournament in Japan as the AFC representatives.

Iran have not qualified for the Olympics since the 1976 games in Munich.

Turkey's Basaksehir eye Rouzbeh Cheshmi

TASNIM — Turkish professional football club Basaksehir are reportedly going to sign Esteghlal defender Rouzbeh Cheshmi.

Iranian media had earlier reported that Cheshmi has reached an agreement with Qatari giant Al Ahli.

Now, Basaksehir have reportedly set their sight on signing the 25-year-old player.

Cheshmi was a member of Iran national football team in the 2018 World Cup and the 2019 AFC Asian Cup.

Cheshmi is facing a dilemma over his transfer to Qatar Stars League or Süper Lig.

Mensha, Goncalves to leave Esteghlal

IRNA — Esteghlal January signings Godwin Mensha and Esmael Goncalves will reportedly part company with the Iranian football club.

Mensha, who joined Esteghlal from Persepolis, scored one goal for the Blues, while Goncalves found back of the net three times.

The future of Ayanda Patosi, South African striker, in Esteghlal is not clear as well.

Esteghlal are negotiating for a new head coach as a replacement for Winfried Schaefer who was sacked in late April.

Former Inter Milan coach Andrea Stramaccioni is reportedly on the verge of reaching an agreement with Esteghlal.

Spanish teams eye Iranian defender Majid Hosseini

PLDC — Trabzonspor defender Majid Hosseini has caught the eyes of several Spanish football teams, Turkey's site Fanatik reported.

Hosseini's eye-catching performance in Süper Lig, has attracted the interest of the big European clubs.

According to the Turkish site, Spanish teams Valladolid, CD Leganes, Levante and Villarreal have shown their interest in signing the 22-year-old defender.

Dutch Eredivise side Vitesse Arnhem is also among the teams targeting the Iranian international defender.

Majid Hosseini was a member of Iran national football team in the 2018 World Cup and the 2019 AFC Asian Cup.

Majidi, who has one year left on his contract, can leave Trabzonspor if he will receive a good offer from the other teams

Takarada called up after injury ends Ueki's hopes

Japan's Riko Ueki has been ruled out of FIFA Women's World Cup France 2019 contention after suffering an injury on the eve of the competition, with the 19-year-old replaced by fellow U-20 Women's World Cup-winner Saori Takarada.

The NTV Beleza youngster reportedly suffered a knock to her right knee playing in a domestic league match on May 19, with the resulting injury unable to be sufficiently recuperated in time for the Finals.

Ueki is seen as a future star for Asako Takakura's side, having scored the winning goal in their 2017 AFC U-19 Women's Championship final victory over DPR Korea, before enjoying a breakout tournament at the 2018 FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup, where she scored five goals in six matches to help Japan to the title.

In a Japan Football Association media release, Ueki - who made her senior international debut in April - expressed her disappointment at missing a chance to feature at France 2019.

"I'm very sorry that I got injured just before (the tournament), and I cannot appear on the World Cup stage," she said.

"However, based on this experience, I will return to this team again and do my best."

While Ueki's loss is a blow for Japan, it provides an opportunity for Young Nadeshiko attacking partner Takarada, who has been drafted into the squad in her place.

The Cerezo Osaka striker, also 19, has a similarly impressive resumé at youth level, having scored five goals despite limited playing time at the 2017 AFC U-19 Women's Championship, before scoring five more in Japan's U-20 Women's World Cup triumph, including one in the final as the East Asians beat Spain 3-1.

Japan's last-minute personnel change comes ahead of their final pre-tournament friendly, also against Spain, on Sunday, before their FIFA Women's World Cup France 2019 campaign begins with an eagerly-awaited tie against Argentina in Paris on June 10.

(Source: the-afc)

Zahra Nemati among Ones to Watch at World Archery Para C'ships

The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) has announced the archery Ones to Watch ahead of the 2019 World Archery Para Championships from 3-9 June in 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

These are athletes who have the potential to make headlines, especially with the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games fast approaching. Their biographies are now available on the IPC website.

■ **Alberto Simonelli (ITA)**

Two-time Paralympic silver medalist broke his own world record in the men's compound open this year.

■ **Andre Shelby (USA)**

Men's compound open 2016 Paralympic champion is going for his first individual World Championship title.

■ **David Drahoninsky (CZE)**

Despite not medaling at the last World Championships, the 2015 men's W1 champion has proven over and over that he should never be counted out of the podium.



■ **Jessica Stretton (GBR)**

Winning Paralympic gold at just 16 years old, Stretton

is expected to add more to her collection ahead of Tokyo 2020 in the women's W1.

■ **Marcel Pavlik (SVK)**

World No.1 in the men's compound open is out for his first individual gold medal.

■ **Wu Chunyan (CHN)**

Caused a major upset by beating Iran's Zahra Nemati for gold at the 2018 Asian Para Games in the women's recurve open.

■ **Zahra Nemati (IRI)**

Reigning Paralympic and world champion in the women's recurve open is also the most popular Para archer.

■ **Zhou Jiamin (CHN)**

Won her first major gold at Rio 2016, and justified her talent at the 2017 World Championships in the women's individual compound open.

(Source: Paralympic.org)

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

I am surprised at him who can repent but gives way to despair.

Imam Ali (AS)

Transilvania International Film Festival to review “Sheeple”

A R T **TEHRAN** — The Transilvania International Film Festival currently underway in the Romanian city of Cluj-Napoca will screen Iranian director Hooman Seyyedi’s tragicomedy “Sheeple”. A screening has been set for June 5 in No Limit, a noncompetitive section dedicated to features that are provocative, controversial, experimental, transgressive and innovative in both form and content.



Farhad Aslani (L) and Navid Mohammadzadeh, act in a scene from “Sheeple”.

Starring Navid Mohammadzadeh, Farhad Aslani and Farid Sajjadi-Hosseini, the film is about brothers Shakur and Shahin, two lowlifes who run a crystal meth laboratory hidden in Tehran. They do care about the honor of their family. However, when a video of their sister revealing her hair ends up on the Internet, the brothers become the protagonists of some strange incidents. The movie won awards in six categories, including best film and best director, at the 12th Celebration of Iranian Cinema Critics and Screenwriters on December 18, 2018. Mohammadzadeh was previously picked as best actor at the Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival in Estonia for his role in “Sheeple”. No Limit also features “Acid” by Russian director Aleksander Gorchilin, “Jonathan Agassi Saved My Life” by German director Tomer Heymann, “This Is Not Berlin” by Mexican director Hari Sama and seven other films from across the world. The Transilvania film festival will come to an end with a screening of Canadian director Denys Arcand’s “The Fall of the American Empire” on June 9.

Iranian artists to attend Swiss sculpture symposium

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian artists Keivan Beiranvand and Bijan Ghoncheper have been selected to take part in the 25th International Sculptor’s Symposium, which will be held in Sur En, a village in Switzerland. “The symposium will be organized on the theme of nature, and as I have done plenty of artworks on this subject,” Beiranvand told the Persian service of Honaronline on Saturday. Beiranvand will attend the symposium with a one-meter high sculpture entitled “Ax on the Roots”. “My work is a bronze statue, which features a human body on the bottom that grows a tree on the upper part with scars from an ax on its back,” he stated. “I intend to show the connection between people and nature; if you cause damage to nature, in fact, you hurt yourself,” he noted. Over 15 sculptors from various countries, including Germany, Russia, Spain, Mexico, Belgium and Ukraine, will attend the symposium, which will be held from June 15 to 23.



“Ax on the Roots” by Iranian sculptor Keivan Beiranvand will be showcased at the 25th International Sculptor’s Symposium in Switzerland.

Art exhibit to commemorate death anniversary of Imam Khomeini

A R T **TEHRAN** — An art exhibition opens today at the shrine of Imam Khomeini to commemorate the 30th death anniversary of the founder of the Islamic Revolution. The exhibit named “Thirty Years” will display a selection of photos, posters and paintings, the Visual Arts Office announced in a press release on Saturday. A collection of photos taken by Mahmud Abdolhossein covering the ceremonies organized last year to commemorate Imam Khomeini will be on view at the exhibition. The exhibit will also put on display a collection of posters selected by Ali Vazirian from the works previously showcased during the 15th Asma-ul-Husna Annual Poster Exhibition at the Iranian Artists Forum. Asma-ul-Husna displays typographical works featuring the names of Allah. Paintings by veteran artists, including Iraj Eskandari, Habibollah Sadeqi, Ahmad Khalilifard, Kazem Chalipa and Faramarz Pileam, will also be showcased at the two-day exhibit.



A calligraphic painting by Faramarz Pileam.

Council founded to supervise Iran’s presence at intl. film events



This combination photo shows the members of the Council of Festivals established by the Cinema Organization of Iran to supervise the country’s presence at international film events.

A R T **TEHRAN** — The Cinema Organization of Iran (COI) has established a council to supervise the country’s presence at international film events. The council titled “Council of Festivals” also aims to stop the currents of films oriented towards international festivals. It also intends to improve the Iranian film industry, the COI announced in a press release published on Saturday. Alireza Rezadad, Ebrahim Darughezadeh, Mahmud Arbabi, Mohsen Haddadi, Hossein Rabbani, Masud Najafi, Jalil Akbari-Sehhat and Mehrzad Danesh are members of the council appointed by COI director Hossein Entezami. The council is also headed by Seyed Ruhollah Hosseini who also presides over COI Office of Festivals and International Cooperation.

Hushmand Honarkar to stage “Do You Turn Somersaults?” in Tehran

A R T **TEHRAN** — Hushmand Honarkar will direct a stage adaption of Russian writer Aleksei Arbuzov’s romantic comedy “Do You Turn Somersaults?” at the Ezzatollah Entezami Museum in Tehran next week. The 1975 play is about a late-in-life love story, in which Rodion is the medical head of a sanatorium where Lydia is a patient, suffering from arteriosclerosis. She is clearly no ordinary patient and the play follows

with warmth and gentle humor the mutual growth of interest and liking to lasting affection between two lonely people. The play has been translated into Persian by Mahin Oskui, and Honarkar has made some modifications to it for staging in Iran. Nahid Moslemi and Kazem Hajirazad will perform in the play whose first performance will be on June 10 and will be continuing on stage until June 30.



A poster for “Do You Turn Somersaults?” by director Hushmand Honarkar.

Disney aims to thrill “Star Wars” fans of all kinds at U.S. parks

ANAHEIM, Calif. (Reuters) — At a new “Star Wars” land at Disneyland Resort in California, Walt Disney Co will let visitors fly the Millennium Falcon and drink blue milk as it aims to satisfy a wide range of the space saga’s fans with its most ambitious expansion ever. When visitors step into the 14-acre section called Star Wars: Galaxy’s Edge starting on Friday, “we want them to feel great anticipation,” said Margaret Kerrison, a story editor at Walt Disney Imagineering, even if they have only passing knowledge of Solo, Chewbacca and other characters. “We want to be appealing to everyone from the very, very hardcore fans,” she said, “to people who know nothing about ‘Star Wars.’” How much of the public embraces Galaxy’s Edge is important to Disney. The theme parks division is the company’s largest by revenue, and it has been growing profits as the media networks unit has been hit by digital competition. Analysts estimate Disney spent at least \$1 billion on two nearly identical versions of Galaxy’s Edge. At Disneyland in Anaheim, California, workers relocated a river and a railroad to make room. The second location, at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida, will debut Aug. 29. “Star Wars” has attracted legions of fans with 10 live-action movies and three



Guests explore “Star Wars: Galaxy’s Edge” at Disneyland Park in Anaheim, California, U.S., May 29, 2019. (Reuters/Mario Anzuoni) animated TV series since 1977. “I think there is universal appeal to ‘Star Wars,’” Disney Chief Executive Bob Iger said in an interview. To impress fans, “we wanted to create something deeply immersive,” he added. “You actually walk through this land and you feel like you are on the outer edge of the galaxy.” The question for theme-park designers was how to satisfy a broad group of admirers who favor different characters and have varying levels of attachment. “‘Star Wars’ means very different things to different people,” said Asa Kalama, executive creative director at Walt Disney Imagineering. “For a certain generation, it is the original (episodes) 4, 5, and 6, and nothing else is ‘Star Wars.’ Others prefer the prequels or animated series.

Leon Redbone, acclaimed 1970s musician, dies

NEW YORK (AP) — Leon Redbone, the blues and jazz artist whose growly voice, Panama hat and cultivated air of mystery made him seem like a character out of the ragtime era or the Depression-era Mississippi Delta, died Thursday. He was 69. No details about his death were provided. Redbone’s career got a boost in the early 1970s when Bob Dylan met him at the Mariposa Folk Festival in Ontario, Canada, and praised his performance. Dylan said that if he ever started a label, he would have signed Redbone. “Leon interests me,” Dylan said in an interview with Rolling Stone in 1974. “I’ve heard he’s anywhere from 25 to 60, I’ve been (a foot and a half from him) and I can’t tell, but you gotta see him. He does old Jimmie Rodgers, then turns around and does a Robert Johnson.” Dylan wasn’t the only one who didn’t know Redbone’s real age since the performer never directly answered questions about his origin or age. Redbone’s publicist confirmed he was born in Cyprus on Aug. 26, 1949, but the Thursday statement announcing his death explained that “Leon Redbone crossed the delta for that beautiful shore at the age of 127. He departed our world with his guitar, his trusty companion Rover, and a simple tip of his hat.” “I don’t do anything mysterious on purpose. I’m less than forthcoming, but that doesn’t necessarily mean I’m myste-



This March 28, 1998 file photo shows Leon Redbone performing at the eighth annual Redwood Coast Dixieland Jazz Festival in Eureka, Calif. (Patricia Wilson/The Times-Standard via AP, File) rious. It just means I’m not inclined to go there,” Redbone was quoted saying in the press release that announced his death. Redbone retired from performing in 2015 because his health had “been a matter of concern for some time,” a spokesman for the singer said at the time, and it was “too challenging for him to continue the full range of professional activities.” He released his debut album, “On the Track,” in 1975, and dropped 16 albums throughout his career. Most often dressed in a white suit with a string tie, wearing glasses and a panama hat, Redbone performed twice on “Saturday Night Live” in its first season (1975-1976) and was a frequent guest on “The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson.”