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Producer Jorn Donner says good filmmakers eliminate borders **16**



March toward motherland

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European MPs warn U.S. over scrapping JCPOA

MPs from Britain, France and Germany have warned the U.S. Congress of damage to transatlantic credibility and conflict in the Middle East if Washington pulls out of the Iran nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The U.S. may withdraw from the agreement next month.

Around 500 lawmakers from the three EU member states on Thursday urged

the U.S. Congress to save the JCPOA, pointing out in a letter that the U.S. is moving towards abandoning the nuclear deal despite Iran living up to its obligations.

The Trump administration has demanded that the 2015 nuclear accord be "fixed" by May 12; otherwise, the United States may reinstate sanctions on Tehran and effectively kill the accord despite Iran's compliance. **→2**

Tehran, Ankara moving to dump dollar in trade

By Mahnaz Abdi

Iran's financial system has intensified its efforts to establish ties with a number of countries based on the national currencies, as the U.S. sanctions against the country have complicated transactions in dollars.

In this line, Iran made an agreement in last October with Turkey on using local currencies in trade transactions between the two countries to improve economic

ties and make bilateral trade easier.

Under the agreement signed between the central banks of the two neighboring countries, the Iranian rial and Turkish lira will be easily converted.

And on April 16, Bank Melli Iran (BMI) opened the first letter of credit (LC) for business transactions with Turkey in the national currencies in a move to omit dollar and euro in bilateral trade. **→4**

Russian FM: No reason not to supply Syria with S-300

Russia says the latest United States missile strikes against Syria have removed any moral obligation for Moscow not to deliver advanced S-300 missile defense systems to Syria.

"We promised not to do it around a decade ago at the request of our partners, and we took into consider-

ation their argument that this would destabilize the situation, despite this [S-300] being a purely defensive system," said Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Friday.

"We heeded their call. But now we have no such moral obligation," the top Russian diplomat added. **→13**



ARTICLE

Dogu Perincek
Turkish Vatan Partisi
chairman

We are with Syria against imperialist attacks

We are with the Syrian Arab Republic, the Syrian Army, and the Syrian Nation; our brothers and neighbors. Our hearts beat with theirs. We support their heroic resistance against USA's imperialism from Turkey.

Tayyip Erdogan's government who welcomed the USA's missiles happily is not representing the Turkish Nation at all. An administration who is content when Muslims and oppressed nations are attacked cannot represent Turkey.

■ In Turkey, patriots will govern, not the supporters of the crusaders

What kind of Islam is this? How is this being a good neighbor? What kind of brotherhood, what kind of humanity is this? Here it is obvious; this government is under Crusaders' control! Tayyip Erdogan administration is a government who supports the missiles of the Crusaders.

The Muslim world is familiar with these Crusaders for 1200 years. We hereby promise the Turkish Nation and humanity; all our Arab and Persian neighbors, including Syria, Iran, Iraq and Lebanon; Russia, China and all Asia, Africa and Latin America: Turkey will get rid of this government and we will give Turkey a government with Vatan Partisi at the center, which is a government that is friendly with Syria, friendly with the humanity and that shows respect and loyalty to neighborhood.

The U.S. attack aims at the cooperation and solidarity established in Astana. As U.S. Secretary of Defense, James Mattis has put it, the attack tries to reestablish Geneva as the platform of negotiations. Thus, the U.S. missiles were also fired to Astana. And they were not only fired at Syria, they were also fired on Russia, Iran and Turkey!

And aiming at these countries at once, and countries with a great tradition of statehood, with a great history these are, the U.S. once again is doomed to loose the war that it declared.

This attack of USA has no value. USA is defeated. They are attempting to such shows in order to cover up their defeat. They can launch missiles all they want; no missile can hide USA's defeat. Syria has defeated USA. **→7**

Iran, Russia, Syria, Iraq hold intelligence committee meeting

POLITICS

TEHRAN – Iran, Russia, Syria and Iraq held a quartet intelligence committee meeting in Baghdad on Thursday, the Mehr news agency reported.

The meeting was primarily aimed at sharing intelligence in campaign against terrorism.

Defense Minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami represented Iran at the meeting.

Hatami said Iran attaches great importance to efforts in fighting terrorism.

The defense chief said Tehran, Moscow, Baghdad and Damascus emerged as the strong force against Daesh which had occupied large

swathes of land in Iraq and Syria.

"The coalition which was formed by Iran, Iraq, Syria and Russia based on the determination of the four countries' top officials played a serious and effective role in defeating Daesh," he explained.

Defense Minister Hatami added, "A common understanding of the threats and interests and... the four countries' joint intelligence cooperation in fighting terrorism have been a successful experience in restoring stability and security and this should be a basis for future cooperation."

Quran is a symbol of Muslim unity: analyst

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

By Jalal Heirannia

TEHRAN – Political analyst Yuram Abdullah Weiler says "Muslims have become the scapegoat for the leaders of the arrogant powers of the world to justify the draconian measures of austerity and surveillance imposed upon the citizens of their respective countries as well as for the obscene levels of military spending."

Weiler is also of the opinion that "The goal of these leaders is to facilitate the transfer of wealth from the poor and oppressed to their backers, the moneyed elite and their method is to present Islam and Muslims as a threat to "national security."

"By presenting the Quran as a book that teaches violence, the leaders of these countries are able to justify their "war on terror," which not only instills fear in the citizens of their respective

countries, but also creates chaos in the oil-producing regions, thereby reducing the supply of crude and thus increasing the price," Weiler tells the Tehran Times.

This is the text of the interview:

■ What is the role of the Quran in uniting Muslims?

A: All Muslims, regardless of which of the five theological schools of Islam (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, Hanbali and Jafari) they may follow, believe in the Quran as the final revelation to mankind by the Creator through His prophet, Muhammad (S). While certain schools or madhaahib have launched accusations that some Muslims have a different Quran, this is, of course, completely false as can be demonstrated quite easily.

Therefore, the Quran is not only a basis, but also a symbol of Muslim unity. It should be pointed out that various Christian sects do not share the

He noted that certain countries which claim they want to help establish peace in the Middle East have "turned into the most criminal governments against the oppressed people of Iraq, Syria and Yemen".

These countries have tried to legitimize aggression under the pretext of human rights, he remarked.

"Enemies seek to harm success in fighting terrorism examples of which are the recent attack by three Western countries against Syria along with the Zionist regime of Israel's attacks on Syria," he added.

same Bible. In fact, the authorized version of the Bible of one mainstream Christian sect contains books within it that are absent from the versions used by others. Consequently, the Quran should be a strong unifying agent. However, in addition to the Quran, Islam requires the Sunna, or traditions of the Prophet (S) for completeness, as narrated in the hadith of "Two Weighty Things (Hadith al-Thaqalayn)," namely, the Quran and Ahlul-Bayt (a.s.), or household of the Prophet (S). Versions of this hadith can be found in Sunni sources, including Sahih Muslim.

■ Why do some try to show the Quran as a book that teaches violence?

A: Muslims have become the scapegoat for the leaders of the arrogant powers of the world to justify the draconian measures of austerity and surveillance imposed upon the citizens of their respective countries as well as for the obscene levels of military spending. **→7**



ARTICLE

Setareh Behrooz
Tehran Times journalist

Doors open in cyberspace, please come in!

Have you ever tracked the amount of time you spend online? For me, it all started with installing a time-tracking app on my smartphone. It tracks minutes I spend on various sites or applications and the result was appalling! Logging 70 times in the messaging apps in less than two hours... and it was not very different for others when I asked them to install the application on their phones as well.

No doubt that our life is mingled with cyberspace. Social network is a part of our daily life, a double-edged sword, which we should be aware of.

Who can deny the impact of social media on improvement of information flow and connection between people? Through social networks, most people are now aware of news and incidents in few minutes and no one is waiting for news programs or tomorrow newspaper. Several civil and social movements formed in social networks.

You can have face to face contact with dear ones who are kilometers away from you and get in touch with your friends and relatives by following their accounts.

Social networks has a great impact on our beliefs, lifestyle and our understanding from world around us. With social networks, several windows are opened to unknown lands.

The point is this, are we selectors or selectees? How much we face news and information which are neither necessary nor beneficial for and to us? The charming sceneries we skim, make us more happy or discontent and stressful? And our flying time... alas!

■ Family gatherings or family groups?

Like other parts of the world, Iranians' lifestyle and daily routines are influenced with social media, which spread globalization faster than before.

Iranians are famous for large family gatherings and reunions. Family networks bonds are strong in the country. Even in a neighborhood, the habitats used to form several communities with different motivations and in this way families establish strong connection with each other. **→10**



Iran celebrates 120 years of national film history

A R T **TEHRAN** – Iran celebrated its 120 years of national cinema history at Tehran's Fajr International Film Festival.

The ceremony was attended by a large number of Iranian cineastes and foreign guests as veteran actor Reza Kianian cut a cake prepared for the celebration.

In his short opening speech, Kianian told the audience, "We have a number of good films this year and I hope you will all like and welcome the films." **→16**

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Czech parliament overturns ban on Bushehr nuclear plant

POLITICS TEHRAN — The lower house of the Czech parliament on Thursday supported a communist party proposal that a ban on exporting equipment for Iran's Bushehr nuclear reactor be lifted.

According to Czech Radio, the vote was on the first reading as the start of the legislative process.

The precise proposal stems from the problems of South Bohemia company ZVVZ Milevsko which had won a contract to deliver air conditioning equipment.

The Czech government took a neutral position on the issue when it came up in Cabinet in March in spite of warnings that agreement to lift the ban might affect relations with key allies such as the U.S.



Algerian Workers' Party: Iran not enemy of Arabs

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Workers' Party of Algeria has condemned the Arab League's anti-Iran statement, saying Iran is not the enemy of Arabs, but imperialism and the Zionist regime are the enemies of the region's nations.

In a statement, the Workers' Party said it is regrettable that the Arab leaders condemned Iran instead of the Zionist regime in their meeting in Dhahran, IRNA reported.

It further said such acts would lead to the continuation of aggressions against Muslim nations, adding that Arab countries, led by Saudi Arabia, are safeguarding America's interests in the region.



Military to get new homemade tank

POLITICS TEHRAN — Chief of the Iranian Army's ground forces said on Thursday that a new homemade tank, Karrar, will soon be delivered to the military, Mehr reported.

Brigadier General Kiomars Heidari said the Karrar tank is equipped with electro-optical fire control system, laser rangefinder, ballistic computer, and ability to fire at fixed and mobile targets during daytime and at night.

Karrar is capable of firing highly-precise laser-guided missiles and can be operated by the gunner and commander from two parallel sites, he said, adding it is also capable of moving through pits, rivers, and under water.



Iran, Iraq sign MOU for industrial cooperation

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran and Iraq signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on Thursday to develop industrial relations, Mehr reported.

The MOU was signed by the Iranian Defense Minister Amir Hatami and Iraqi Minister of Industry and Minerals Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani in Baghdad.

At a presser after the signing ceremony, Hatami said the Islamic Republic is determined to develop ties with Iraq.

"The same way, the Iraqi officials are after the same objective," he added.

The defense minister also met separately with Iraqi National Security Advisor Faleh al-Fayad on Thursday.



Cleric calls for vigilance against enemies' threats

POLITICS TEHRAN — Ayatollah Kazem Seddighi, Tehran's interim Friday prayer preacher, has said that people and officials should be vigilant in dealing with enemies' threats.

Addressing worshippers, Ayatollah Seddighi said security forces should thwart the enemies' plots in a way they could not mastermind any other conspiracy against the Islamic Republic, IRNA reported.

All should be united in carrying out the guidelines of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, he stressed.

"We should beware of the enemies' approaches in this war, which is spearheaded by infiltration," the cleric warned.



Bushehr nuclear plant not affected by quake

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Bushehr nuclear power plant has not been affected by the Thursday quake, a local official at the plant said on Thursday.

Mahmoud Jafari said the nuclear plan is operating normally. An earthquake with magnitude 5.9 jolted the southern Iranian province of Bushehr, with no reports of casualties or damage.

Jafari added that all refineries and petrochemical plants in Asalouyeh were not harmed by the earthquake, IRNA reported.

Tehran's unconditional compliance with JCPOA unimaginable: Araqchi

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi has said it would be a "mistake" to imagine that the Islamic Republic will adhere to the nuclear deal, officially called the JCPOA, under all conditions.

Araqchi made the remarks in a Thursday meeting with the Norwegian Foreign Minister Ine Marie Eriksen Soreide in Oslo.

He also stressed that any attempt to link the deal with "other issues" would be irrelevant and further complicate the regional situation.

U.S. President Donald Trump has repeatedly described the JCPOA, which was negotiated under his predecessor, Barack Obama, as "the worst and most one-sided transaction Washington has ever entered into," a characterization he often used during his presidential campaign, and threatened to tear it up unless amendments are made to it to include agreements on Iran's military program and regional policy.

"The JCPOA is first and foremost a security pact in the field of non-proliferation.



Any collision with it will weaken the non-proliferation system and will confront put us in a situation to choose between security and no security," underlined Araqchi who



was a key negotiator in drawing up the nuclear agreement with the 5+1 group (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany) in July 2015.

For her part, Soreide voiced strong support for the nuclear accord, stating that "there is no better alternative for this deal and all-out effort is needed for the JCPOA to survive."

On Wednesday, Araqchi warned that Tehran is well prepared to deal with any possible scenario related to the future of the country's nuclear agreement.

"We will powerfully defend the Islamic Republic of Iran's interests in the face of measures by the American president. We are ready to counter and defend against any scenario," he stressed.

Araqchi stated that the world will see how fast Tehran can reactivate its nuclear capacities and even bolster them to a much higher level than before the nuclear agreement was concluded.

He added, "European countries are currently negotiating with each other and America" about the future of the JCPOA.

The deputy foreign minister's remarks come ahead of a May 12 deadline for Trump to decide whether to extend waivers of economic sanctions on Iran under the nuclear deal.

Any war will lead to annihilation of Israel: IRGC general

POLITICS TEHRAN — Brigadier General Hossein Salami, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC)'s second-in-command, warned on Friday that any war against Iran will lead to annihilation of the Zionist regime of Israel.

Salami made the remarks while addressing worshippers in Tehran.

"Let me speak to the Zionists. We know you well. You

are highly vulnerable. You have no depth. Neither is your reserve as big as our 'Operation Beit ul-Moqaddas'.

"You have no way to escape. No way but to wade the sea. Do not trust your airbases. They are within range and will be soon shut down. Do not assure yourselves on account of the U.S., France, or the UK. They may arrive when you are no more. So mind your behavior and do not make dangerous calculations,"

He added Iran's missiles are ready to be launched.

"Hands are on the trigger and missiles are ready and will be launched at any moment that the enemy tries to carry out its sinister plot against (our) lands," Tasnim news agency quoted him as saying.

"Operation Beit ul-Moqaddas" refers to the struggle by the Iranian military which led to the liberation of the city of Khorramshahr from Iraqi occupation on May 24-25, 1982.

Zarif: Iran's reaction will be 'unpleasant' if Trump quits nuclear deal

POLITICS TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Thursday that Iran has a variety of options in store that will make the United States "regret" if it leaves the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"Iran has a wide range of options both inside and outside of the JCPOA and surely, the reaction from Iran and the international community will be 'unpleasant' for the Americans," Zarif told reporters upon arrival in New York to attend a UN General Assembly peacebuilding meeting, Press TV reported.

Under the deal, which went into force in January 2016 when President Barack Obama was still in office, Iran agreed to put limits on parts of its nuclear program in exchange for termination of all nuclear-related sanctions.

The chief Iranian diplomat said the U.S., especially the Donald Trump administration, has failed to stay true to its commitments and it was up to the European

signatories of the deal to preserve it and force Washington to keep up its obligations.

Trump has been a vocal critic of the nuclear deal which was signed between Tehran, the European Union, Germany and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council - the U.S., France, Britain, Russia, and China.

"If the European countries want to preserve the deal they have to make it sustainable for Iran;... they need to impose pressure on the United States in order to compel the U.S., encourage the U.S. to implement what it undertook under the deal," Zarif said. "Unfortunately, it hasn't been doing that."

The European trio - Britain, France, and Germany - is seeking talks on Iran's missile program in order to encourage Trump to stay in the deal.

However, Zarif said any offers "will not get a positive answer" from the Islamic Republic and Tehran would make no "concessions" whatsoever.

Iran has been insisting that its missile program is only for defensive purposes.

'We will be praying in the Holy Quds soon'

POLITICS TEHRAN — Ali Akbar Velayati, a senior advisor to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, has expressed hope that by restoring unity, Muslim nations would defeat Israel soon and hold prayers in al-Quds (Jerusalem), Tasnim reported.

Velayati made the remarks while addressing the opening ceremony of the 35th International Holy Quran Recitation Competition in Tehran on Thursday.

Velayati also said the United States is seeking to undermine unity among Islamic countries and split their territories but Iran will not allow any change to Muslim countries' borders.

Pointing to the emergence of Daesh (ISIL) in the region, he said Western countries sought to portray a "horrible" image of Islam but failed because of their miscalculations.

"When colonialism dominated Islamic countries, it led to the decline of the Islamic civilization," he stated, adding that Western colonial powers tried to replace the Islamic culture with the Western culture but failed.

Velayati also said the U.S. has failed in its invasions against Islamic countries, drawing

examples from Iraq and Syria as two Muslim countries which defended their land against U.S. intervention by reviving Islam.

Major General Yahya Rahim-Safavi, a top military adviser to the Leader, also spoke at the ceremony, saying Iran is defending Islamic countries' territorial integrity against foreign intervention.

"The coalition of the Americans, Zionists and some regional countries regarding Syria and Iraq has failed," Rahim-Safavi said, Mehr reported.

"It was the coalition of Iran, Russia, Iraq, Syria and Hezbollah which emerged victorious and the resistance front's victories will go on," the former IRGC chief stated.

The general said Iran is the strongest Islamic country in the world and its Leader is the frontrunner in defending Muslim countries, including Yemen, Syria and Iraq.

The general went on to say that the Islamic Republic will always defend Muslim nations against disintegration of their lands.

The greatest threat, Safavi said, is the American-Israeli link, against which Iran will spare no effort fighting.

Parliament speakers of Iran, Sri Lanka meet in Colombo

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani held talks with his Sri Lankan counterpart Karu Jayasuriya in Colombo on Friday.

Larijani said that the two countries' parliaments have established a close relationship.

"The two parliaments have cooperation in international fora. There are good relations between the two governments and there are also good ties in political, cultural and parliamentary spheres," Larijani explained.



He also called for expansion of relations in various areas. For his part, Jayasuriya said that Sri Lanka seeks to expand economic relations with Iran.

The two countries have potentials to expand economic relations, the Sri Lankan parliament speaker added.

Before visiting Colombo, the Iranian parliament approved a bill on prisoner swap with Sri Lanka.

Prior to his visit to Sri Lanka, Larijani also made a two-day visit to Hanoi, where he held talks with Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc on Tuesday.

OPCW should not be used for political gains, Iran says

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons should not be used as tool for political gains of state parties, and Iranian diplomat has said.

"The OPCW as the competent authority in the field of chemical weapons shall not be used as an instrument to confirm the political intentions of the States Parties," Alireza Jahangiri, Iran's representative at the OPCW, said on Thursday.

Following is full text of his speech published by IRNA published on Friday:

At the outset I would like to appreciate the Director General for providing the States Parties with the report on the activities of the technical

assistance visit (TAV/02/18) team in relation to the Salisbury incident on 4 March 2018.

My delegation has already declared its position on this issue in 87th Session of the Executive Council. Unfortunately, in that session, we again witnessed quite a number of allegations and accusations made before receiving the results of the findings of the OPCW team. This should not be a precedent in future work of this Organization. The States Parties fairly expect that in cases such as Salisbury incident in which there is an allegation of the use of chemical weapons against another State Party, the work of the OPCW proceeds in its regular course and after

the end of the process and issuance of the final report by the team, the States Parties, invoking the report, offer their arguments.

It is also expected that the OPCW, implement its activities such as collecting and analyzing information and samples independently without relying upon the findings of other sources.

The OPCW as the competent authority in the field of chemical weapons shall not be used as an instrument to confirm the political intentions of the States Parties. Political disputes shall be settled through their methods and claims against a State Party to Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) on the use of

chemical weapons or toxic chemicals should be dealt with through the existing mechanisms and provisions of the CWC.

We are of the view that the current case of Salisbury incident could be settled in accordance with Article IX of the Convention either through bilateral negotiation between two sides based on a cooperative approach, sound arguments and reasons and without any prejudgement or with the help of the OPCW.

In closing may I request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the 59th Meeting Executive Council and be posted on both the external and public website of the OPCW.

European MPs warn U.S. over scrapping JCPOA

1 -> The lawmakers from the three European countries that were signatories to the deal warned that abandonment of the nuclear accord would create a source of conflict in the Middle East.

Thirteen years of negotiations with Iran allowed the international community "to impose unprecedented scrutiny on the Iranian nuclear program, dismantle most of their nuclear enrichment facilities..." they said in the letter, Deutsche Welle reported.

"Not a drop of blood was spilt," they wrote.

A U.S. withdrawal would create "lasting damage to our credibility as international partners in negotiation, and more generally, to diplomacy as a tool to achieve peace and ensure security."

German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron will head to Washington next week to press the Trump administration to stay in the accord signed by the

three European powers, Russia, China and the United States.

A U.S. withdrawal would open a deep divide between the United States and Europe, despite common concern over Iran's ballistic missile program and its support for Syrian President Bashar Assad.

Lawmakers said a U.S. withdrawal from the nuclear deal would create "lasting damage to our credibility as international partners in negotiation, and more generally, to diplomacy as a tool to achieve peace and ensure security."

The European MPs said that although they "share the concerns expressed by many vis-à-vis this Iranian behavior, [they] are deeply convinced that these issues must be treated separately" outside of the nuclear accord.

Iranian leaders have signaled that Tehran's response to a U.S. withdrawal would be dictated by the stance of European powers, especially ensuring that Iran benefits sanctions be lifted under the nuclear accord.

European governments led by Britain, France and Germany are considering taking non-nuclear related sanction action against Iran over its ballistic missile program and support for the Syrian government in order to appease the Trump administration in a bid to save the nuclear accord.

(Source: Deutsche Welle)

"Not a drop of blood was spilt" in crafting the nuclear agreement, 500 lawmakers from Germany, France and Britain write to the U.S. Congress.

Bahraini court jails 24 Shias, strips them of citizenship

A Bahrain court has sentenced 24 Shia citizens to jail and revoked their nationality as the ruling House of Khalifah regime presses ahead with its heavy-handed clampdown on the majority community in the Persian Gulf tiny state.

An unnamed Bahraini judicial source said that the High Criminal Court had found the defendants guilty of alleged forming of a “terrorist group,” travelling abroad for “weapons and explosives training” and attempted murder of policemen.

The source also noted that 10 of the defendants had received life imprisonment, 10 sentenced to a decade behind bars and the remaining four to jail terms between three and five years.

Since February 14, 2011, Bahraini people have been holding peaceful protest rallies on an almost daily basis, demanding that the House of Khalifah relinquish power and let a just system representing all Bahrainis be established.

Bahrainis have also been complaining against widespread discrimination against the Shia majority in the tiny Persian Gulf state.

Manama has responded to the protests with lethal force, drawing international criticism.

Bahraini authorities have further detained human rights campaigners, broken up major opposition political parties, revoked the nationality of several pro-democracy activists and deported those left stateless.

In February, Human Rights Watch (HRW) urged Bahrain to immediately end its arbitrary deportations and restore citizenship to the people whose nationality was revoked unfairly.

“Bahraini authorities have dropped all pretense of pluralism and tolerance for dissent and are clearly stripping away the citizenships of people whom they find undesirable,” said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East director at the HRW.

According to the New York-based rights group, Bahraini authorities have stripped more than 570 nationals of their citizenship since 2012.



■ Protests ahead of F1 races

Meanwhile, Bahraini protesters have staged rallies across the country against the House of Khalifah regime's repressive policies in the lead-up to the Formula One Grand Prix 2018 races in the sheikdom.

The protesters took to the streets on Wednesday night, holding the photos of those killed or incarcerated during anti-regime protests in the country since 2011.

Clashes erupted between Bahraini police forces and protesters in the village of al-Akr, 32 kilometers south of

the capital, Manama.

The protests come as the Persian Gulf is set to host the Formula One Grand Prix as of April 6.

Bahrainis say Formula One's governing body, FIA, should cancel the event over Manama's ongoing crackdown on protests and poor human rights record.

Human rights activists slam Bahrain's hosting of the Formula One race as a failed attempt to restore Manama's international image.

(Source: agencies)

Iraq launches ‘deadly strikes’ against ISIL inside Syria

Iraq says it has carried out “deadly air strikes” against fighters of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group, situated in pockets inside neighboring Syria.

The announcement comes days after Haider al-Abadi, Iraq's prime minister, said his country would take action against the ISIL if its terrorists threatened Iraq's security.

Iraqi F-16 fighter jets crossed into Syria on Thursday in coordination with the Syrian army, al-Abadi's office said in a statement.

“Based on orders from the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, Haider al-Abadi, our heroic air force carried out deadly air strikes against ISIL sites in Syria on Thursday near the border with Iraq,” it said.

According to the statement, the attacks countered dangers posed by the ISIL and reflected the Iraqi armed forces’ “military capabilities in fighting terror”.

According to an Iraqi military spokes-



person, the operation was fully coordinated with the Syrian army.

Al-Abadi formally declared victory over the ISIL last year with the help of a coalition made up of Kurdish Peshmerga forces and Shia-dominated paramilitary units.

Iraq's army also received key air and ground support from an international coalition.

But ISIL still poses a threat from pockets along the border with Syria and has continued to carry out ambushes and bombings across Iraq.

Also on Thursday, ISIL terrorists were given 48 hours to leave a pocket they control in the south of the Syrian capital, Damascus, pro-government Al-Watan daily reported.

The fighters have been in control of an area around the Palestinian Yarmouk refugee camp and its surrounding neighborhoods south of Damascus for nearly three years.

(Source: agencies)

Suspected 9/11 recruiter Mohammed Haydar Zammar captured in Syria

A German extremist with links to Sept. 11 ringleader Mohamed Atta and other attackers has been detained in Syria, a United States official confirmed on Thursday.

“Mohammad Haydar Zammar, a Syrian-born German national, was captured more than a month ago,” Pentagon spokesman Eric Pahon told NBC News.

“This terrorist was captured during a unilateral operation by the Syrian Democratic Forces,” he added, referring to the group of the U.S.-backed militias purportedly fighting the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group.

According to the congressional report into the 9/11 attacks by al Qaeda, Zammar had lived in the Germany city of Hamburg and was an “outspoken, flamboyant Islamist” and a “possible recruiter” of some 9/11 attackers.

The 9/11 Commission Report said Zammar was “a well-known figure in the Muslim community (and to German and U.S. intelligence agencies by the late 1990s),” adding that he had fought in Afghanistan and “relished any opportunity to extol the virtues of violent jihad.”

Atta was born in Egypt and studied in Hamburg. Atta was the head of the so-called Hamburg cell, which was central to the attacks on the United States.

After 9/11, “Zammar reportedly took credit for influencing Ramzi Binalshibh,” as well as to “the rest of the Hamburg

group,” the congressional report added. Binalshibh was later sent to Guantánamo Bay for his alleged role in planning and providing logistical support for the Sept. 11 attacks.

The congressional report said that “owing to Zammar's persuasion or some other source of inspiration,” by the late 1990s Binalshibh, Atta and fellow attackers Marwan al-Shehhi and Ziad Jarrah “eventually prepared themselves to translate their extremists beliefs into action.”

Binalshibh, Atta, al-Shehhi and Jarrah are considered part of the Hamburg cell, which “shared the anti-U.S. fervor” of other extremists, according to the congressional report, with the “added enormous advantages of fluency in English and familiarity with life in the West.”

Atta, who is considered the operational leader of the 9/11 conspiracy, served as the pilot for American Airlines Flight 11 that crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center. Al-Shehhi flew United Airlines Flight 175 into the South Tower. Jarrah was flying United Airlines Flight 93, intending to crash it into either the Capitol or the White House in Washington, when it plowed into a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, following a revolt by passengers.

Zammar was detained by the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) in Morocco in late 2001 and was later handed over to the Syrian government, Germany's Der Spiegel reported in 2005. At the time, the magazine said Zammar was being



held in the notorious Far-Filastin prison in Damascus.

In 2007, a Syrian court sentenced Zammar to 12 years in prison for being a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, but he got out in 2013 after that country's civil war broke out, AFP reported.

According to German newspaper reports, he was released as part of a prisoner exchange between Islamist rebels and the government of President Bashar al-Assad of Syria. Zammar is believed to be in his 50s.

(Source: NBC News)

Putin ‘ready’ for Trump summit: Lavrov

Russian president Vladimir Putin is “ready for a meeting” with his United States counterpart Donald Trump, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Friday.

Moscow's chief diplomat added that such a summit was not currently being discussed but the Kremlin hopes that a meeting at the White House would materialize.

“President Putin is ready for such a meeting,” Lavrov said in an interview with state news agency RIA Novosti.

“We are proceeding from the fact that the U.S. president in a telephone conversation - that was made public, there is no secret about this - sent such an invitation and said that he would be happy to see [Putin] in the White House and then to meet him during a reciprocal visit.”

“Since Trump suggested this, we proceed from the fact that he will make this concrete,” he added.

Trump proposed a White House summit when he called Putin last month, prior to the mass expulsion of Russian diplomats from the U.S.

The proposal has not moved forward since relations between the U.S. and Russia deteriorated further over an



alleged chemical attack in Syria.

During the interview, Lavrov also said Moscow welcomed an expected summit between Trump and Kim Jong Un, the leader of nuclear-armed North Korea.

“We cannot wish this meeting failure,” Lavrov said.

“This would be a step away from the prospect of a military crisis and a military solution to the problem that is the

Korean peninsula,” he added.

“We very much hope that he [Trump] starts the process of de-escalating tensions.”

The odds of the Trump-Kim summit taking place were boosted by the shock news earlier this week that CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) chief Mike Pompeo had gone to Pyongyang to meet Kim for the most significant U.S.-North Korea contact in almost two decades.

Lavrov compared the U.S. and North Korean statements prior to the meeting to tensions between “boxers” before a match.

“Before the start of serious conversations it is like boxers entering the ring, showing off in front of one another before the fight,” he said.

Russia has relatively warm ties with North Korea, with which it shares a small land border.

The United States earlier this year accused Russia of helping Pyongyang evade some international sanctions by supplying fuel to the isolated country.

(Source: AFP)

Fresh Saudi regime airstrike leaves nearly two dozen civilians killed in S.W. Yemen

Nearly two dozen civilians have lost their lives when the House of Saud regime fighter jets launched an aerial attack in Yemen's southwestern province of Ta'izz as Riyadh continues with its bombardment campaign against its impoverished neighbor.

Local sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, told al-Masirah television network that Saudi regime warplanes targeted a vehicle as it was travelling along a road in the al-Arish of Mawza district on Friday afternoon.

The sources added that 20 people were killed in the airstrike.

Earlier in the day, three houses were reduced to rubble in the al-Dhaheer district of the mountainous northwestern province of Sa'ada, when the Saudi regime military aircraft carried out three airstrikes against the area.

Also on Friday, Yemeni army soldiers and allied fighters from Popular Committees fired a domestically-manufactured ballistic missile at an airport in Saudi Arabia's southwestern border region of Jizan in retaliation for the Saudi regime's military campaign against their crisis-hit country.

A military source, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Yemen's Arabic-language al-Masirah television network that the Badr-1 missile struck Jizan Regional Airport, also known as King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Airport, with great precision.

The Yemeni Ministry of Human Rights announced in a statement on March 25 that the Saudi regime-led war had left 600,000 civilians dead and injured since March 2015.

The United Nations says a record 22.2 million Yemenis are in need of food aid, including 8.4 million threatened by severe hunger.

A high-ranking United Nations aid official recently warned against the “catastrophic” living conditions in Yemen, stating that there was a growing risk of famine and cholera there.

“After three years of conflict, conditions in Yemen are catastrophic,” John Ging, UN director of aid operations, told the UN Security Council on February 27.

He added, “People's lives have continued unraveling. Conflict has escalated since November driving an estimated 100,000 people from their homes.”

Ging said cholera had infected 1.1 million people in Yemen since last April, and a new outbreak of diphtheria had occurred in the war-ravaged country since 1982.

(Source: Press TV)

Four Saudi regime security forces killed by gunmen in southern province

Four members of the House of Saud regime's security forces were killed and four others wounded in clashes with gunmen on Thursday at a checkpoint in the southwestern Asir province, Saudi regime-owned Al Arabiya TV said.

The Saudi Press Agency (SPA) said the casualties came after the outpost on Arqob Road between the provinces of Mujarda and Bareq came under gunfire on Thursday.

One gunman was killed and two detained, the broadcaster said on Twitter, citing the Saudi regime interior ministry, without providing more details.

“In the interest of the investigation, their names cannot be revealed,” it said.

(Source: Reuters)

Cuba marks end of era as Castro hands over power

Cuba's new president, Miguel Diaz-Canel, began his term on Thursday with a promise to defend the socialist revolution led by the Castro brothers since 1959, giving a sober speech that emphasized the need to modernize the economy.

A stalwart of the ruling Communist Party, Diaz-Canel was sworn in to replace Raul Castro by the National Assembly in a carefully managed new chapter for the Caribbean island, aimed at preserving the political system.

“The mandate given by the people to this house is to give continuity to the Cuban revolution in a crucial historic moment,” Diaz-Canel, 57, told the assembly in his first speech as president.

He delivered a warm homage to 86-year-old Raul Castro, who took office a decade ago as his brother Fidel Castro's health deteriorated. Fidel Castro died in 2016.



Castro will retain considerable clout as the head of the Communist Party until a congress in 2021. Diaz-Canel, praising the reforms he ushered in as president, said Castro would remain the leader of the revolution and would be involved in major decisions.

Stepping to the podium for a 90-minute-long parting speech, a relaxed-looking Castro gave the impression he would not quickly fade from sight.

He sharply criticized the United States foreign, trade and immigration policy under President Donald Trump.

“Since the current president arrived in office, there has been a deliberate reversal in the relations between Cuba and the United States, and an aggressive and threatening tone prevails,” Castro said. Thursday's session was held on the 57th anniversary of Cuba's 1961 defeat of a CIA-backed Cuban exile invasion at the Bay of Pigs, a victory that Havana celebrates as a symbol of its resistance to “imperialist” pressure for change from Washington.

In 2014, Castro and former U.S. President Barack Obama reached a landmark agreement to renew diplomatic ties and improve relations between the Cold War foes, a detente that led to a rapid increase in the U.S. visits and investment on the island. There has been a renewed chill under Trump, who put a stop to doing business with some Cuban state-run companies and tightened rules for the U.S. visitors. A spate of mystery illnesses among U.S. diplomats in Havana has also undermined trust.

(Source: Reuters)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	95523.9
IFX	1063.76

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	51,800 rials
GBP	59,790 rials
AED	11,490 rials

Source: mehrnews.com

COMMODITIES

WTI	67.95/b
Brent	73.31/b
OPEC Basket	69.39/b
Gold	\$1,343.55 /oz
Silver	\$17.22/oz
Platinum	\$937.80/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Iran seeking new LPG customers

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** — Iran is seeking new target markets for the export of its liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), according to Iranian Gas Commercial Company (IGCC) Managing Director Mohammad-Ali Barati.



Barati said the production and exports of LPG from some development phases of South Pars gas field (which Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf) has experienced a 100-percent growth in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), IRIB news reported.

Tehran, Ankara moving to dump dollar in trade

1 → Following the LC opening, Gholamreza Panahi, a board member of the BMI, said this method reduces risks and costs significantly and will definitely facilitate trade ties between the two countries; so it could be a proper model for the expansion of business and trade transactions with other countries.

Also, in an exclusive interview with Anadolu Agency in Moscow in last October when the agreement was signed between Iranian and Turkish central banks, Mohammad-Hossein Adeli, the secretary general of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF), said that Iran and Turkey's decision to trade in national currency is technically feasible particularly for bilateral energy trade.

"If sanctions, restrictions and political considerations are somehow limiting the countries' free trade, they will start having more willingness to do it [trade in national currencies]," he noted.

The official asserted that this practice will have a knock-on effect on other countries and they will see that it is not just possible



but profitable.

And the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) has said that it has signing other deals for trade in local currencies with the countries which have major transactions with Iran on its agenda.

Meanwhile, on April 9, CBI Governor Valiollah Seif said that the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei had welcomed his

suggestion to replace dollar with euro in Iran's foreign trade.

"Dollar does not play a role in our foreign trade transactions," Seif announced at the time.

The shift to trade in national currencies is something also desired by other countries which have major trade transactions with

Iran, such as Russia and India.

On April 9, Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak said Russia was considering payments in national currencies in trade with Iran.

"There is a common understanding that we need to move towards the use of national currencies in our settlements. There is a need for this, as well as the wish of the parties," RT quoted Novak as saying.

"We are considering an option of payment in national currencies. This requires certain adjustments in the financial, economic and banking sectors", the minister explained.

Also in mid-February, the Indian media reported that India has allowed its investors to invest in Iran in rupees to stimulate trade and investment between the two countries.

While ditching dollar in its international trade transactions, Iran is also deleting the U.S. currency from its domestic financial system as the cabinet on Wednesday ordered all state-run organizations and companies to replace U.S. dollar with euro in reporting their financial statements.

IGTF 2018 hosting 43 foreign companies in Tehran

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The third edition of Iran's international horticulture trade fair also known as Iran Green Trade Fair (IGTF 2018) kicked off at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds on Thursday.

Over 100 Iranian exhibitors along with 43 foreign companies from different countries including Germany, Spain, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, France, China, Azerbaijan, Russia, India, UAE



and Turkey are showcasing their latest achievements and services in this three-day event.

First Iran-Spain joint oil, gas task force due in early-May

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** — Iran and Spain are due to establish their first ever oil and gas task force on the sidelines of the 23rd Iran International Oil, Gas, Refining and Petrochemical Exhibition (Iran Oil Show 2018) on May 7.

A combination of Spanish companies has been identified for this task force. Companies active in various fields including manufacturing generators, industrial valves, cooling towers and etc. are going



to join the task force.

The 23rd edition of Iran Oil Show is due to be held on May 6-9 at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds.

IDRO to create 30,000 jobs in 4 years

ECONOMY **TEHRAN**— Head of Iran's Industrial Development and Renovation Organization (IDRO) announced that within the next four years the organization will create 30,000 jobs using 500 trillion rials (about \$11.9 billion) of investments, Shata news reported

on Friday.

According to Mansour Moazzami, presently, IDRO has 32 projects underway in new industries, 9 in oil, gas, and energy, 7 in transportation, and 16 projects in other industries.

"Investing in deprived areas stands among top priorities

of IDRO and among the named ongoing projects, 10 are being implemented, using 43 trillion rials (above \$1 billion) investments in the less developed areas of the country," the official said adding that these projects have created 5,000 jobs in these regions.

China envoy says China will retaliate if U.S. insists on trade war

China will retaliate if the United States insists on initiating a trade war, China's ambassador to the United States was quoted as saying by the state news agency Xinhua on Friday.

Speaking at an event held by the Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies at Harvard University this week, Cui Tiankai said any

dispute should be worked out through dialogue and a trade war would poison the atmosphere of overall China-U.S. relations. Cui also urged the United States to abandon a cold war and zero-sum mentality, Xinhua reported.

(Source: Reuters)

Trade tensions are just one of the three biggest challenges for the global economy, IMF says

While the "sun is still shining" on the global economy, clouds could be looming over the horizon, warned Tao Zhang, a deputy managing director for the International Monetary Fund.

Speaking with CNBC's Joumana Bercetche on Thursday, Zhang said there are currently three big challenges facing the global economy: tensions on the trade front, fiscal and financial risk, and the ongoing struggle to attain inclusive growth.

As trade tensions mount between the U.S. and China, Zhang said there are numerous models attempting to assess both the impacts of a potential trade war as well as the effectiveness of possible mitigation measures.

Zhang acknowledged, however, that the reality of the situation could be "much more complicated" than predicted by models,

adding that the fundamentals all point to the resolution of trade disagreements through a cooperative approach.

Otherwise, he said, any escalations in trade tensions would result in a loss for the global economy "one way or the other." Zhang has worked as the IMF's executive director for China, and as a deputy governor at the People's Bank of China.

"That, by itself, is alarming to all of us" Speaking about the risk of global debt — the total debt level for the world came in at a record \$164 trillion in 2016, according to the IMF — Zhang noted he's seeing levels "higher than the levels seen" during the 2008 financial crisis.

■ **"That, by itself, is alarming to all of us," he said.**

Countries have to be aware of their fiscal conditions, particularly in the public sector,

Russia is prepared to defend itself against U.S. sanctions

Russia stands ready to retaliate against the latest round of U.S. sanctions, the country's Finance Minister Anton Siluanov told CNBC.

The U.S. slapped sanctions on several Russian oligarchs, businesses and agencies thought to have ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin earlier this month. It prompted a dramatic market sell-off in Moscow, with investors seen dumping Russian assets amid elevated concerns over the country's economic position.

Speaking late Thursday on the sidelines of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) spring meeting in Washington, Siluanov told CNBC: "We are not in favor of sanction-swapping. Nevertheless, our MPs (members of parliament) have drafted legislation that would allow us to introduce certain restrictions, both on exported goods and on goods imported into the country."

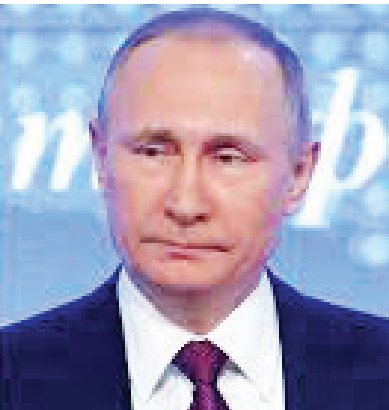
"Still, I would reiterate, any sanctions have a negative effect on the state of economies ... I very much hope that these sanctions processes do not develop any further. We need to talk, we need to find agreements, we need to look for ways out in order to solve problems not by imposing sanctions but through political agreements," he added.



Sanctions blacklist

The U.S. added several Russian companies to a sanctions blacklist in response to Moscow's actions in Crimea and Syria, as well as its interference in the West — including suspected cyber activities. The Kremlin has since called these sanctions unlawful.

One of the most prominent casualties from Russia's recent market slump was aluminum giant Rusal. The company, owned by billionaire Oleg Deripaska, was directly targeted by Washington on April 6 and, in reaction to the news, inves-



tors then wiped half the value of its Hong Kong-listed stock and almost a third from its London-listed EN+ firm.

The Kremlin has since sought to try to manage the fallout by actively assisting large companies, such as Rusal, with additional liquidity, Siluanov said.

He added that while market turmoil in the country would "no doubt negatively impact the companies that found themselves hit by the restrictions," the Kremlin would not be updating its economic and budgetary forecasts.

(Source: CNBC)

First Announcement

IN THE NAME OF GOD

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING

INTERNATIONAL TENDER NO.96/121-143/14

Tender Holder:
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING (IRIB)

Subject of Tender:
Purchasing, Installation and Commissioning of Electrical Equipment in accordance with the technical specification and other terms and conditions mentioned in the tender documents.

Deadline and How to Receive the Tender Documents:
From **23rd Apr 2018 (1397/02/03)** by **4 p.m.** on **Tuesday 1st May 2018 (1397/02/11)** with presentation of introductory letter by company or its representative and the receipt of paying the documents fee.

Place of Receiving the Tender Documents:
Interested participants may refer to purchasing (KALA) Dept., 4th Floor of IRIB Administration Complex, Hotel Esteghlal St., Vali-e Asr Ave., Tehran Iran.

The Fee of the Tender Documents and How to Deposit it:
Submission of payment receipt for the amount of 2,000,000 Rials to account No.4101029171204273 with CENTRAL BANK OF IRAN in the name of IRIB.

Type and Amount of Guarantee for Participation to Tender:
The amount of deposit for participant in tender is **USD 38500** fixed or its equivalent in 1,925,000,000 Rials which should be in the form of Bank Guarantee.

Time and Place of Delivering Priced Bid:
The sealed A, B & C packages/envelopes should be submitted no later than **4 p.m.** on **02nd Jun 2018 (1397/03/12)** and at the address mentioned in the 4th clause.

Time and Place of Opening Envelopes:
The date of opening envelopes A&B is on **03rd Jun. 2018 (1397/03/13)** at **3 p.m.** in the office of Financial Vice President and opening of envelope C will be after technical evaluation.

For more information, please see:
www.iriboffice.ir/tenders and <http://iets.mporg.ir/> Tel: **00982122167463**

Purchasing (kala) Dept. of IRIB

Oil dips but remains close to late-2014 highs on supply cuts, strong demand

Oil prices on Friday stayed near three-year highs reached earlier this week, with ongoing OPEC-led supply cuts and strong demand gradually drawing down excess supplies.

Brent crude oil futures were at \$73.74 per barrel at 0657 GMT, down 4 cents from their last close.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were down 13 cents at \$68.16 a barrel.

Both Brent and WTI hit their highest levels since November, 2014 on Thursday, at \$74.75 and \$69.56 per barrel respectively. WTI is set for its second weekly gain, climbing more than 1 percent this week, while Brent is also poised to rise for a second week, adding around 1.5 percent.

Traders said there had been some profit-taking on Friday following Thursday's multi-year highs.

There was also some caution after Russia's energy minister Alexander Novak was reported saying that a group of producers around the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) as well as Russia may this year ease output restrictions.

Producer cartel OPEC and its allies have been withholding production since 2017, help-



ing push up prices. The deal to cut is currently scheduled to expire at the end of 2018.

After a tepid start in 2017, the supply restraint had by this year started tightening markets.

"Commercial inventories in the OECD are now essentially at their five-year average, and drawdowns likely accelerate as refineries emerge from maintenance ahead of peak

seasonal demand," U.S. investment bank Jefferies said on Friday.

"OECD commercial inventories could fall back to ... a level not seen since the oil price collapse that began in 3Q14. On a day of forward demand basis, we believe cover could drop below 57 days later this year, a level last seen in 2011," it added.

The tightness is also a result of strong

oil demand.

"Global oil demand data so far in 2018 has come in line with our optimistic expectations, with 1Q18 likely to post the strongest year-on-year growth since 4Q10 at 2.55 million barrels per day," U.S. bank Goldman Sachs said in a note published late on Thursday.

Beyond OPEC's supply management, crude prices have also been supported by an expectation that the United States might re-introduce sanctions on OPEC-member Iran.

"The first key geopolitical issue is the expiration of the current U.S. waiver of key sanctions against Iran," said Standard Chartered Bank in a note this week, referring to a deadline on May 12 when U.S. President Donald Trump will decide whether or not to re-impose sanctions.

One factor that could start weighing on prices is rising U.S. production, which has jumped by a quarter since the middle of 2016 to 10.54 million barrels per day (bpd), making the United States the world's second-biggest producer of crude oil behind only Russia, which pumps almost 11 million bpd.

(Source: Reuters)

OPEC panel confirms the oil glut is all but eliminated



A meeting of the Joint Technical Committee (JTC) of the OPEC and non-OPEC oil producers part of the supply-cut pact found on Thursday that oil inventories in developed economies had dropped to just 12 million barrels over the official target of the cuts—the five-year average, a source familiar with the matter told Reuters.

The technical panel is meeting in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, ahead of a ministerial meeting on Friday, which will be attended by the energy ministers of Saudi Arabia and Russia, among others.

According to Reuters' sources, the panel found today that oil inventories in OECD nations were 12 million barrels above the five-year average, a virtually non-existent surplus, especially if compared to the 340-million-barrel overhang that was present in January 2017, when OPEC and its non-OPEC partners led by Russia started to purposefully cut oil production in an attempt to erase the glut and prop up oil prices.

Thanks to the cuts, and to a better-than-initially expected global oil demand growth last year, OPEC and friends have now managed to virtually bring the oil market back to balance, if the five-year

average of OECD oil stocks is the metric to measure the success.

Yet, there are no signs that OPEC and the non-OPEC partners would be discussing exiting the cuts. Rather, they are said to be ready to discuss 'moving the goalposts' on the deal by changing the five-year average to a seven—or more—year average, and those proposals would shift the inventory goal further out in time.

According to the sources who spoke to Reuters today, the ministers will discuss the five-year average metric on Friday, although the panel did not make recommendations on this issue today.

Instead of winding down the cuts now that the oil glut is virtually eliminated, some OPEC members and its allies are said to be looking to change the metric to justify prolonging the cuts until the end of 2018 in hopes of overtightening the market and pushing for even higher oil prices. OPEC's de facto leader and largest producer, Saudi Arabia, would reportedly be happy to see oil prices rising to as much as \$100 a barrel to fill up government coffers and boost the valuation of Aramco.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Exxon faces setback in Iraq as oil and water mix



Talks between Exxon Mobil and Iraq on a multi-billion-dollar infrastructure contract have reached an impasse, Iraqi officials and two industry sources said, in a potential setback to the oil major's ambitions to expand in the country.

More than two years of negotiations on awarding the U.S. firm a project to build a water treatment facility and related pipelines needed to boost Iraq's oil production capacity have hit difficulties because the two sides differ on contract terms and costs, the officials and sources told Reuters.

Unless the differences can be resolved, the project could be awarded to another company in a tender, the officials said, without elaborating on the points of dispute.

Losing the contract could deal a blow to Exxon's broader Iraqi plans, as it would be handed rights to develop at least two southern oilfields - Nahr Bin Umar and Artawi - as part of the deal.

Exxon declined to comment.

Further delays to the project could also hold back the oil industry in Iraq. OPEC's second-largest producer; the country needs to inject water into its wells or risk losing pressure and face severe decline rates, es-

pecially at its mature oilfields. As freshwater is a scarce resource in Iraq, using treated seawater is one of the best alternatives.

The Common Seawater Supply Project (CSSP), which would supply water to more than six southern oilfields, including Exxon's existing West Qurna 1 field and BP's Rumaila, was initially planned to be completed in 2013 but has now been delayed until 2022.

Many of the world's biggest oil companies, like BP, Total Royal Dutch Shell and Eni have operations in Iraq, where a low-return environment and strict contract terms have squeezed returns in recent years.

With total oil production at West Qurna 1 at around 430,000 bpd, Exxon's presence in Iraq is small compared with dominant player BP whose Rumaila oilfield accounts for around a third of the country's total production of around 4.4 million bpd.

While the Texas-based firm is looking to grow in Iraq, its geographical focus remains on the Americas, including U.S. shale fields and Brazil, in contrast to rivals like France's Total and Italy's Eni who have been significantly expanding their activities in the Middle East in recent years.

(Source: Reuters)

Oil's 'artificial' surge to multi-year highs could spark a new crisis, economist warns

A sudden upswing in crude futures could be enough to fast-track the energy market's next crisis, one economist told CNBC.

Oil prices soared to levels not seen since late 2014 on Thursday, following reports Saudi Arabia would be content to see crude prices rally as high as \$100 a barrel over the coming months.

"Oil prices are high because the dollar is low," Daniel Lacalle, chief economist at Tressis Gestion, told CNBC's "Squawk Box Europe" Thursday.

He went on to warn that "massive supply management" in the energy market was always likely to trigger an "artificial" upswing in oil prices. "That is a big concern ... Because oil prices don't generate crises; the abrupt and unexpected rise of oil prices creates crises," Lacalle said.

OPEC, Russia and several other allied

producers have led an ongoing effort to try to clear a global supply overhang and prop up prices. The agreement, which came into effect in January 2017, has already been extended through until the end of this year — with producers scheduled to meet in June to review policy.

The initial target of the supply-cutting deal was to reduce industrialized nations' oil inventories back to their five-year average. Nonetheless, with several major global producers honing in on achieving their original aim, there is little indication from the world's top exporter that it wishes to wind down the supply cuts.

In fact, Saudi Arabia is thought to be happy to see crude futures rally up to triple digits in the near term, according to a Reuters report citing three unnamed industry sources.

The news prompted oil prices to surge

to multi-year highs Thursday. Brent crude futures traded at \$74.11 during mid-morning deals, up around 0.9 percent, while WTI was at \$69.04, approximately 0.8 percent higher. Both benchmarks had peaked at their highest respective levels since late 2014 earlier in the session.

Reports that Saudi Arabia could be supportive of a further uptick in oil prices comes at a time when the kingdom is undergoing final preparations for its planned sale of a minority stake in state oil company, Saudi Aramco.

An initial public offering (IPO) for Aramco on a major international exchange was planned for this year, but is now widely expected to occur in 2019, following a listing on the domestic Tadawul exchange.

Aramco CEO Amin Nasser says his company is ready to go public, but is waiting

for the government to decide where to list shares.

Saudi Arabia aims to raise about \$100 billion and attract a valuation of \$2 trillion in the offering, though other analysis suggests a \$1 trillion to \$1.5 trillion valuation is more likely.

The IPO is the cornerstone of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's ambitious effort to diversify Saudi Arabia's oil-dependent economy.

Meanwhile, OPEC and its partners are poised to meet in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on Friday. The 14-member oil cartel will then reconvene on June 22 to review to its oil production policy.

Few market participants expect calls for an exit strategy to OPEC's output cuts at either meeting.

(Source: CNBC)

Morocco ready for another solar project to curb energy imports

Morocco plans to build plants to produce another 800 megawatts of solar power, just months after attracting bids for its Midelt project as the North African country moves to curb energy imports.

Initial tenders for the Noor PV II project will be announced in a "few months," Obaid Amrane, a member of the Moroccan Agency for Sustainable Energy's management board, said Wednesday in an interview. It will include plants in several locations, he said at the state-owned company's offices in Rabat. Morocco may issue domestic or international bonds

to fund the project, expected to be completed by the end of 2020, he said.

Morocco is part of a regional expansion in renewables, with plans to generate 52 percent of electricity from solar, wind and hydropower by 2030 from 34 percent currently, according to Amrane. In December, France's Engie SA, EDF Energies Nouvelles and Riyadh-based ACWA Power International led groups bidding for the 800-megawatt Midelt solar project. The nation is also starting construction this year on 850 megawatts of wind power.

Morocco plans to add 6 gigawatts of installed renewables capacity -- including solar, wind and hydropower -- between 2018 and 2030, Amrane said. "Everything linked to waste-to-power" is also being considered, he said.

The renewables push started in 2009 with Morocco planning to spend an estimated \$9 billion to generate 42 percent of the nation's electricity from solar, wind and hydropower by 2020, Amrane said. "That estimate is lower today because costs have declined as the renewables technology advances," he said.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Saudi energy minister: World has 'capacity' to absorb high oil price

Saudi Arabia's energy minister said on Friday that the world economy had the "capacity" to absorb higher prices, the day after crude hit the highest level since 2014.

Khalid al-Falih, who has led OPEC's 1.8m barrel a day supply reduction deal with Russia, said that while the kingdom was not targeting a specific price, it had little fear current levels above \$70 a barrel would cut into rising consumption.

"I have not seen any impact on demand with current prices. We have seen prices significantly higher in the past, twice as much as where we are today," Falih said before the start of a technical meeting in Jeddah to review the impact of the cuts.

"Energy intensity as you know has declined significantly, most economies are taking much less energy to generate [a unit of] GDP as they did 20 or 30 years ago. So this reduced energy intensity and higher productivity globally... leads me to think there is the capacity to absorb higher prices."

His comments are the latest signal Saudi Arabia, OPEC's de facto leader, has little intention of backing away from supply cuts even as the oil market has tightened.

Russia, however, has appeared more reticent to signal the cuts will continue indefinitely.

Alexander Novak, the Russian energy minister, told state-owned news agency Tass that they could still decide to begin rolling back the production cuts as early as this year.

The supply deal is officially due to expire at the end of 2018 but its extension is widely expected to be under discussion at the next official meeting of OPEC ministers and large producers in June.

Russia's cooperation has been key to the deal but it has appeared more cautious about the risk of pushing prices too high, with output from the U.S. shale industry back to growing at a rapid pace.

The International Energy Agency said last week OPEC was close to being able to declare "mission accomplished" in its stated aim of reducing oil inventories that had bloated during the 2014 crash, which drove prices briefly below \$30 a barrel from above \$100 at the beginning of the decade.

Falih said producers in the deal needed to be careful not to "jump the gun" saying Opec was now targeting other metrics alongside inventories, including boosting investment in future supplies.

"My guidance to you all is to be patient. We as producers should be patient too. We shouldn't jump the gun. We shouldn't be complacent and listen to the noise that mission accomplished... we still have work ahead of us."

Brent crude oil was down 0.1 percent at \$73.67 a barrel in early London trading, having hit a post-2014 high of \$74.75 a barrel in the previous session.

(Source: Financial Times)

Sweden's king embraces solar with panels on his Stockholm palace

Workers this week started to install solar panels on the royal palace in central Stockholm. Over 600 units will be mounted on the roof over the next six weeks.

The building, which dates back to the 18th century and has almost 600 rooms, is being fitted out with enough solar panels to meet more than 10 percent of its annual power demand. With Sweden targeting to get all its power from renewable energy by 2040, King Carl XVI Gustaf wants to make sure he does his bit.



The panels were given to the king as a 70th birthday gift by the National Property Board in 2016, but have not been fully installed until now due to permitting-issues for the historical building. The Swedish National Heritage Board only gave the go-ahead once assured the units would not be seen from the ground.

"The only chance you will get to see the solar cell panels is when you fly over Stockholm," Erik Kampmann, administrative head of the royal palace, said in a statement.

Sweden's largest source of power is hydro, followed by nuclear and wind. Solar accounts for less than 1 percent of the nation's total.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Shell snaps up more than eight million barrels Mideast, Russia oil in Asia: sources

Royal Dutch Shell has snapped up more than 8 million barrels of Middle East and Russian crude oil loading in June and resold some cargoes at higher premiums as it profits from robust demand in Asia, five trading sources said on Friday.

The region's pull on Middle East and Russian grades, priced off Middle East crude benchmark Dubai, has strengthened this month as a widening of Brent's premium to Dubai has made competing Atlantic Basin supplies more expensive.

Asia's crude demand is also set to rise in the third quarter as refiners return from maintenance to ramp up output to meet peak summer oil consumption.

Shell has bought six June-loading cargoes of Qatar Marine, four cargoes of Upper Zakum and three cargoes of Russian Sokol crude from various market players, two sources directly involved in the trades said.

The oil major has also purchased at least a cargo each of Banoco Arab Medium and al-Shaheen crude, they said.

Each cargo of Middle East crude is about 500,000 barrels while a Sokol cargo is 700,000 barrels. The company has the option of re-selling some of the crude or can send the oil to its refineries.

Shell said it does not comment on details of commercial agreements or the movement of cargoes.

(Source: Reuters)

Republicans face November's midterm elections without Paul Ryan

The reasoning behind Paul Ryan's decision to retire must remain a matter of speculation. The speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives says he wants to spend more time with his family, and there is no reason to doubt it. He may be sick of corralling an ornery Republican caucus. He may have worried that he would lose his re-election bid in November's midterms, or (more likely) that if his party lost its majority he would take the blame for it. Whatever the truth of the matter, it is an astonishing commentary on the state of Republican politics that one possibility receiving serious discussion is that, by leaving now, Ryan is setting himself up for a presidential run in 2024. He may have appeal in that he



is a link to the moderate, pre-populist Republican party. But he has been a comprehensive disappointment in his role as speaker since taking on the job in 2015. His defense of the fiscal and moral proprieties sacred to the old Republican establishment has been exclusively verbal. The idea of running for president on his record as speaker is simply bizarre. Ryan's defenders will argue that, in tandem with Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell, he ushered through a landmark tax reform bill last year. They will

not mention that the tax cut did not deserve to be called "reform", and that it constituted a major betrayal of Ryan's professed principles as a deficit "hawk". It was funded with borrowing, not spending cuts, and will raise the deficit by \$1tn or more over a decade. It consisted mostly of changes to tax rates. Structural changes to the tax base — the stuff of real reform — were dropped or watered down. Indeed, as a deficit hawk, Ryan has no achievements to his name: his dream of entitlement reform, starting with a repeal of former president Barack Obama's healthcare changes, is in ashes. His support for free trade, similarly, failed to deter President Donald Trump from raising tariffs. One might think the departure of a weak leader would mean little to the Republican congressional candidates' chances in November. But fundraising is a principal job for a House speaker. As long as the speaker is a lame duck, donors may hesitate out of uncertainty about the direction of the party, or focus their largesse on the Senate. If the Democrats should take the House (with some 40 Republicans abandoning their seats, this is a significant possibility) the question of Republican leadership will be less important. But if they hold on, both of the leading contenders for speaker, Steve Scalise of Louisiana and Kevin McCarthy of California, are personally and ideologically closer to Trump than Ryan was. Ryan was unable to restrain the president's worst instincts. There is a danger that his successor will actively encourage them. The tax bill makes it likely America's debt stock will pass 100 per cent of gross domestic product within a decade. If all goes well — that is, if bond markets remain supine — the country can carry that burden. The margin for error declines, however, if more debt-funded spending (on infrastructure, say) is piled on. In a recession, the U.S.'s stimulus options would be curtailed. Trump has instructed his economic advisers to consider rejoining the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Perhaps he is beginning to realize that a unilateralism on trade, particularly as regards China, is a losing bet. If the next leader of the House does not push in that direction, backtracking only becomes more likely. Ryan was a weak leader in the House. America and the world must now hope that whoever replaces him is not an actively harmful one. (Source: FT)

We spend 65 cents for every child facing poverty and violence. It is not enough

By Sarah Pickwick

Every day, millions of children around the world are victims of violence. Deprived of the protection of community, school and family, they are at serious risk of abuse at the hands of slavers, traffickers, armed groups and others who look to exploit them.

At present, around 535 million children — a quarter of the world's child population — are living in fragile states, affected by natural disasters, epidemics and other emergencies. More than half of these live in countries affected by conflict and around 50 million are on the move worldwide, having been uprooted from their homes.

Just to cite a few examples: in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), 13.1 million people — 60 percent of which are children — need humanitarian assistance, 3.4 million children have no access to education and 400 schools have been attacked in the Kasai region alone. In Somalia, 2.8 million children need humanitarian assistance, while in war-torn South Sudan, 1.1 million children need food.

But while research has shown that inaction on child violence results in huge costs to governments worldwide, very little is spent on protecting children. A 2014 report by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and Child Fund Alliance showed that the global costs of physical, sexual and psychological violence against children is between \$2 trillion and \$7 trillion per year, up to 8 percent of global GDP.

Yet, globally, less than one per cent of the official development assistance (ODA) — an average of \$0.65 per child — is spent on ending violence against children. In April, Britain's International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said that the UK was still committed to spending 50 percent of its aid budget on fragile states.

But while we welcome this and hope that other countries follow suit, we are concerned that yet again, protection of the most vulnerable children has not been made a primary focus. The key in any pledge of funding is that it needs to translate into actual support for the most vulnerable children. Children are the next generation and if they are neglected and their lives are at risk, then they will not be able to thrive and reach their full potential. They may survive, but will they be able to live life to the full?

Any aid, whatever government department oversees it, should prioritize the most vulnerable children and their needs, rather than being used to serve national interests. Aid must be implemented according to international development standards, and have the full engagement of civil society, including those who are at risk of being marginalized such as children. Only this will allow aid to provide results for the world's most vulnerable children. (Source: Newsweek)

Libya's road to peace: Constitution first, then elections

By Guma el-Gamaty

After the popular uprising in February 2011 and the fall of the Muammar Gaddafi's rule, Libyans had the opportunity to draft a constitution for the second time in the country's modern history. The first was in 1951, when Libya was preparing to become an independent state after 33 years of Italian colonization and seven years under British and French administration.

Dutch diplomat Adrian Pelt was nominated by the UN in 1949 as a high commissioner for Libya, charged with overseeing the creation of an independent state from British-administered Cyrenaica and Tripolitania and French-administered Fezzan by 1952. Pelt was also to assist with the drafting of the Libyan constitution, and he proposed a drafting committee of 60 members, 20 from each of the three regions.

■ Libya's constitutional history

A modern constitution setting up a monarchic federal Libya was agreed upon, and independence was officially declared on 24 December 1951. In 1963, the constitution was amended to abolish the federal system, and Libya became a unitary state with one set of political institutions, including a two-chamber parliament. The constitutional monarchy lasted only 18 years as, upon coming to power in a military coup in 1969, Gaddafi immediately abolished the constitution and all the political institutions developed since independence.

During the 42 years of Gaddafi's autocratic rule, the Libyan population tripled from around two million to six million, and generations grew up without any awareness of constitutional and democratic culture and discourse.

Amid this backdrop, Libyans in 2014 found themselves faced with the opportunity and challenge to craft a new constitution for only the second time in 65 years. This new document would act as a social contract that lays the foundations for a new democratic political order - state-building almost from zero.

After much delay, wrangling and debate, the new transitional parliament in Libya agreed to form the Constitutional Drafting Assembly (CDA) with 60 members, 20 from each of the historical three regions, emulating what happened in 1951 - except this time, it was directly elected by the Libyan people. Elections for the CDA took place in February 2014 and its mandate was 18 months, but it took more than three years to agree on a draft constitution.

During those years, the CDA struggled amid a divided political environment and volatile security situation.

The assembly finally voted on a new draft in July 2017 with 43 votes out of 60, just over the required two-thirds majority. Some observers saw this as indicating little consensus within the drafting body itself and a first challenge to the legitimacy of the document, as some nine members from eastern Libya and five from the south boycotted the vote, claiming the draft constitution did not fairly distribute power and wealth or recognize minority rights.

The voting session did not go smoothly; gunmen threatened assembly members if they failed to adopt certain changes.



Amid the country's current disarray, the best that can be hoped for is a new constitution by the end of the year and elections in 2019.

■ Major obstacles ahead

After the vote, some opponents of the new draft appealed to an administrative court in the eastern city of al-Bayda, which ruled that the vote was invalid because it was not held on a working day, but on a weekend holiday. But on 14 February 2018, Libya's Supreme Court effectively quashed that decision by ruling that administrative courts do not have jurisdiction over CDA matters.

The high court ruling should, in theory, pave the way for the next stage of adopting the draft constitution: offering it to the Libyan electorate for a referendum, where a two-thirds majority would be required for the new constitution to become binding. However, major obstacles remain.

Many actors, including the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, welcomed the high court ruling as a positive step forward, asking the Tobruk-based House of Representatives to issue a referendum law for the new draft.

But 18 members of the house, mainly from eastern Libya, voiced their strong rejection, noting in a statement: "The ruling of the Supreme Court is not valid on the constitution. Therefore, we, the deputies, decided not to recognize the constitution drafting assembly." The members, who refused to issue a referendum law, want to see a return to the federal political system of 1951.

Other parliamentarians, also mainly

from the east, are trying another tactic to stop the new constitution in its tracks. They are suggesting that a referendum should not be held in the whole of the country as one constituency, but rather in individual votes among the three historical constituencies.

This, in effect, would allow a single region to veto the draft, even if the total number of "yes" voters countrywide exceeds two-thirds.

Some international observers have suggested that one way to reduce resistance to the draft constitution is for the CDA to abolish the provision that blocks any amendments for the next five years after it comes into effect, leaving it open to revisions and amendments once a new permanent parliament is in place.

■ Campaigners push 'Constitution First'

The UN has recently endorsed its special envoy to Libya, Ghassan Salame, who was charged to assist the holding of elections in Libya by the end of this year. Ideally, these elections will be a culmination of the process to adopt a new modern democratic constitution in the country for the first time in decades.

Many believe that holding elections prior to adopting a new constitution would only prolong the transitional period and all the uncertainties, including political instability and armed conflict, that come with it.

A popular social media campaign in Libya using the slogan "Constitution First" has recently gained momentum,

demanding that no election should be held until a new constitution is approved. Some argue that you cannot craft a constitution while a country is deeply polarized and lacking a stable security environment.

On the other hand, having a minimum consensus on a new constitution will unite the overwhelming majority of Libyans around one political legitimacy, superseding all the sub-legitimacies that constitute the country's ongoing conflict.

As another observer put it: "An approved constitution prior to election day will only strengthen the prospect that elections could pave the way to a measured resolution of Libya's turmoil." Regional and international consensus with a determined political will could help Libyans to achieve a constitution that would provide the framework for a new permanent, stable political order, which could be amended accordingly as the country moves forward.

However, considering the current state of Libya's disarray, hope for elections by the end of this year is unrealistic.

The best that can be hoped for is to approve a new constitution through a referendum before the end of 2018, and to hold the first presidential and parliamentary elections based on that constitution by the end of 2019. Having a constitution after five decades will be a major milestone for Libyans and a step that deserves all the support it can get.

(Source: Middle East Eye)

Saudi king uses Arab summit to adjust Riyadh's stance toward Trump

Saudi King Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud used the 29th Arab Summit last weekend to reaffirm long-standing political positions, amounting to some distancing of the kingdom from its close association with the Trump administration. The subtle change in tone publicly reflects growing private doubts about the U.S. administration's commitment to rolling back Iranian influence in the region.

Instead of hosting the Arab heads of state in the capital city, Riyadh, the Saudis selected the venue to be in Dammam in the Eastern Province, the home of the kingdom's oil wealth and its Shiite minority. So Dammam and nearby towns like Khobar and Dhahran were decked out with the flags of the Arab States, including Qatar (but not Syria) to welcome the states that attended the summit. Of course, the Eastern Province is also the part of Saudi Arabia that is the farthest away from Yemen. Last week, the Houthis announced that 2018 is "the year of the ballistic missile." By the Saudis count, 117 missiles have targeted Saudi cities in the last three years.

Salman opened the summit by renaming it the "Jerusalem Summit." In his remarks, he said the top priority of the Arab leaders is and should be Palestine. He strongly condemned the Trump administration's Jerusalem policy. He said the Saudis saw Palestine and Jerusalem as their "first issue." This rhetoric is not new, of course, and it is standard Saudi policy. The king also reaffirmed the Saudi commitment to the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative developed by his predecessors.

The stridency of the king's remarks, however, reflects growing unease in the royal palace that events in Gaza and Jerusalem are moving toward even more explosive unrest next month when the U.S. Embassy opens in Jerusalem. The Saudis are uncomfortable that they have been widely perceived in the Arab World as colluding with Trump's son-in-law and



The Saudis publicly endorsed the American, British and French attack on the Syria.

adviser, Jared Kushner, to undermine the Palestinians' claim to the holy city, a perception that damages the Saudi mantle as the defender of the holy mosques, which is crucial to the royal family's legitimacy. Pictures on TV of protesting Gazans burning Saudi flags and pictures of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman have been blocked in the kingdom.

To counter charges that he is soft on Jerusalem, Salman pledged at the summit \$200 million in aid. He is donating \$150 million to preserve Islamic sites in Jerusalem and another \$50 million to Gaza for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees. He pledged to support Jordan's King Abdullah after months of snubbing him.

The Saudis publicly endorsed the American, British and French attack on the Syrian chemical weapons infrastructure. The summit was divided on the issue, with Iraq and Lebanon calling the attacks dangerous.

Riyadh was upset before the tripartite attacks by Trump's promises to pull all American troops out of Syria soon. They have not been reassured by his remarks since about the reasoning behind the airstrikes in which he has promised not to try to fix the "troubled" region's problems. To the Saudis, Trump increasingly sounds like Barack Obama in advocating a strategy that leaves the Arabs to take care of themselves. Riyadh was mystified when Trump claimed Salman was ready to pay for America to stay in Syria. In fact, the Saudis long ago gave up on trying to topple Bashar al-Assad. They want Washington to do the heavy lifting. They aren't going to pay for it.

Salman also said that the Arab leaders must unite against Iran. The summit was divided on this, just as on Syria. The Saudis also are frustrated that Trump talks tough on Iran but has avoided confrontation with Tehran in Syria and elsewhere.

After the summit, the king inspected military maneuvers in the Eastern Province, which includes troops from 22 Saudi allies.

The Saudis are not giving up on Trump. They have put their prestige behind the Trump administration by hosting him in Riyadh a year ago and with the crown prince's extensive visit to the United States. They are encouraged by the dismissal of Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and the promotion of Iran hawk John Bolton as national security adviser. But their expectations about the administration have been downsized. The adjustment is tactical and careful, led by Salman's Jerusalem Summit.

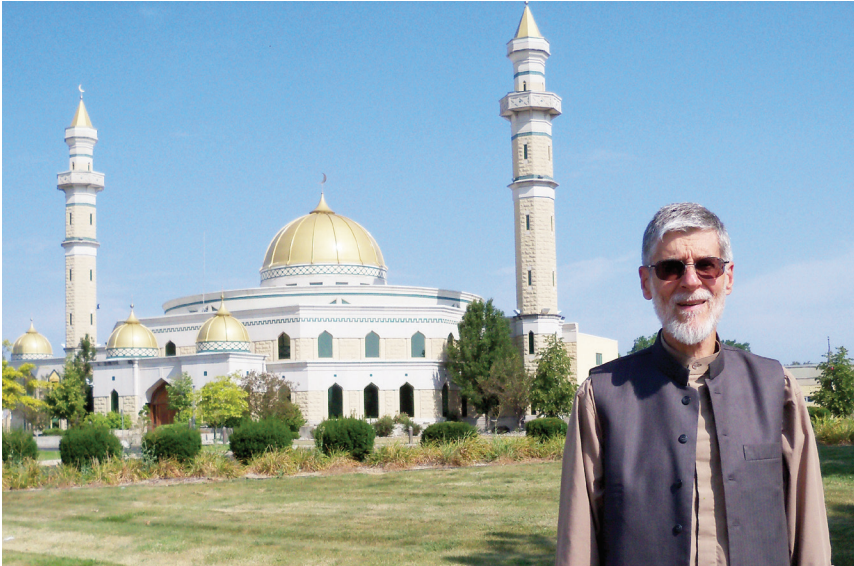
(Source: Al Monitor)

Quran is a symbol of Muslim unity: analyst

➔ The goal of these leaders is to facilitate the transfer of wealth from the poor and oppressed to their backers, the moneyed elite and their method is to present Islam and Muslims as a threat to “national security.”

In short, by presenting the Quran as a book that teaches violence, the leaders of these countries are able to justify their “war on terror,” which not only instills fear in the citizens of their respective countries, but also creates chaos in the oil-producing regions, thereby reducing the supply of crude and thus increasing the price. This is highly desirable for a number of reasons. First, high energy prices encourage investment in the energy sector due to increased profits. Second, the fear generated by the threat of “radical Islamic terrorism,” to use the phrase employed frequently by the head of a certain arrogant power, allows political leaders to impose measures restricting the rights of citizens and cutting spending on social programs. Additionally, as a result of people’s focus on fear, politicians are able to pass legislation favoring their well-heeled backers, such as the recent tax bill and resulting giveaway to corporate interests in the United States.

Keep in mind that the three highest primary energy producers in the world are the U.S., Russia and China in that order. This, of course, includes all energy sources, not just petroleum. However, if we look at oil—believe it or not—the U.S. still comes out on top with Saudi Arabia in second place and Russia in third. The idea of collusion between these nations to up the price of oil using the excuse that the Quran teaches violence and thereby justifying military intervention, which causes the destruction of infrastructure and con-



sequent reduction of oil production, should not be discounted.

■ What is the role of common studies on the Quran in uniting Muslims (such as common studies between Shia Muslims and Sunni Muslims)?

A: The differences among the various theological schools in Islam are masterfully summarized in a book written by Muhammad Jawad Maghniyyah. The book, titled The Five Schools of Islamic Law, Al-Fiqh ‘ala’l Madhaahib al-Khamsah, could certainly serve as a basis for common studies. What is remarkable about this book, in my opinion, is that the legal differences among the various schools can be summarized in a

single volume of some 600 pages.

As far as how this unification would be accomplished, a two-pronged approach would seem most likely to succeed. Islamic scholars from all schools of Islamic theology would have to meet and issue statements of mutual recognition, urging followers toward tolerance and respect of their co-religionists, regardless of theological school. Large mosques could establish programs of outreach to others of different schools of theology, forming “grass roots” ecumenical committees to discuss and implement ways of increasing mutual understanding, respect and tolerance.

■ How can Muslims use the Quran’s teachings for making a “Unified Ummah”?

A: First, let me reiterate that I am not in favor of the dissolution of the various schools of Islamic theology. I believe it is possible to have a unified Ummah while maintaining the distinctions between the five schools. And therein lurks the problem: given that the Quran is the same for all Muslims, we really must find a way to reach mutual tolerance and acceptance of our differences.

However, there is a fundamental problem blocking the way to achieving a unified Ummah, the issue of ijthihad, the use of logic and reason where the Quran is not specific. For without ijthihad, we are forced either to abandon our intellect or leave our religion in a fossilized state of increasing irrelevance, to be categorized as merely one choice from a plethora of “spiritual” options. Either choice plays directly into the hands of the leaders of the arrogant powers, to whom Islam is anathema. And only one of the five schools of Islamic theology, namely the Jafari School, recognizes ijthihad, which may explain why the west and certain Muslim-majority countries are so rabidly opposed to its propagation.

Perhaps, much in the same way that scholars produced books on the differences in interpretation of Fiqh among the various schools, leading Islamic theologians could produce a book, which includes the commonalities and divergences of interpretation of the Quran among the madhaahib. I believe that the production of such a book, or series of books of commentary on the Quran aimed at lay persons, would represent a huge step towards uniting Muslims of all schools.

Five takeaways from U.S.-UK-France missile strikes at Syria

TEHRAN (FNA)— The United States, in cooperation with France and Britain, carried out a series of predawn air strikes on Saturday in Syria in response to what they claimed was a chemical weapons attack this month in the rebel-held Damascus suburb of Douma.

Strange enough, President Donald Trump ordered the airstrikes as a team of experts from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons was about to arrive on Saturday to determine whether a chemical weapons attack had even occurred! The US-led military aggression would no doubt complicate the OPCW mission. Many suspect that the timing of the US-led attack was intended to prevent the team from gathering evidence to prove whether or not chemicals were used. The OPCW does not assess blame though. However, there are at least five takeaways from this latest development in a long-running and complex conflict with consequences far beyond Syria itself - including in the United States, Iran, Russia and other parts of Europe:

1- The war on Syria is drawing to an end. There will be mess, but the outcome is clear. The ISIL, along with the Qaeda-linked Salafists and Wahhabis the US, Saudi Arabia and Israel financed and armed, are headed into history. Syria will remain intact - averting, if narrowly, failed-state status. The peace talks Iran, Russia and Turkey have sponsored is also working. In effect, all is positive, although there are still some implications to consider.

2- The suspicious strikes came following a trip by Saudi Prince

Mohammed bin Salman to the US, the UK and France, during which he signed contracts worth billions of dollars with tech moguls and arms manufacturers “in order to create a bulwark against Iran.” While on the three-week US tour, Salman said the US should maintain its military presence in Syria to prevent Iranian expansion in the war-ravaged nation, a day after US President Donald Trump stated that the United States would pull out of Syria very soon, and “Saudi Arabia might have to pay if it wants continuing US presence in Syria.” Trump further argued, “We spent \$7 trillion in the Middle East. And you know what we have for it? Nothing.”

3- During the seven-year conflict, the Syrian Army transformed itself from a traditional military built on the former Soviet model into an effective counterinsurgency force. And with sustained military support from Russia and Iran, and the guerrilla warfare expertise of its ally, Lebanon’s Hezbollah, it regained ground almost everywhere in the war-torn country. Syria’s armed forces continue to battle rebel groups ranging from the mainstream Free Syrian Army to Al-Qaeda’s Syria affiliate the Nusra Front and the Wahhabi-Takfiri ISIL militants. The power of the Syrian army has increased qualitatively and quantitatively, and as a consequence, the US and its terror proxy forces have lost control of large parts of Syria. These successes have been partly the result of a shift to the close-quarters guerrilla warfare in which Hezbollah specializes. Despite having the state-of-the-art warfare technology, experts see little chance the US and company will be able to recapture all the territory they have

lost, much less affect regime change in Damascus.

4- Western governments are acknowledging that the unthinkable has become a reality; that Russia has emerged as a great military power, and its economy is far from being “in tatters”. Thanks to its timely military interventions in Ukraine and Syria, Russia is now emerging as a prospective great power challenging the West. On the other hand, former great powers, such as Germany, France, England, and the US itself are now no longer major powers. Simply put, this is a country that just won’t go away. That’s why the US avoided targeting the Russian army in the Saturday strikes. In the grand of scheme of things, the warmongers wanted to avoid hitting Russian targets and its unintended consequences after Russia vowed to shoot down incoming US missiles.

5- Last but not the least, both Russia and the US seem to want to avoid an escalation - for now. Washington and Moscow have had some close calls in Syria, but so far they have avoided a serious altercation. However, it’s not a given that continued military operations to appease Saudi Arabia, Israel and terror proxies like the one on Saturday, plus unintended casualties like killing Russian soldiers if they are near the target the US wants to strike, wouldn’t be a provocation.

The question is, can the US and Russia avoid getting into a broader fight after the US launches missiles at Syria on yet another chemical attack pretext, even if neither side wants this? The recent military operation by the US, the UK and France told us that nothing is risk-free in Syria.

Saudi regime in Yemen’s swamp

By Hanif Ghafari

TEHRAN — About three years has passed since Saudis and their allies started war and bloodshed in Yemen. Today, after this long time, Yemen has become the symbol of Saudi Arabia’s defeat in West Asia. However, according to “Colin Powell”, the former U.S. Secretary of State, Saudi Arabia was supposed to seize Yemen in 14 days and destroy the country’s revolution. But now, Riyadh is facing the increasing costs of its failure in various Yemeni cities.

Most regional analysts and experts agree that Riyadh and its allies are the losers of the Yemen war, and this is what scares “Mohammed bin Salman”, the crown prince of Saudi Arabia and other agents of the Yemen war most. Saudi Arabia leads the military alliance against Yemen, consisting of nine Arab countries. Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Senegal and Sudan also belong to this military alliance.

However, today, the cost of Saudis’ defeat in Yemen has involved other members of the coalition too. Undoubtedly, these countries have to be held responsible for their crimes against the Yemeni people, and they must be condemned to pay the heavy costs of this failure in the future.

In any case, it has been three years now that the



defenseless people of Yemen are living under the aggression of al Saud and its allies. These three years of Saudi aggression led to Riyadh’s heavy defeat, the death of a large number of aggressive forces and, most importantly, the survival of the Yemeni revolution. Sanaa and Aden and Ma’rib have become the symbols of the defeat of Al Saud in Yemen.

Saudi Arabia has even lost the power to regulate its relations with its allies in Yemen. The controversy that has formed between Riyadh and the United Arab Emirates in Yemen can be analyzed in the same vein.

These conflicts are the result of the erosion of the Yemeni war and the joint defeat of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Another point to consider is that Saudi Arabia, in spite of al Qaeda’s help and extensive support, has failed to defeat the revolution of the Yemeni people and to destroy this massive popular movement. The death of hundreds of Saudi and Emirati military forces in this war marks the rise of the Yemeni nation’s stronghold against Al Saud and its aggressive allies.

It is a nation that has been able to humiliate Al Saud and exacerbate existing gaps between the Saudis. Now the situation of Saudi Arabia and its allies is so disordered that even the Western rivals of Riyadh can no longer close their eyes to the heavy defeat of Saudis in Yemen. They can no longer justify this great frustration. Here is another point that requires attention:

Despite the extensive support of the United States, and in particular Trump’s government of Saudi Arabia, this country has failed in Yemen. During the last year, Trump sold a massive amount of weapons to Saudi Arabia to make money for the U.S. Treasury, and to achieve one of its regional goals (the destruction of the Yemeni revolution). However, the U.S. President’s aids to the Saudi leadership couldn’t rescue the Saudi family in Yemen war. ➔13

supports them.

Act like a Muslim. This is not Islam. Right now, resigning from AKP is the greatest virtue of all. This is being virtuous. You cannot be virtuous and stand by American imperialism. Do your daily prayers, pray, go to Hac all you want; standing by American imperialism will not make you a Muslim, it will not save you.

Turkish nation can confide in Vatan Partisi. Vatan Partisi is on its duty. We are confident. Our path is clear, our horizon is

clear. We will see in the near future that USA’s attacks for show have no value at all.

The forces that support the unity of West Asia are on the rise in Turkey. Those forces defend the territorial integrity of the region’s countries; they reject foreign interference and call for regional solidarity and cooperation.

As the Atlantic Age is ending and Eurasian Age is beginning, Turkey as the western end of Asia will soon be crowned with an according government.

10 questions from a medical point of view on Douma incident

TEHRAN (FNA) — Following the recent incident in Douma on 7 April 2018, western news and media outlets released information before any scientific inspection had taken place. The USA, France and the UK justified their recent attacks on Syria based on these unconfirmed reports. Taking into account the vast experiences gained from dealing with and treating chemical victims, including Sarin, during the Iran Iraq war, the following points regarding the Douma incident seem unclear and must be explained by experts:

1- Why do they insist that another gas was definitely used other than Chlorine and that it was a Sarin type nerve gas? Skeptics would conclude that it was because Chlorine gas and its derivatives are widely used for common household and industrial purposes and are therefore not enough to accuse the Syrian government.

2- They claim that Sarin has been used, but why do they not provide any clear evidence, documentation and clinical signs? Some of the declared clinical signs seem to be copied from ordinary toxicology textbooks or websites and do not reflect accurately our field experiences in the Iraq-Iran war. This is easily distinguishable by experts.

3- There has been a lot of emphasis put on the WHO report confirming the use of nerve gas. Firstly, the report was carried out by Health Cluster partners, not WHO specialists in these types of injuries, and secondly, no exclusive evidences for nerve gas have been noted. All the clinical evidence mentioned could also result from Chlorine.

4- So far most of the pictures and evidence on the internet point to Chlorine gas. If we attribute a few to Sarin, there is the question that if the attackers intended to “punish” people and used extensive quantities of Chlorine successfully, why would they then add so little Sarin? If the Saudi backed “Army of Islam” carried out the attack, this would make sense. It would probably be due to the fact that they only had access to a small amount of nerve gas and used it for its psychological effect and propaganda impact. It makes sense to poison many people with widely available chlorine gas and then use small quantities of nerve gas to accuse the Syrian army.

5- If high concentrations of Chlorine gas are used in an enclosed space, it can cause serious injury and even lead to death. Why do they insist that the severe cases and deaths are due to nerve agents?

6- Blood and Urine samples analyzed by US officials suggested the presence of both chlorine gas and “an unnamed nerve agent” Why haven’t the analysis reports and scientific details been published and what was the chain of custody? And why it is assumed the “unnamed gas” is sarin!?

7- Why couldn’t the cause of the rapid deaths have been a very simple and deadly compound like cyanide? Is it perhaps because cyanide can be easily produced by the militants, but the production of Sarin is very difficult? If cyanide is declared as the cause of the rapid deaths, the opposition would be accused, but with Sarin the government of Syria can be accused instead. If the Syrian government wanted to “punish” its own people why not use cyanide instead of Sarin?

This will have two “advantages”: first, the remnants of cyanide are hard to trace in the blood and the environment and second, by not using Sarin they can avoid being blamed.

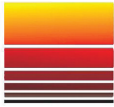
8- It is strange that those who have collected samples are all looking for signs of Sarin. Why don’t they carry any tests for other deadly compounds like cyanide? Why are they only looking for Sarin? Why were they so confident that they did not pursue other avenues?

9- If we accept the few clinical signs provided on the internet for nerve gas and Sarin, these signs relate to organophosphate poisoning, and are not unique to Sarin and other military nerve gases. The use of organophosphorous insecticide (especially the undiluted compound), that is widely used for agriculture can have the same signs and also cause similar deaths as Sarin. Why didn’t anyone check for organophosphorous insecticide used in farming that could have been weaponized?

10- In the recent Skripal case, there is a striking similarity in the narrative. The chemical compound used is Novichok which is allegedly exclusive to the Russian chemical arsenal. When a target can be killed with a compound like cyanide which does not leave any trace behind, why should a compound be used that only one country allegedly produced and had access to in the past? Perhaps to facilitate the process of accusation? This story is oddly similar to the Douma incident in this regard.

There are other very serious questions that can be raised, which will be left for after the publication of the OPCW report.

IN THE NAME OF GOD



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How to prepare a post-Trump renaissance in diplomacy

By Nicholas Kralev

It has been just over a year since American diplomacy entered a dark age, but the time for mourning has passed. The Trump White House's disdain for diplomacy persists, and that probably won't change. The new national security adviser, John Bolton, is no fan of diplomacy or diplomats.

The best that the Foreign Service and those outside government in academia and at think tanks can do now is prepare wisely for the day after Mr. Trump leaves office to make sure that a renaissance follows the dark age.

Many career diplomats in Washington have little to do these days. Some are between assignments because of the administration's failure to fill hundreds of State Department positions. Others have jobs but find themselves increasingly ignored or

sidelined. The silver lining is, they now have time to turn inward and find solutions to their problems — both those created by Mr. Trump's neglect and those that have long plagued the department.

There is even a precedent for this in American history. After the Civil War, Congress drastically slashed the United States Army's budget. The service lost its sense of mission and morale suffered. So smart and farsighted officers began thinking and writing about how to initiate reforms and strengthen professionalism, to be ready when the dark period ended.

One of the modern Foreign Service's biggest cultural challenges has been to organically produce true — even if informal — leaders within its ranks, regardless of their formal positions or titles. This is one reason nobody has emerged as the face of

the current discontent with the administration's war on diplomacy. Even in normal times, career diplomats are conditioned to keep their heads down and not make much noise.

■ Grass-roots leaders

The diplomats have to get over that. Abnormal times like these demand that grass-roots leaders take the initiative and mobilize their colleagues to create a path to a revival.

As former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's much talked about but ill-fated attempt to "redesign" the department showed, true reforms in how the United States conducts diplomacy are unlikely to come from political appointees. According to a recent report, Mr. Tillerson spent \$12 million on consultants who knew nothing about the State Department and produced little of value.

Worthy ideas are more likely to emerge from the professional ranks — but not by the boss's order. Any major changes would have to be approved by the department's leadership, but in a normal administration, career diplomats are entrusted with some of those top posts, along with political appointees, and can exert outside influence. That would be easier with compelling and innovative ideas. And it won't hurt to have powerful allies on Capitol Hill — after all, Congress is the only reason the State Department's budget didn't get slashed by the 30 percent the White House wanted.

It would be crucial for such an effort to focus on the right issues, such as long-term abilities and the institutional culture, rather than on technical matters. For example, United States diplomacy

has been more reactive than proactive for far too long. How do we fix that? The Foreign Service's culture relies too heavily on improvisation and not enough on strategic thinking. William J. Burns, a former deputy secretary of state, once told me that career diplomats "perversely pride ourselves on our ability to adapt quickly to different circumstances, and we are not particularly systematic about how we go about doing that."

Another problem is the stupefying amount of administration that diplomats overseas have to contend with, instead of practicing diplomacy; many have taken to calling it "e-hell." It gets in the way of the very reason they live in foreign countries — to understand and analyze developments in those countries and engage with their societies to better inform United States policies. ➔13

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خانم دیبا: ۰۹۱۲۸۱۰۳۲۰۶

دفت: ۲۲۶۶۲۴۵۴ - ۲۸۱۴۱

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Iranian startups cut out the middlemen: VP

TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Startups make customers satisfied through offering services with reasonable prices by cutting out the middlemen, the vice president for science and technology has said.

Sourena Sattari made the remarks during the opening ceremony of the 11th International Exhibition of Exchange, Bank and Insurance, visiting some startup companies on April 17.

Sattari pointed to fast growth of startups in Iran due to warm welcoming of people for using services offered by them, ISNA reported on Wednesday.



“The rate of growth for some startups are 10 percent during a week,” he announced.

He called the past Iranian calendar year 1396 (March 20, 2017-March 20, 2018) as a good year for startups, which saw great achievements in startup ecosystem.

He said that startups provide transparent services to customers and this is the reason that people welcome startups.

“This new system [of startups] should be supported by insurance and exchange, otherwise the country would be a looser,” he said.

While middlemen resist the development of startups, people back innovative entrepreneurs, he said.

“No one can fight with startups. We should support these great number of talented young people and accept their novel ideas,” he explained.

Implant gives early cancer warning by growing an artificial mole on your skin

The earlier cancer is detected, the better the outlook for the patient. Unfortunately, cancer is a crafty foe and does a good job of hiding its presence until it's too late. Now, researchers at ETH Zurich have developed a novel early warning system for four common types of cancer. An implant keeps watch for elevated levels of calcium in the blood, and warns the patient by growing an artificial mole on their skin.



Early detection of cancer can not only improve survival rates, it can reduce the intensity of the treatments and cut healthcare costs dramatically. To that end, scientists are working to develop techniques such as blood tests, injectable nanoparticles and lab-on-chip systems to get the jump on cancer before it gets out of hand.

The prototype system from ETH Zurich is one of the most unique ideas we've seen so far. It's made up of a genetic network integrated into human cells, encased in an implantable device. When this is inserted under the skin, it constantly checks the calcium levels in a person's blood. High calcium levels are an early biomarker for four of the most common kinds of cancer – prostate, lung, colon and breast.

When the implant detects elevated calcium levels for a prolonged period of time, it triggers the genetically-modified cells to begin producing extra melanin. This pigment is what darkens skin to form freckles and moles, creating a clearly-visible signal at the site of the implant, telling the person that something is wrong and they should visit a doctor. The mole will appear long before the cancer could normally be detected through other means, and means people won't wait until they feel sick or are in pain to get themselves checked out.

“Early detection increases the chance of survival significantly,” says Martin Fussenegger, an author of the study. “Nowadays, people generally go to the doctor only when the tumor begins to cause problems. Unfortunately, by that point it is often too late.”

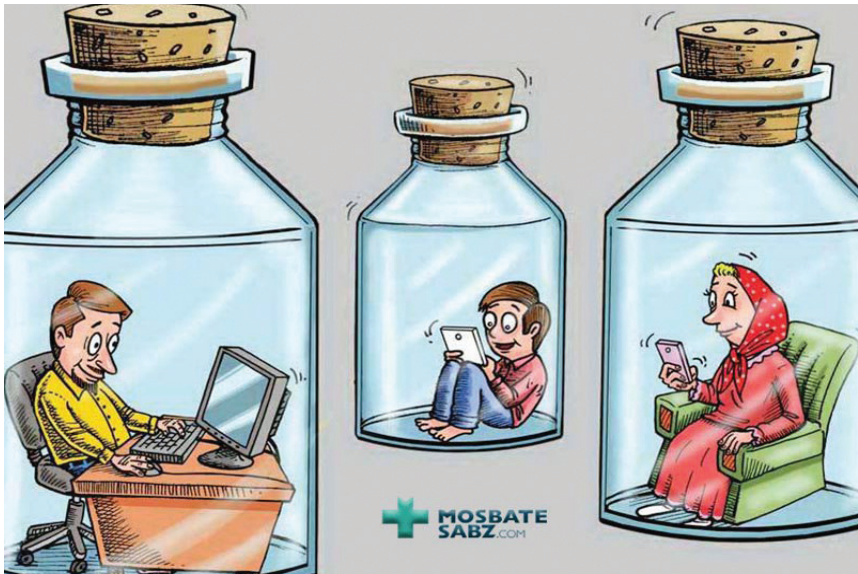
For those who'd rather not have a big blemish pop up on their skin forever, the team says another version of the device could produce a mark that's only visible under red light. Hiding the signal might defeat the purpose of the self-diagnosis test, but it could at least make a regular check by a doctor easier.

So far the team has tested the device in mice and samples of pig skin, where it responded well to high calcium concentrations. One disadvantage to this technique is the fact that encapsulated living cells, like those used in the device, generally only last for around a year, before they'd need to be replaced. That means the implant would need to be reactivated annually, which might be a hassle – or a good excuse for a regular checkup, depending on how you look at it.

With further research, the team says the concept could be adapted to monitor other biomarkers besides calcium, to serve as early warning systems for other gradually-developing illnesses like neurodegenerative diseases and hormonal disorders. Unfortunately, a publicly-available device is still at least a decade away.

(Source: newatlas.com)

Doors open in cyberspace, please come in!



■ The door is open; come in!

Just take a look at the traditional architecture in Iran and you find that the houses are composed of two parts andarooni and birooni. The andarooni, is in contrast to

the birooni, and is a part of the house in which the private quarters are established. It means that the space for living is covered from strangers. Islamic beliefs also highlight these issues. However, exploring

in Instagram, you can find every angels of different homes shared by users.

The users share their photos willingly on social networks, to share their ‘good taste’ and ‘happy life’ with each other.

On one hand, with filtering photos, you as an addressee just find yourself unfortunate and sad. Colorful dishes, happy moms, tidy smiling kids, loving spouses and no trace of your real, everyday life can be found at this magic mirror.

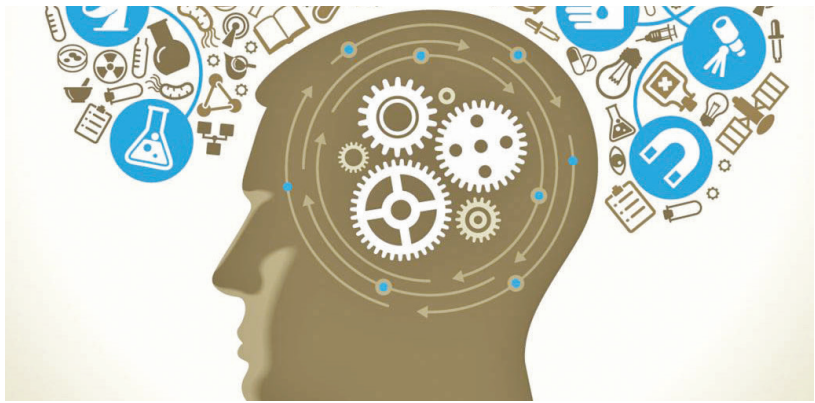
On the other hand, as the owner of the account, you are now obsessed with every work you do during the day and every angel of your home, which leads into more ‘likes’ for you.

Many conventions and cultures are changed by time passing. The most absurd solution is to resist and deny the progress of technology and time.

It is a great idea to be in touch with each other in social networks, to share our happy and beautiful moments with each other on cyberspace but do not forget the beautiful life surrounded us.

Live every moment and use cyberspace to rich your life. It is not a good place for living but a great choice to live more happily.

‘Health Innotech aims to create entrepreneurship ecosystem’



TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The national Health Innotech conference aims to create entrepreneurship ecosystem in the field of health in the near future, an official with the National Nutrition and Food Technology Research Institute told ISNA on April 17.

The event, which will be held from July 4 to 6 in Tehran, is to establish connection between technical units and nutrition policymakers, investors and technology parks, Mehdi Farhoodi said.

“Today several companies are active in the field of safety of food products and they face problem in marketing. The event aims to provide condition to facilitate marketing process for these companies,” he said.

He pointed to the importance of investor in marketing, which is also highlighted during the event. “Technical and scientific consulting meetings are presented by experts on the sideline of the event,” he said.

It aims to support entrepreneurs in the field of health, he concluded.

Iran intl. oil show to host start-up demo days



TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** — A start-up demo days will be held on the sidelines of the 23rd Iran International Oil, Gas, Refining and Petrochemical Exhibition, which will be held on May 6-9 in Tehran.

The event is organized by the National Iranian Gas Company and the National Technomart Center, supervised by Pardis Technology Park.

It aims to attract investors for newly-established startups and knowledge

enterprises active in the field of gas and oil.

Through the event, startup runners and investors can interact with each other and talk about their ideas.

The Iran oil show is among the most significant oil and gas events in the world in terms of the number of participants and its diversity. The presence of famous foreign companies as well as domestic producers and industrialists provide a good chance for mutual cooperation in view of signature of contracts.

How text messages are helping African farmers save for their futures

Stuck in a cycle of low income due to poor-quality seeds, many farmers in developing countries find it hard to improve output, but Anushka Ratnayake's myAgro offers a secure and easy scratchcard system to help them save via a mobile phone

Anushka Ratnayake was in a remote part of Rwanda, working for a microcredit organization, when she had a lightbulb moment.

Local farmers had money at harvest time, but by planting time, when they needed to buy seed and fertilizer, their money had run out. “I kept hearing people saying: ‘can I overpay my loan’? They were using the language of credit but describing a savings program. I thought: what if I created a model for farmers to save?” She came up with the idea for myAgro, a pioneering micro-savings project, which now operates in Mali and Senegal.

The UN estimates that approximately 767 million people live on less than \$1.90 a day, and the overwhelming majority of these people are in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Many in these regions work as smallholder farmers, with about 70% of Africans making their living from agriculture – yet many are unable to even grow enough to eat, and rarely have the money to source high-quality seeds and fertilizer when they need them.

Ratnayake witnessed that cashflow was a significant problem for the farmers she worked with. She also found that there were no organizations working on micro-savings programs; that most smallholder farmers did not have banks nearby; and that very few (7%) had access to traditional credit.

“Every day, I went to the local kiosk to buy phone credit,” she says. “The store owner was a good businesswoman – she knew her customer base well, and the profit margin on everything.” But the upfront costs for the shop owner to buy items such as seeds and fertilizer were too high, and there was no space in the store to keep the quantities the farmers needed. “I thought: what if I could create a cost-effective model to enable farmers to save for seeds and fertilizers in a really convenient and easy way?”

With myAgro's Mobile Layaway platform, farmers save for seeds, fertilizer and specialized training via scratchcards – in the same way they might buy phone credit. The cards are bought at the local convenience store, and farmers then text the number on the card to their myAgro account. That way, they are confident their money is being saved securely. They are enrolled in the scheme at harvest time, when they have money, and myAgro helps them save and plan for the next season.

When it comes to planting season, the seeds have already been paid for and are delivered to the farmers. They can also access training to ensure their harvest has a good chance of being more successful than it has been in previous years. In Mali, for instance, Ratnayake found that farmers often have a lot of land, but do not cultivate it because the soil needs fertilizer that they cannot afford. As a result, they are not able to feed their families.

Although 43% of the global labor force in agriculture



are women – rising to more than 50% in sub-Saharan Africa – they are less likely than men to have access to credit or training. Ratnayake estimates that women make up around 70% of the myAgro client base, and she describes the impact of the service on women as something she is particularly proud of. “The independence that women can have if they save privately, and the pride they have from taking care of their families better – that’s incredibly rewarding,” she says.

So why was Mali chosen as the initial location for myAgro back when it began in 2011? Ratnayake explains that in Mali, agriculture is the main source of income for three-quarters of the population. “We had a great opportunity there, the farmers are hardworking, and the villages are close together, so [getting involved] really made sense for the local stores. Also, the population had nearly doubled in 20 years, so the opportunity for farmers to invest in their fields and move out of poverty was compelling,” she says. “If I could prove the savings model for smallholders to invest their own cash, then this model could replicate globally.”

After careful research and planning, the program quickly flourished. “This scaled more quickly than I had planned, through word of mouth, the myAgro radio program, and then [farmers] talking to their neighbors.”

The organization now also operates in Senegal, and, across the two countries, had 34,000 customers in 2017. Ratnayake estimates that on average, farmers who participated had a 60% increase in their annual average income. This has also had a knock-on effect for the owners of convenience stores, who have seen an increase in their income, and seed companies, which are also gaining a wider market. Next for myAgro is Tanzania, where it will aim to connect with established savings groups.

Ratnayake is excited about the opportunities that being a

Skoll award winner will bring. “We are incredibly honoured and thrilled to be part of the Skoll community,” she says. “We can bring the myAgro story to a wider audience, network within the Skoll community itself, learn from them and maybe partner with some of those organizations in the future.”

Through the product margin it makes on each item sold, myAgro expects to be sustainable by 2021. “Our goal is that by 2025 we will have reached a million smallholder farmers, doubling their income. That’s an increase of \$550 per family per year,” she says.

This micro-savings model is reaching a new segment of farmers who are among the poorest on the planet, many of them women

The Skoll Foundation was set up in 1999 with the aim of driving large-scale change through investing in, connecting and celebrating social entrepreneurs, with the awards taking place annually since 2005. The awards are about “shining a light on what is working in the world” according to president and chief executive Sally Osberg. “We wanted to invest in solutions to the world’s most pressing problems. The Skoll Awards are a way for us to do that,” she says. “We see entrepreneurs as agents of opportunity, of creative disruption.”

Organizations are nominated by Skoll's network of partners, for qualities such as impact potential, collaboration and innovation, and must be led by visionary social entrepreneurs. Each winner gets a \$1.25m three-year core support investment to scale work and increase impact. This year, five of the six awards have been presented to women, something Osberg thinks is significant. “There is a perception that women entrepreneurs either don’t exist or don’t prevail,” she says. “We wanted to see if we could prove that wrong, and I believe we’ve done that.”

(Source: theguardian.com)

New research could literally squeeze more power out of solar cells

Physicists at the University of Warwick have today, Thursday 19th April 2018, published new research in the journal Science today 19th April 2018 (via the Journal's First Release pages) that could literally squeeze more power out of solar cells by physically deforming each of the crystals in the semiconductors used by photovoltaic cells.

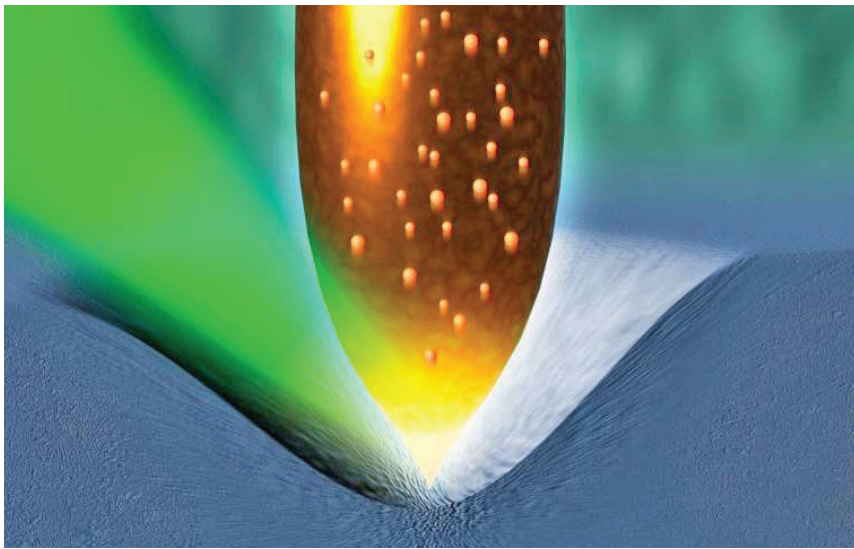
The paper entitled the "Flexo-Photovoltaic Effect" was written by Professor Marin Alexe, Ming-Min Yang, and Dong Jik Kim who are all based in the University of Warwick's Department of Physics.

The Warwick researchers looked at the physical constraints on the current design of most commercial solar cells which place an absolute limit on their efficiency. Most commercial solar cells are formed of two layers creating at their boundary a junction between two kinds of semiconductors, p-type with positive charge carriers (holes which can be filled by electrons) and n-type with negative charge carriers (electrons).

When light is absorbed, the junction of the two semiconductors sustains an internal field splitting the photo-excited carriers in opposite directions, generating a current and voltage across the junction.

Solar cells

That junction between the two semiconductors is fundamental to getting power out of such a solar cell but it comes with an efficiency limit. This Shockley-Queisser Limit means that of all the power contained in sunlight falling on an ideal solar cell in ideal conditions only a maximum of 33.7% can ever be turned into electricity.



When light is absorbed, the junction of the two semiconductors sustains an internal field splitting the photo-excited carriers in opposite directions, generating a current and voltage across the junction.

There is however another way that some materials can collect charges produced by the photons of the sun or from elsewhere. The bulk photovoltaic effect occurs in certain semiconductors and insulators where

their lack of perfect symmetry around their central point (their non-centrosymmetric structure) allows generation of voltage that can be actually larger than the band gap of that material (the band gap being the gap

between the valence band highest range of electron energies in which electrons are normally present at absolute zero temperature and the conduction band where electricity can flow).

Photovoltaic effect

Unfortunately the materials that are known to exhibit the anomalous photovoltaic effect have very low power generation efficiencies, and are never used in practical power-generation systems.

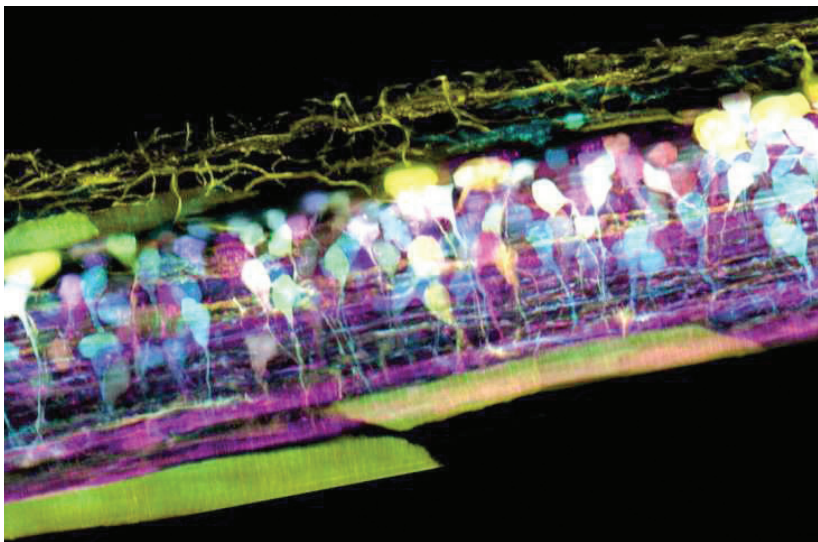
The Warwick team wondered if it was possible to take the semiconductors that are effective in commercial solar cells and manipulate or push them in some way so that they too could be forced into a non-centrosymmetric structure and possibly therefore also benefit from the bulk photovoltaic effect.

For this paper they decided to try literally pushing such semiconductors into shape using conductive tips from atomic force microscopy devices to a "nano-indenter" which they then used to squeeze and deform individual crystals of Strontium Titanate (SrTiO₃), Titanium Dioxide (TiO₂), and Silicon (Si).

"Extending the range of materials that can benefit from the bulk photovoltaic effect has several advantages: it is not necessary to form any kind of junction; any semiconductor with better light absorption can be selected for solar cells, and finally, the ultimate thermodynamic limit of the power conversion efficiency, so-called Shockley-Queisser Limit, can be overcome.

(Source: phys.org)

New microscope captures detailed 3-D movies of cells deep within living systems



By combining two imaging technologies, scientists can now watch in unprecedented 3-D detail as cancer cells crawl, spinal nerve circuits wire up, and immune cells cruise through a zebrafish's inner ear.

Physicist Eric Betzig, a group leader at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Janelia Research Campus, and colleagues report the work April 19, 2018, in the journal Science.

Scientists have imaged living cells with microscopes for hundreds of years, but the sharpest views have come from cells isolated on glass slides. The large groups of cells inside whole organisms scramble light like a bagful of marbles, Betzig says. «This raises the nagging doubt that we are not seeing cells in their native state, happily ensconced in the organism in which they evolved.»

Even when viewing cells individually, the microscopes most commonly used to study cellular inner workings are usually too slow to follow the action in 3-D. These microscopes bathe cells with light thousands to millions of times more intense than the desert sun, Betzig says. "This also contributes to our fear that we are not seeing cells in their natural, unstressed form.

Seeing is believing

"It's often said that seeing is believing, but when it comes to cell biology, I think the more appropriate question is, 'When can we believe what we see?'" he adds.

To meet these challenges, Betzig and his team combined two microscopy technologies they first reported in 2014, the same year he shared the Nobel Prize in Chemistry. To unscramble the light from cells buried within organisms, the researchers turned to

adaptive optics - the same technology used by astronomers to provide clear views of distant celestial objects through Earth's turbulent atmosphere. Then, to image the internal choreography of these cells quickly yet gently in 3-D, the team used lattice light sheet microscopy.

That technology rapidly and repeatedly sweeps an ultra-thin sheet of light through the cell while acquiring a series of 2-D images, building a high-resolution 3-D movie of subcellular dynamics.

Optical system

The new microscope is essentially three microscopes in one: an adaptive optical system to maintain the thin illumination of a lattice light sheet as it penetrates within an organism, and another adaptive optical system to create distortion-free images when looking down on the illuminated plane from above.

By shining a laser through either pathway, the researchers create a bright point of light within the region they wish to image. The distortions in the image of this "guide star" tell the team the nature of the optical aberrations along either pathway.

The researchers can correct these distortions by applying equal but opposite distortions to a pixelated light modulator on the excitation side, and a deformable mirror on detection. Over large volumes, the distortions change as the light traverses different tissues. In this case, the team assembles large 3-D images from a series of subvolumes, each with its own independent excitation and detection corrections.

(Source: eurekalert.org)

Climate change affecting food chains in the ocean, reducing number of fish



Climate change is impacting life in the sea more quickly than scientists are realizing. Heat from rising temperatures is currently affecting life on the surface of the water, this could make ocean food chains less productive and could reduce the number of fish in the sea.

A team of U.S. based scientists released a study in the journal Science which examines the consequences of climate warming for the next couple of centuries ending in the year 2300 on food supply and aquatic biome. The study focused on how the warming climate would affect the number of essential nutrients that support plankton which then go on to support fish.

Researchers found that current trends in rising temperatures would affect a large number of factors that make up the marine ecosystem. It would alter the winds, water temperatures, sea ice cover, and ocean circulation. All of these changes would shift nutrients from upper levels of the ocean to the lower depths. This would reduce the plankton growth at the surface.

Reducing global fish catch

By 2300 this reduction of plankton would leave the surface nutrient-starved, and reduce the global fish catch by 20 percent. It would have a great impact in the northern part of the Atlantic reducing the fish catch by nearly 60 percent.

Scientists analyzed how these changes could affect the biological pump. The process which transfers nutrients from the surface water to the deep ocean and vice versa. At the bottom of the food chain are

phytoplankton are consumed by zooplankton, which is then consumed by smaller fish, up to the top that includes animals such as whales and sharks.

Dead organisms sink down to the deep ocean. This releases carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus, and other nutrients into the depths of the ocean. It provides the nutrients for the phytoplankton at the bottom of the chain which then continues the cycle.

In the study, they found that this process would be disrupted. It would leave areas of the ocean north of the Antarctic zone without much nitrogen and phosphorus. Using current trends, they found that temperatures on the surface would rise by 17.2° F (9.6° C).

The deep oceans

In the researchers model, nutrients would build up in the deep ocean. It would leave surface waters with a continuously decreasing nitrogen and phosphorus but would see an increase in the deep ocean.

This would cause phytoplankton growth to decrease which would have an impact on the food chain. The global fish catch would be reduced by 2300. Their simulations showed that after over a 1,000 years enough carbon dioxide would be absorbed that the climate would begin to cool down. It would take centuries for the biological pump to be restarted again.

The biological pump not only works to transfer nutrients all over the Earth's oceans but it also serves a role in removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

(Source: universetoday.com)

Carbon fiber artificial muscles can lift 12,000 times their weight

Today, most robots and machines that need to move around use motors to do it. In the future, they might use artificial muscles that work more like our own biological versions.

Researchers from the Department of Mechanical Science and Engineering at the University of Illinois have created a new artificial muscle design based on coiled carbon fiber and rubber. They say this material can lift more than 12,000 times its own weight.

Coiled artificial muscles are not an entirely new idea, but other teams have used nylon fibers.

The University of Illinois team believed greater strength-to-weight ratios were possible with a more versatile base material. They chose carbon fiber because of its high tensile strength and low weight. They combined carbon fiber with polydimethylsiloxane (PDMS) rubber, then coiled the material to create a muscle that can contract and relax.

Like your muscles, the artificial muscle responds to an electric current. The mechanism is quite different, though.

The current heats up the rubber component and pushes the carbon fiber strands apart. That causes the coil to expand outward, thus contracting lengthwise. The researchers also found the muscles would contract when exposed to liquid hexane, but the electric current is somewhat more practical.

(Source: extremetech.com)

Scientists getting closer to the most accurate clock ever, using thorium

Experiments with the metal thorium have revealed a strange quirk that could be used in a totally new class of atomic clock, paving the way to a more precise timekeeping method than we've ever had before.

Right now, the kinds of high-precision clocks we use to co-ordinate global positioning satellites are based on striking an electron with just the right amount of energy to force it to jump from its orbital and return again.

Current efforts by groups such as the U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology try to improve precision by cooling and increasing the particle's density, but electrons can still be easily nudged every now and then.

Around 15 years ago, physicists from Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt (PTB) in Germany began to take seriously the possibility of using transition states in an atomic nucleus as a way to measure time.

The density of particles packed into a nucleus - such as the one in a thorium atom - means it would be a lot less likely to be disturbed, so could theoretically keep beat with even greater reliability.

The only problem is most atoms need a powerful kick to get their nucleus to transform into an excited enough state to 'tick', so you need beams of X-rays or gamma rays to get them started.

Thorium-229's nucleus stands out for its ability to form an isomer in an excited state that is temporarily stable (known as a 'metastable' state) when bathed in UV light, making it the best candidate so far for an optical atomic clock based on an atom's nucleus.

Turning theory into a practical piece of technology though has proven to be a challenge thanks to the narrow range of wavelengths required.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

Desiccation cracks help reveal the shape of water on Mars

As Curiosity rover marches across Mars, the Red Planet's watery past comes into clearer focus.

In early 2017 scientists announced the discovery of possible desiccation cracks in Gale Crater, which was filled by lakes 3.5 billion years ago. Now, a new study has confirmed that these features are indeed desiccation cracks, and reveals fresh details about Mars' ancient climate.



"We are now confident that these are mudcracks," explains lead author Nathaniel Stein, a geologist at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena. Since desiccation mudcracks form only where wet sediment is exposed to air, their position closer to the center of the ancient lake bed rather than the edge also suggests that lake levels rose and fell dramatically over time.

The "mudcracks show that the lakes in Gale Crater had gone through the same type of cycles that we see on Earth," says Stein. The study was published in Geology online ahead of print on 16 April 2018.

The researchers focused on a coffee table-sized slab of rock nicknamed "Old Soaker." Old Soaker is crisscrossed with polygons identical in appearance to desiccation features on Earth. The team took a close physical and chemical look at those polygons using Curiosity's Mastcam, Mars Hand Lens Imager, ChemCam Laser Induced Breakdown Spectrometer (LIBS), and Alpha-Particle X-Ray Spectrometer (APXS).

That close look proved that the polygons -- confined to a single layer of rock and with sediment filling the cracks between them -- formed from exposure to air, rather than other mechanisms such as thermal or hydraulic fracturing. And although scientists have known almost since the moment Curiosity landed in 2012 that Gale Crater once contained lakes, explains Stein, the "mudcracks are exciting because they add context to our understanding of this ancient lacustrine system."

(Source: Science Daily)

BMI shines in Tabriz 2018 Islamic tourism Capital

In line with its social responsibilities, Bank Melli Iran (BMI) has shown best performance in Tabriz 2018 Islamic Tourism Capital, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

With due observance to the said issue, Bank Melli Iran has taken giant stride in this important and prestigious event with the aim of introducing the country as suitable tourism destination due to its historical background and geographical diversity.

Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) initiated a plan in 2015 with the name of introducing a modeled tourism hub of Islamic countries. In this comprehensive plan, a city from the Islamic countries is introduced as a

'model tourism city of Islamic world' every year, based on which, Tabriz was introduced in the current year as Islamic Tourism Capital in 2018.

However, Bank Melli Iran has always put supporting cultural heritage and tourism field atop of its agenda and for this reason, a number of its buildings have been registered in the National Heritage List.

Bank Melli Iran's central branch in Tabriz has been registered in the National Cultural Heritage List in a way that its portal is one of the outstanding architectural monuments which is constructed by the Grand Architecture Mohsen Foroughi, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank concluded.



Sanchi oil tanker investigations will be through by late May: MP

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — Investigations uncovering the real causes of Sanchi oil tanker tragic incident in which the tanker burned and sank off the coast of China on January 6 will be completed by late May, MP Mohammad Reza Rezaei has said.

The Sanchi oil tanker carrying 136,000 tons of Iran’s light crude oil was heading to South Korea when collided with a Chinese freighter off east coast of China. The collision set fire to the oil tanker and after days of burning. The taker eventually sank on January 14. Following the tragic incident all those aboard, including 30 Iranian sailors and two Bangladeshi ones were announced dead.

There are four parties at fault including, Iran, Panama, China and Hong Kong as the Panamanian-flagged Iranian-owned tanker has collided with a Hong Kong-flagged Chinese-owned freighter, ISNA news agency quoted Rezaei as saying on Friday.

So, once a ship fly a flag of another country - in this case Panama and Hong Kong - they must be accountable for the losses incurred on the vessels, crews and the cargos, he explained.

Therefore, each country’s share in the Sanchi’s incident will be determined by the end of the Iranian calendar month of Ordibehesht, falling on May 21, the MP said, adding, both ships were insured and will be reimbursed accordingly by the international insurance companies.

The back box is also retrieved and is being analyzed with representative from all for aforesaid countries in attendance, he said, stating, as per the primary investigations human error was the leading cause of the incident, however, the main party at fault is not decided yet.

An team of experts from the Ports and Maritime Organization of Iran will travel to China next week and will follow-up on the issue to assert and stand up for the rights of the Islamic Republic of Iran and those who lost their lives in the accident, he highlighted.

Independent British festivals commit to banning plastic bottles and straws by 2021

More than 60 independent British music festivals have committed to ban single-use plastic from their sites by 2021. The Drastic on Plastic initiative, led by the Association of Independent Festivals (AIF), will lead to the removal of plastic drinks bottles, plastic straws, glitter, plastic food trays, cable ties and toiletry bottles from festival sites.

All 61 of AIF’s members have signed up to the pledge, including End of the Road, Bestival, Boardmasters and Kendal Calling. As an initial measure, participants will also support the Final Straw initiative to ban vendors from supplying plastic straws at their sites this year.

AIF CEO Paul Reed described the use of single-use plastic products at festivals as “one of the most critical issues facing our businesses and wider society”. Bestival co-founder Rob da Bank called the initiative “exactly the sort of work the AIF needs to be doing – leading the global charge against essentially unnecessary plastic at all our festivals.”

It is thought that 38.5m plastic bottles are used in the UK every day, and that 91% of that plastic is not recyclable. Annual consumption of plastic bottles is set to top half a trillion by 2021. The Ellen MacArthur foundation estimates that by 2050, there will be more plastic than fish in the ocean. Marine conservation and campaigning group Surfers Against Sewage has said the plastic pollution crisis rivals the threat of climate change.

Most commercially produced glitter would fall under the ban. Glitter is made from etched aluminium bonded to polyethylene terephthalate (PET), making it a form of microplastic. Scientists have said that microplastic pollution in the ocean is far worse than feared. In March 2018, a study revealed the highest microplastic pollution levels discovered anywhere in the world in a river near Manchester.

The founders of Glastonbury festival announced in February 2018 that they would be implementing a site-wide ban on plastic bottles when the event returns in 2019. Organisers previously estimated that 1m plastic bottles are used during the event.

(Source: The Guardian)

LEARN ENGLISH

Toothache

A: What seems to be the problem?

B: I have a really bad toothache! My cheek is **swollen** and I can't eat anything.

A: Let's have a look. Hmmm. This doesn't look too good. I think we may have to pull out your **wisdom tooth**. It's pressing against your **molars** and that's one of the reasons you are **experiencing** so much pain.

B: When you pull my tooth will you also have to extract the nerve and the root?

A: First we will take some x-rays and see what we're dealing with. I also noticed a small **cavity** up front here, so you are going to need a **filling**.

B: I guess **that's what I get for** not **flossing** or brushing my teeth three times a day.

A: It could be that, or maybe you are eating too many sweets. In any case, I'll **administer** an **anesthetic** and you won't feel a thing!

■ Key vocabulary

swollen: increase in size with liquid or internal pressure

wisdom tooth: one of four rearmost molars on each side of both jaws

molar: a type of tooth at the back of the mouth with a rounded or flattened surface for grinding food

to experience: have the experience of; undergo; feel

cavity: a hole or space inside something

filling: a small amount of metal that is put into your tooth to cover a hole

that is what one gets for: that is what one deserves for

floss: to clean between your teeth using floss

to brush: to clean with a brush

to administer: to give or apply as a remedy or relief

anesthetic : a drug that stops you feeling pain

■ Supplementary vocabulary

fluoride: a mouthwash given by the dentist that contains fluoride

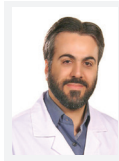
root canal: a dental operation to save a tooth by removing the diseased contents from the canal of the root of the tooth and filling it with a protective substance

rinse your mouth: put water in one's mouth, swish it around and spit it back out

gums: the firm, fleshy tissue that covers the inside of the jaws and that surrounds the bases of the teeth

(Source: irlanguage.com)

Iranian traditional medicine: Eat a varied, well-balanced diet



ARTICLE

By Seyed Mahdi Mirghazanfari, MD, PhD

Over the previous articles the broad definition of the temperaments (Mizaj in Persian), their specifications, food and drinks producing the four humors, also called ‘*Akhlat*’ in Persian, in the body or formation of excessive amounts of the humors in the body leading to mal-temperament or *Sou-e Mizaj*, and most importantly healthy lifestyle tips suiting people with different temperaments were given.

Here are some complementary tips on temperaments, humors, and the difference between the body parts regarding their needs and the fact that which humor they mainly feed on.

■ Temperaments; mal-temperament

People suffering excessive humor of “blood” have similar symptoms to people with warm and wet temperament (sanguine). Likewise, people suffering excessive “phlegm” resemble people with cold and wet temperament (phlegmatic). People experiencing discomfort due to excessive “black bile” share the same symptoms with people with cold and dry temperament (melancholic). And lastly, those who suffer from health conditions resulted from excessive “yellow bile” are very much like people with warm and dry temperament (choleric).

This is why one should take a heed in consuming food and drinks which might lead to excessive formation of each of the four aforementioned humors in the body as excessive amounts of each humor in the body would also intensify the temperament pertaining to that humor.

For instance, overeating food stuff and drinks with warming characteristics (warm temperament), deep fried food, spicy food, etc. would both increase yellow bile in the body as well as exacerbating the symptoms of choleric temperament which are increased warmth and dryness.

Similarly, eating too much food and drinks with cooling characteristics in addition to water and watery foods and fruits would not only increase the amounts of phlegm in the body, but also aggravate symptoms of phlegmatic temperament, hence, cause an upswing of coldness and wetness in the body.

Furthermore consuming too much canned food, leftovers, sauces, old meat, fast foods, and pickled fruits and vegetables would both produce excessive amounts of black bile in the body and develop symptoms of melancholic temperament which means an upsurge of coldness and dryness in the body.

And finally eating large quantities of red meat, bread, rice, fatty food stuff, and sweets would increase the humor of blood in the body and at the same time bring

about symptoms of sanguine temperament by enhancing warmth and wetness in the body.

For example, one day the patient may feel so hot, another day he or she feels drowsy. Once his or her skin might get dry and deal with dry nose. People suffering mal-temperament may feel fatigue and even suffer from sleep disorders or negative thoughts. In such cases one is said to suffer from “*mal-temperament*”, also called “*Sou-e Mizaj*”. It means that one or two of the four qualities of warmth, coldness, dryness, and wetness have increased which can be accompanied by a rise in one of the four humors including black bile, blood, phlegm, and yellow bile.

In order to prevent such health conditions it is important to reconsider our lifestyle, and diet along with abstaining from food stuff which could be harmful to people’s main temperaments.

If mal-temperament is sparked by a rise in the amount of a humor the condition is called “material mal-temperament” as a material (humor) has climbed in the body which normally should not. Typically those who are suffering material mal-temperament feel tired and sluggish, especially people with increased humor of blood or phlegm.

People suffering constipation, women with abnormal uterine bleeding particularly low menstrual bleeding, people with absent sweating or those who hold urine are more prone to suffer such symptoms as humors and waste materials might build up in their bodies. If so, they have to first treat their excretory system diseases.

■ Different organs, different humors

Each body part principally feeds on a certain humor, so it is highly important to have a varied, well-balanced diet. In other words we have to consume almost all food and drinks, including fruits, vegetables, dairy products, meat, beans and grains, which are created by God, over our lifetime as we need all the four humors in our bodies.

However, the amount and proportion of each food stuff and drink is different for every person as people have distinguished temperaments and that’s the key concept of Iranian traditional medicine.

For instance, not all people are allowed to consume the same amount of red meat, water or dairy products as people differ from one another regarding their physical and mental characteristics. But everyone should consume all foods and drinks with care considering their individual characteristics.

As eating all foods and drinks moderately and in accordance with one’s temperament can result in having healthy organs overeating or not eating can result in diseases and harm organs.

Heart mainly lives on the humor of blood and also yellow bile, to some extent, as a source of energy. Human heart is warm and dry and in case one uses food stuff with warm and dry temperament such as deep fried food, spicy food

or salty food, they might experience palpitation.

In contrast, consuming too much food with cold and wet temperament such as yoghurt, lettuce, water, and watery or sour fruits can result in weakened heart muscles, heart valve prolapse, varicose veins, and edema.

Other organs such as liver, spleen, kidneys and muscles which are normally big and red in color also feed on humor of blood and have warm and wet temperaments so eating too much food which result in formation of humor of blood in the body, such as red meat, bread, rice or fatty foods, can result in sluggishness, and extreme fatigue while not consuming them can lead to malfunction of the aforesaid organs.

Organs such as brain and spinal cord have cold and wet temperament and they mainly feed on phlegm. Foods that are watery and slimy such as soups, broths, and sour stews containing vegetables, water from boiled Kaleh pache (dish of boiled cow or sheep’s feet and/or head) or tripe (edible lining from the stomachs of sheep), and consuming too much rice without bran can result in overly produced phlegm in the body and accordingly memory loss, dizziness, difficulty learning or remembering something.

On the other hand sleep deprivation, stress, and irritability can be symptoms of lack of phlegm in the body.

Bony tissues mainly rely for nourishment on black bile more than the others. The right amounts of black bile keep bones healthy and strong and that’s why bones, teeth, hair, fingernails and tendons primarily live off black bile.

Eating too much food which can lead to formation of black bile in the body and heavy foods such as eggplant, lentil, leftovers, fast foods, and kashk (a kind of dairy product fabricated from the liquid yoghurt) could result in excessive production of black bile which leaves harmful residues in the whole body. This abnormal, excessive amounts of black bile cannot properly provide hair, fingernail and bones with nutrition and would contribute to darkening of the skin and developing brown skin patches (caused by black bile residues in the skin and brain), muscle cramps (as a result of black bile residues in muscles), peeling and breaking of the fingernails, and frizzy, lifeless, and dull hair.

So it is very important to have a varied diet and becoming vegetarian or vegan or not eating fruits and vegetables and overeating meats are all wrong and can harm the body and result in diseases.

It is worth mentioning that varied diet doesn’t mean having all kinds of food and drinks in one single meal but to consume all kinds of food stuff in your lifetime.

However, it is recommended to have one kind of food and a foodstuff that can moderate the temperament of the food in a meal.

Seyed Mahdi Mirghazanfari, MD, holds a PhD degree in medical physiology and is an Iranian-Islamic traditional medicine researcher. He is also an assistant professor in AJA University of Medical Sciences, Tehran.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ◀ ▶ ➤ ➥

Majlis may discuss altering weekend holidays

The Iranian parliament (Majlis) may discuss the possibility of altering weekend holidays from Thursday to Saturday, Mehr news agency reported. The bill was not approved by the social committee of the Majlis, MP Abolfazl Aboutorabi said, adding that 15 MPs have undersigned a request to the presiding board of the Majlis to discuss the proposed plan later in an open session. According to him, the four-day holiday difference with almost the whole world is causing difficulties for Iranians.

In 2007 Riyadh Summit, Aboutorabi said, Islamic countries have opt for Friday and Saturday for their weekends which decreases the differences to one day with the world.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-hood”

■ **Meaning:** condition or state

■ **For example:** He and his family lived in a nice **neighborhood** near a lake.

PHRASAL VERB

Get in with somebody

■ **Meaning:** to become friendly with someone

■ **For example:** He got in with a bad crowd and started getting into trouble.

IDIOM

Get down to brass tacks

■ **Explanation:** to start to discuss the essential aspects of a problem or situation

■ **For example:** The situation was so serious that after a few polite exchanges they quickly got down to brass tacks.

طرح جدید مجلس برای تعطیلات آخر هفته

به گزارش خبرگزاری مهر مجلس شورای اسلامی طرحی مبنی بر تغییر تعطیلات آخر هفته از پنجشنبه به شنبه ارائه داده است.

ابوالفضل ابوترابی، عضو کمیسیون شوراها و امور داخلی کشور در مجلس نمایندهای بود که از ارسال طرح تعطیلات رسمی کشور با امضای ۱۵ نفر از نمایندگان به هیات رئیسه مجلس خبر داد و در رابطه با امکان طرح مجدد این موضوع در مجلس گفت: این طرح در کمیسیون اجتماعی مورد تأیید نمایندگان واقع نشد اما این فرصت وجود دارد تا در صحن علنی مجلس مطرح شود. به گفته وی وی این اختلاف تعطیلات ۴ روزه با دنیا سبب شده تا ایرانیان در موارد مختلفی دچار مشکل شوند.

ابوترابی تأکید کرد: کشورهای اسلامی در کنفرانس ۲۰۰۷ ریاض روزهای جمعه و شنبه را به عنوان تعطیلات رسمی خود انتخاب کردند که اختلاف تعطیلاتشان با دنیا را به یک روز رساند.

Russian FM: No reason not to supply Syria with S-300

Russia: German chlorine, British smoke bombs found in Syria's Ghouta

➔ On April 14, the U.S., France and Britain carried out a missile attack on a number of targets in Syria in response to a suspected chemical attack in Douma that reportedly took place on April 7. Syria has rejected any role in the alleged attack, which is yet to be investigated.

The Russian Defense Ministry said a total of 103 cruise missiles were launched by the U.S. and its allies, 71 of which were intercepted by Syria's air defenses. Russian missile systems deployed to the country were not involved in the interception.

Following the strikes, Russia announced it may consider giving Syria S-300 systems so it can defend itself in the face of such acts of aggression.

The announcement has raised fears in Israel, which has been conducting frequent air raids against various targets in Syria in support of anti-Damascus militants.

According to former Israeli military intelligence chief Amos Yadlin, the deployment of S-300 in Syria has been a concern for Israel in the past two decades and "at the end of the day, it will happen."

Yadlin told Bloomberg it was inevitable that the S-300 missile system would be deployed in Syria and then targeted by Israel. "If I know the air force well, we have already made proper plans to deal with this threat. After you remove the threat, which is basically what will be done, we're back to square one," he said.

Elsewhere in his remarks Lavrov said that prior to the tripartite Western airstrikes on Syrian targets, Russia had cautioned the U.S.-led coalition that crossing certain "red lines" on the ground in Syria would prompt retaliation.

"This was said very clearly and unambiguously," Lavrov said.

"Afterwards there were contacts at the level of military leaderships and generals, between our representatives and the U.S. coalition command. They were notified of our 'red lines,' including geographical 'red lines' on the ground. And, as a result, these 'red lines' were not crossed," he said.

He further said the U.S. President Donald Trump has invited his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, during a phone conversation for a meeting at the White House, adding that the two heads of state would never allow tensions between their nations to turn into an armed conflict.

"Speaking about the risk of a military confrontation, I feel absolutely confident to assume that the militaries will not allow this, and of course neither will President Putin or President Trump. They are leaders, after all, elected by their people and responsible for their peace," he said.

■ **Syria hands unexploded U.S. cruise missiles to Russia**

Meantime, Syria has handed over to Russia two unexploded cruise missiles it discovered in the aftermath of the recent attack by the U.S., Britain and France, Syrian sources say.

"Two cruise missiles that did not detonate during the U.S. missile strike on Syria overnight on April 14 were found by the Syrian military. Both are in rather good condition. These missiles were handed over to Russian officer the day before yesterday (April 17)," a source in the Syrian Defense Ministry told Russia's TASS news agency on Thursday.

The Syrian military sent the missiles over on board a plane on Wednesday, the source



added. The Russian Defense Ministry had yet to confirm the report.

It was not clear whether the discovered missiles were American Tomahawks or Scalp/Storm Shadow, codenames for a cruise missile jointly developed by France and Britain.

However, there is a good chance that the missiles were fired by the U.S. military as Britain and France only fired 20 missiles collectively.

■ **Russia: German chlorine, British smoke bombs found in Syria's Ghouta**

Separately, Russia said Syrian government forces have found containers filled with toxic chlorine gas from Germany and smoke grenades manufactured in Britain in Syria's recently-liberated Eastern Ghouta region.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said on Thursday that the seizure of the Western-made chemicals and weapons undermined "the faith in humanness" of some countries' leadership.

"In the liberated areas of Eastern Ghouta, Syrian government troops have found containers with chlorine – the most horrible kind of chemical weapons – from Germany, and also smoke grenades produced... in the city of Salisbury, the UK," she said.

Zakharova also referred to the alleged chemical weapons attack in the Damascus suburb town of Douma on April 7, which Western states blamed on the Damascus government.

She stressed that the images and videos of the incident, which had been circulated on social media, were "100-percent fake."

Elsewhere in her remarks, the Russian spokeswoman said that the tripartite strikes on Syria were meant to allow terrorists to replenish their ranks.

"Our assumptions have been confirmed, the actual goal of the three Western countries was to let the extremists catch their breath, restore their ranks and prolong the bloodshed on Syrian soil thus hindering the political settlement process," she pointed out.

In a relevant development on Thursday, Russia's Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said that Moscow would screen at the world body an interview with a Syrian child who says he was made to pose as a victim of chemical weapons.

"We are distributing it to member countries (of the UN Security Council) and journalists, and at the next meeting of the Security Coun-

cil we will find a way to screen it," he said.

Omar Diab, the father of the 11-year-old Syrian boy called Hassan, said he is ready to go to international organizations to testify that no chemical attack took place in Douma.

"There were no signs of chemical damage to my son; he was frightened but healthy. I and my family are ready to testify in any place in the world, including in Geneva, New York, that no chemical weapons were used," he told reporters.

■ **Syria: Assad won't wear award of 'slave' to America**

The developments followed as Syria sent back to France the prestigious Légion d'honneur (Legion of Honor) given in 2001 to President Bashar al-Assad after Paris joined the U.S. and Britain to attack Syria, saying the leader will not wear the award of a "slave" to America.

In a tweet on Thursday, the Syrian Presidency said, "The ministry of foreign affairs... has returned to the French republic... the decoration of the Grand Croix of the Légion d'honneur awarded to President Assad."

It added that the award was returned to France via the Romanian embassy in Damascus, which represents French interests in Syria.

A source close to the presidency said the decision to return France's most prestigious decoration was made over the participation of the European country "in the tripartite aggression alongside the U.S. and Britain against Syria on April 14."

"It is no honor for President Assad to wear a decoration attributed by a slave country and follower of the United States that supports terrorists," and violates the "most elementary norms and principles of the International law."

Legion of Honor, French state's highest honor, was given to Assad by former French President Jacques Chirac in 2001, shortly after taking power following the death of his father, Hafez al-Assad.

The office of French President Emmanuel Macron said on Monday that "a disciplinary procedure for withdrawing the Légion d'honneur (Legion of Honor) is underway."

■ **Takfiri Jaish al-Islam terrorists return Qalamoun town to Syrian government**

Meantime, Syrian forces have established full control over a town northeast of the capital, Damascus, after the terrorists controlling the area agreed to hand it back

to the government.

On Thursday, the so-called Jaish al-Islam (Jaysh al-Islam/Army of Islam/Brigade of Islam) terrorists and their families evacuated Dumayr in the Qalamoun region after surrendering their weapons as part of an evacuation agreement with the Syrian government.

Waving the national flag, residents of Dumayr welcomed government forces into their town after the last of 5,000 militants and their family members boarded buses and left the town for the militant-held city of Jarablus.

The deal also addresses the status of those militants who want to lay down arms and stay in the town.

Syria's official SANA news agency also reported that security forces have entered the town and raised the Syrian flag over the municipality building.

Army units are now ready for clean-up operations to get rid of the landmines planted by the militants across the town.

The withdrawal of Jaish al-Islam militants and their families followed that of their fellows earlier this month from the town of Douma in the Eastern Ghouta suburb of Damascus.

Dumayr is a short drive away from Douma, the last East Ghouta town the government managed to recapture from the militant groups.

■ **Militant jail uncovered in Douma**

A similar mop-up operation is underway in Douma, where government forces have discovered a prison facility formerly run by the Jaish al-Islam terrorists when they were in control of the town.

Footage filmed from inside Douma showed the so-called al-Tawba prison, which fortified with high barracks and linked with a number of underground tunnels.

Jaish al-Islam reportedly used the facility as the headquarters for its leaders and a place for interrogation and torture. Iron cages were also found inside the jail.

Elsewhere, the Syrian army is gearing up for a military operation against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) Takfiri terrorist group and al-Nusra Front (Jabhat al-Nusra/Jabhat Fateh al-Sham) terrorists in the southern districts of the capital, including Yarmouk.

On Thursday, the Syrian army gave the terrorists a 48-hour ultimatum to leave those areas or face a military offensive.

■ **Syrian govt. troops unearth mass grave near capital Damascus**

Syrian government forces have discovered a mass grave containing the bodies of dozen people executed by members of foreign-sponsored Takfiri terrorist groups near the country's capital Damascus.

Syrian Forensic Medicine General Director Zaher Hajo said on Thursday the Syrian soldiers made the discovery in the recently-liberated town of Douma, located about 10 kilometers northeast of Damascus, and that the grave contained 112 corpses, Arabic-language al-Baath Media news website reported.

Hajo added that the victims had most likely been killed during heavy clashes in the former militant stronghold nearly two weeks ago.

He further said that the corpses were transported overnight to a forensic department to undergo identification process, stressing that a nine-strong team, including six dentists, had been formed to that end.

By staff & agencies-Contributed by Nima Chitsaz

Gazans march toward motherland

Two Palestinians killed, dozens injured in clashes with Israeli forces

At least two Palestinians have lost their lives and more than four dozen others sustained injuries during clashes with Israeli soldiers as anti-occupation protests along the border between the besieged Gaza Strip and occupied territories continue unabated.

The spokesman for the Gaza Ministry of Health, Ashraf al-Qidra, said in a statement that 25-year-old Nabil Abu Aqel was critically injured in his head east of Jabalia, located 4 kilometers (2.5 miles) north of Gaza City, before Friday noon.

He was rushed to a nearby hospital, where he succumbed to his grave gunshot wounds.

Shortly afterward, another Palestinian man, identified as 24-year-old Ahmed Rashad al-Athamna, was fatally shot.

Qidra further noted that 40 Palestinian protesters were injured by Israeli gunfire and suffered tear gas inhalation as well.

Protests along the Gaza border since March 30 have led to clashes with Israeli forces in which at least 34 Palestinians have lost their lives and hundreds of others sustained injuries.

The Palestinian rally, dubbed the "Great March of Re-

turn," will last until May 15, which coincides with the 70th anniversary of Nakba Day (Day of Catastrophe) on which Israel was created.

Every year on May 15, Palestinians all over the world hold demonstrations to commemorate Nakba Day, which marks the anniversary of the forcible eviction of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homeland by Israelis in 1948.

More than 760,000 Palestinians - now estimated to number nearly five million with their descendants - were driven out of their homes on May 14, 1948. Since 1948, the Israeli regime has denied Palestinian refugees the right to return, despite UN resolutions and international law that upholds people's right to return to their homelands.

This year's Land Day demonstrations appear especially combustible as Palestinian anger is already high over Trump's decision in December 2017 to recognize al-Quds (Jerusalem) as Israel's "capital."

Israel occupied the West Bank, East al-Quds (Jerusalem) and parts of Syria's Golan Heights during the Six-Day

War in 1967. It later annexed East al-Quds in a move not recognized by the international community.

Israel is required to withdraw from all the territories seized in the war under UN Security Council Resolution 242, adopted months after the Six-Day War, in November 1967, but the Tel Aviv regime has defied that piece of international law ever since.

■ **Gazans hold new mass protest; Israel drops leaflets to warn people**

Elsewhere, Palestinians in Gaza are held another mass demonstration against Israeli occupation for the fourth week in a row as part of the Great March of Return.

Many protesters have since Thursday been staying in camps and sit-in tents near the fence separating the besieged Gaza Strip from the Israeli-occupied territories.

Israel dropped leaflets in the Gaza Strip on Friday, warning Palestinians not to approach the fence, where the regime has deployed Special Forces, sharpshooters and armored vehicles.

(Source: agencies)

Saudi regime in Yemen's swamp

➔ At present, Saudi Arabia has no choice but to declare its failures in Yemen. An issue that is still hard to understand for Riyadh and its supporters. However, it is clear to everyone that, the later the official announcement of this defeat, the higher the cost of Saudis' defeat in Yemen.

■ **UN Failure in the Bloody Test of Yemen**

The next important issue that needs to be taken into consideration in the Yemeni war, is the failure of the United Nations, and especially the Security Council, in the face of this bloody war. The killing of the Yemeni people, especially women and children, the spread of cholera among a large number of Yemeni children and the blockade of Yemen's food, are only part of the right violations that the UN not only closed its eyes on, but also left the Saudi regime open-handed in continuing its crimes.

The United Nations doesn't play an effective role in the developments happening in Yemen, but rather attempts to defeat the Yemeni revolution. The strong attachment of both former and current Secretary-Generals of the United Nations (Ban Ki-moon and Guterres) to Washington and Tel Aviv has strengthened this trend. During Ban Ki-moon time, we even witnessed the withdrawal of Saudi Arabia's name from the list of war criminals: A truly flagrant action that put the UN's role in dealing with humanitarian crises under question.

However, the story does not end there! The reverse and negative role of the United Nations in Yemen has once again shown itself in the escape to the former president of the country. A senior member of the Yemeni High-Electoral Committee said to "Al Maydeen" the primary researches showed that "Jamal Benomar", the UN Yemen envoy, helped "Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi" escape to Aden.

At present, the crimes of Saudi and Emirati authorities in Yemen are rising day by day. Despite the brutal killing of tens of thousands of Yemeni people by Riyadh, the United Nations still refuses to condemn the Saudis. It even refuses to introduce these crimes as a war crime (which deserve punishment). The world public opinion, and especially people of the region, are angry about the continuation of this war, strongly against the reverse role played by the United Nations in the Yemeni war, and the direct support of the permanent members of the Security Council (Britain, France and Germany).

Since the start of the Yemeni war, about 9,000 people have been killed, and tens of thousands have been injured. According to UN data in Yemen, about 8.4 million people are at risk of hunger, and there have been many victims of cholera in the country. But Saudi Arabia and its allies continue their bloodshed, and bombard the country's defenseless people. The main question, however, is that despite knowing the terrible conditions of the Yemeni people, why does the UN avoid confronting Saudi Arabia's crimes?!

How to prepare a post-Trump renaissance in diplomacy

➔ What about the staffing gaps overseas every summer, when officers start new assignments at embassies and consulates weeks or even months after their predecessors have left? Even in the age of instant communication, this leads to a lack of continuity and a need for almost every new officer to reinvent the wheel.



As for those outside government, internationally focused think tanks could play a role in producing research on trends and innovation in diplomatic practice. They have largely ignored that, saying their job is to study foreign policy, not what some call the "machinery" that carries it out. The main reason for that is funding — it's much easier to find donors willing to finance policy research, which they hope will influence official government decisions. However, given the damage being done to the machinery, getting the process right will be as important as the policy substance on the other side of the dark age.

■ **Diplomacy attractiveness diminished**

Academia can help as well. The Trump administration's policies and actions have significantly diminished the attractiveness of diplomacy as a career for young Americans. As a result, the number of those taking the Foreign Service exam has decreased by nearly half since Mr. Trump's election, and compared with pre-2017 figures, fewer than a third of new officers are being accepted into the Foreign Service.

So it's vital to keep alive the young generation's interest in and pursuit of diplomacy as a career. But it's difficult to find colleges and universities in the United States (and globally, for that matter) that teach diplomacy. Not international relations, but diplomatic practice. Even schools whose names include the words "diplomacy" or "foreign service" offer no more than a couple of diplomacy-related courses, one of which is usually in diplomatic history.

To that end, my school, the Washington International Diplomatic Academy, which trains diplomats and other international affairs professionals from around the world, is holding a practical training program for students this summer for the first time. They will learn what is increasingly becoming a lost art, as well as specific skills, from some of the best diplomats in recent years, including recent State Department refugees. Still, I'd rather see dozens of universities offer multiyear degree programs.

The longer the United States fails to exercise its diplomatic muscle, the worse its atrophy will get. Future Foreign Service leaders could emerge from its current ranks or among Americans still in college. Naturally, they will aspire to become ambassadors and assistant secretaries. But once at the top, despite the huge political demands of those jobs, they should find time to take care of their colleagues in the service. Dark age or renaissance, no one else will.

(Source: The NYT)

James Comey: There is no-one who can control Donald Trump's behavior

The former director of the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation), James Comey, has told BBC Newsnight that he doesn't believe there is anyone around Donald Trump who can contain him.

In his only British broadcast interview, Comey said there is no one around him to stop impulsive behavior.

"We have become numb to it in the U.S.," he added.

Meanwhile, during a discussion with New York editor David Remnick, former FBI

director James Comey was asked why he doesn't hate Donald Trump, even after getting fired and relentlessly lambasted by the president. Comey's answer drew gasps in the audience for the wide-ranging discussion at the Town Hall venue in New York City on Thursday night: "I think he has an emptiness inside of him and a hunger for affirmation that I've never seen in an adult."

Comey also had a nuanced, if evasive, answer when Remnick asked him for his opinion of Rudy Giuliani, the former N.Y.C.

mayor and federal prosecutor who joined Trump's legal team on Thursday. Comey was very critical of Giuliani in his new book, A Higher Loyalty, calling him out for a "dangerous" management style and an excessive craving for publicity. But on Thursday night, Comey just said about Giuliani: "Maybe he'll be successful where others weren't and maybe he'll precipitate a clash. I just don't know."

Remnick asked Comey to explain why he compares Trump to a mob boss in his book, describing at length Comey's own experience

prosecuting Mafiosi like Sammy "The Bull" Gravano. Since there were many accounts of Trump associating with mobsters like "Fat Tony" Salerno (whose trial inspired Comey to become a federal prosecutor) during the 1980s, why didn't Comey ever investigate Trump back then? Comey's reply was the epitome of bureaucratic banality: "We don't open investigations because we think people must have done something wrong. For the FBI, there has to be a factual predicate."

(Source: agencies)

Carrick asked for England exclusion due to depression

Manchester United midfielder Michael Carrick asked the Football Association (FA) not to select him for England duty after suffering from a bout of depression during the 2010 World Cup in South Africa.

The 36-year-old made his international debut in 2001 and went on to pick up 34 national caps, the last of which was a friendly against Spain in 2015, but admitted that the World Cup had a lasting impact on his mental health.

“I’d been in the squad a long time and I’ll be honest, I was finding it hard going away with England. I didn’t mind going away with United pre-season... but going with England, it was almost depressing in a way,” Carrick told the BBC.

“It made me really down, so I came to the point after South Africa where I thought: ‘I can’t do that again.’ People would be saying: ‘Pull yourself together and be grateful for it’ and I understood the position I was in... but I just found it so hard and I couldn’t deal with it any more.

“I was probably on the verge of... yes, I was depressed at times, yes. I told the FA: ‘Look, please don’t pick me.’”

Carrick, who has won five Premier League titles, collected a Champions League winners’ medal along with numerous other trophies in 12 years at United, and will retire at the end of the season before joining the club’s coaching staff.

(Source: Reuters)

Djokovic reveals return plans after Monte Carlo Masters defeat to Dominic Thiem

Novak Djokovic has revealed he will take part in either the Hungarian Open or the Barcelona Open next week and that he will make a decision today as to which one he will choose to participate in.

The Serbian’s return to form was halted by clay-court specialist Dominic Thiem at the Monte Carlo Masters yesterday after Djokovic had bounced back from a losing streak to record back-to-back wins.

But after downing compatriot Dusan Lajovic and young Croatian Borna Coric, Djokovic came unstuck against Thiem and made 40 unforced errors which ultimately told in a battle that lasted nearly two-and-a-half hours.

The 31-year-old was next expected to return at the Madrid Open, starting May 6, but has revealed he will return to the ATP tour earlier than planned with the 500 series event in Spain or the 250-level tournament in the Hungarian capital of Budapest, which only made its debut last year, his two options.

“I haven’t played too many matches since July,” Djokovic acknowledged after his defeat to Thiem. “I’ll continue building up. I’ll probably play one of the two tournaments next week [in Barcelona or Budapest].

“I will decide tomorrow [today, Friday 20 April] which one it will be. Hopefully I’m going to get a wild card. We’ve already contacted the tournaments and they’re happy to give us an invitation so we’ll see.

“I would like to build my form so I can peak at Roland Garros. That’s obviously the most important one on this surface.”

“But, you know, Madrid and Rome are back-to-back weeks, so that’s very demanding depending on how I play.”

(Source: Express)

Copa del Rey final: Coutinho feeling the nerves as Barcelona go for glory

Barcelona and Sevilla will know the success of their respective seasons is on the line when they go head to head in the Copa del Rey final on Saturday.

The Cup would certainly have been third on Barca’s list of priorities only a month ago, but the shattering Champions League defeat to Roma has altered perceptions of what might have otherwise been a stellar campaign.



Unbeaten in La Liga and virtually certain to win the title, a domestic double may not be enough to remove the lingering disappointment from Rome, particularly if arch rivals Real Madrid clinch their third consecutive European crown.

“I live with a little anxiety,” Barca midfielder Philippe Coutinho said Thursday. “But it is a very important and very happy moment, playing a final only two or three months after arriving.”

Another surprise loss this weekend would certainly settle the argument, even if it seems strange to declare a team under pressure six days after they marked the longest unbeaten run in La Liga history.

In moulding his team around organisation, hard work and the irrepressible Lionel Messi, Barcelona coach Ernesto Valverde has steered this team away from the club’s more free-flowing, attacking traditions.

He has proven a master of extraction, drawing the very best from a squad that unexpectedly lost one of its star strikers in Neymar last summer, and owns far less talent than its predecessors. Sevilla have fewer questions to answer in terms of entertainment. Since Vincenzo Montella took charge in December, they have beaten Atletico Madrid, twice, Manchester United and drawn with Bayern Munich and Barcelona.

They have also conceded five goals at home to Real Betis and lost to minnows Alaves, Eibar and Leganes. In their draw against Barca, they shipped two goals in the 87th and 89th minutes.

“We know how they play, that they have quality and a fast counter-attack,” Coutinho said. “The most important thing is to think about ourselves, how we have to play and what we should do to win.”

(Source: Sport360)

Wenger to step down after two decades in charge at Arsenal

Arsene Wenger has stunned football by announcing that he will finally step down as Arsenal manager at the end of the season after 22 years in charge.

The 68-year-old Frenchman, who joined Arsenal from Nagoya Grampus Eight all the way back in 1996, has written an emotional statement to the club’s fans, announcing his departure, offering them ‘my love and support for ever’.

Wenger dropped the bombshell ahead of Arsenal’s Premier League clash with West Ham at the Emirates on Sunday afternoon. There has been open unrest at the Emirates in recent years following the Frenchman’s failure to win the league title since 2004. He has however won 10 major trophies during his time in north London and will be remembered as the club’s greatest ever manager.

He told Arsenal’s official website: ‘After careful consideration and following discussions with the club, I feel it is the right time for me to step down at the end of the season.

‘I am grateful for having had the privilege to serve the club for so many memorable years. I managed the club with full commitment and integrity.

‘I want to thank the staff, the players, the Directors and the fans who make this club so special. I urge our fans to stand behind the team to finish on a high.

‘To all the Arsenal lovers take care of the values of the club. My love and support for ever.’

Thomas Tuchel is the bookies’ favourite to take over from Wenger in the summer. The 44-year-old German is highly regarded internationally and is without a club after leaving Borussia Dortmund last year.

Arsenal’s links to Dortmund have grown strong in recent years with the German club’s former recruitment guru Sven Mislintat taking up a similar

role at the Emirate Stadium last November. Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang was signed from Dortmund in January for £57million, while Henrikh Mkhitaryan is also a former Dortmund man.

Germany boss Joachim Low is also high up in the running, and could relish linking up with Arsenal’s German contingent, including Mesut Ozil and Shkodran Mustafi, after this summer’s World Cup in Russia.

Carlo Ancelotti, a three-time Champions League-winning manager, is a free agent, while legendary Arsenal midfielder Patrick Vieira would be a popular choice with fans - he has been cutting his managerial teeth at New York City. Massimiliano Allegri and Brendan Rodgers, managers of Juventus and Celtic respectively, are also strongly fancied for the job.

The Gunners hope the announcement will ignite the club’s hopes of winning the Europa League as Wenger looks to go out on high.

Wenger had been desperate to stay on; but the club’s powerbrokers have been dead set on the Frenchman leaving this summer following the their disappointing season.

Sportsmail revealed in February that Wenger leaving was emerging as a genuine option and the news has now been confirmed.

Arsenal chief executive Ivan Gazidis is set to talk about Wenger’s departure at 5pm.

Meanwhile, Arsenal majority shareholder Stan Kroenke described this as the ‘most difficult day we have ever had’.

The American said: “This is one of the most difficult days we have ever had in all our years in sport. One of the main reasons we got involved with Arsenal was because of what Arsene has brought to the club on and off the pitch. His longevity and

consistency over such a sustained period at the highest level of the game will never be matched.

‘Arsene has unparalleled class and we will always be grateful to him. Everyone who loves Arsenal and everyone who loves football owes him a debt of gratitude. Three Premier League titles, including an entire season unbeaten, seven FA Cup triumphs and 20 successive years in the Champions League is an exceptional record. He has also transformed the identity of our club and of English football with his vision for how the game can be played.

“We have high ambitions to build on Arsene’s remarkable tenure and to honour his vision by ensuring that Arsenal competes for and wins the biggest and most important prizes in the game.

‘We must now focus on making a strong finish to the season and ask our millions of fans around the world to join us in paying appropriate tribute to one of the greats of Arsenal’s history and one of the greats of the game.’

(Source: Daily Mail)



VAR is a lifeline for beleaguered referees, says FIFA director

Massimo Busacca still remembers the sleepless nights. FIFA’s director of refereeing was himself a match official for 15 years and knows how much suffering and soul-searching that referees go through after a bad performance.

“To understand what a referee’s life is like, just try doing it once,” the Swiss told Reuters in an interview. “Try it, just to see what it means to make a big mistake and be killed by the media the next day.

“I know how many hours I was looking up at the ceiling and I couldn’t sleep because of my mistake... and I know that only one decision can change your life.”

Busacca said that “a player can be very bad for 89 minutes and he scores a goal and suddenly he becomes a hero. A referee can be the best in the world for 89 minutes, he makes one mistake and he is killed.”

For Busacca, the video technology system (VAR) which will be used at this year’s World Cup in Russia to help referees, is a much-needed safety net that could end their purgatory.

“Please let us have VAR for these moments,” he told Reuters on the sidelines of a training camp for the European and African referees who will officiate in Russia. “Our careers and our lives have to change, they have to be fairer.”

Busacca, whose own career included two World Cups

and a Champions League final, remembered refereeing one “important” Champions League match where there was a sending-off offence but he was not sure which player had committed the foul.

He did not have VAR to turn to, so he did what he thought was the next best thing — and asked the players involved.

“I said, please tell me who committed the foul because otherwise it could be my last game,” he said. “The players were very fair... one owned up and I gave the red card.”

■ In the dark

Busacca said that, without VAR, players would quickly find out what television replays had shown while the referee remained in the dark.

“The players receive information from outside the pitch. Team staff are watching the match on an iPad, or the coach gets an SMS,” he said.

“So the players tell you that you made a mistake, and how do you continue the game after that? What happens if there is another incident in the other penalty area? Do you compensate for the mistake?”

In the VAR system, a trained referee with access to a video monitor, and in constant communication with the main match official, checks decisions considered “match-changing”.

If an obvious mistake is spotted, the incident can be reviewed and changed. The referee, who has access to a pitchside monitor, can also initiate a review himself.

The system has been trailed in several leagues around the world this season, including Serie A, the Bundesliga and the MLS, and was approved by soccer’s law-making body IFAB in March.

■ ‘Controversial VAR’

One of the most frequent complaints is too many incidents are being reviewed. Busacca, however, said the last thing a referee wanted to do was consult the VAR.

“Like anyone else, referees don’t like to be told they have made a mistake so the referee doesn’t like having an onfield review. He doesn’t want to go the pitchside monitor,” he said.

And he warned that a referees’ mistake would still be noted by FIFA even if the VAR helped make the right decision.

“Just because VAR has corrected you, it doesn’t mean that you will easily be allocated another game,” he said, adding that one review per match — not including offside — was too many.

“That would mean we are not working well with referees any more,” he said.

(Source: Euronews)

Bulgaria calls for tough response to soccer violence



The Bulgarian government has called for tough measures to crack down on violent soccer fans after a policewoman was injured in an explosion at the Sofia derby on Wednesday.

Some 40 Levski Sofia fans were detained after a policewoman sustained an eye injury and underwent surgery following the incident at the Vasil Levski stadium during a league match between the 26-times Bulgarian champions and their bitter city rivals CSKA.

“The first step, which will be taken is that the interior ministry will issue recommendations to the sports ministry, which will provide for increased access control and identification of those who have access to football events,” the sports ministry said in a statement.

The offender who set off the explosion has not yet been found, police said.

The police officer, who will need another operation to retain vision in her injured eye, was hit by broken glass after a device exploded near a stadium entrance, while another policeman sustained minor injuries.

The Eternal Derby, as matches between the two most popular clubs in the Balkan country are known, has a long history of crowd violence.

■ Ultras

Levski condemned Wednesday’s violence in a statement but the club face a potential three-match home stadium ban and a fine of 30,000 leva (13,461 pounds). The Bulgarian Football Union (BFU) will announce its decision in the case on Friday.

Most Balkan states, including Bulgaria, are known to have groups of hardcore soccer fans, known as ‘ultras’ who are frequently behind stadium trouble.

Football-related violence has spiralled in Bulgaria since the fall of communism in 1989 with threats and even physical violence against players and officials now commonplace.

The Bulgarian sports ministry said another measure to combat stadium violence should be the creation of a working group to prepare legislative changes that will lead to “increased personal responsibility”.

“There must be a public response and irreconcilability to such hooliganism,” said the interior ministry’s Chief Secretary Mladen Marinov. “We have to jointly oppose such acts.”

The interior ministry’s police union called for stricter sanctions for people showing aggression or showing disrespect to police officers.

(Source: Mirror)

Armstrong settles \$100m US government lawsuit for \$5m



Lance Armstrong has agreed to pay \$5m (£3.5m) to the US government to settle a long-running lawsuit that could have cost him \$100m (£71m) in damages.

The American, 46, was accused of fraud by cheating while riding for the publicly funded US Postal Service team.

He was stripped of his seven Tour de France titles and banned from cycling for life in 2012 before admitting to using performance-enhancing drugs.

“I’m glad to resolve this case and move forward with my life,” said Armstrong.

Armstrong failed to block the lawsuit last year and a trial was set for 7 May in Washington.

In a statement on Thursday, he said he was “particularly glad to have made peace with the Postal Service” despite believing their lawsuit to be “without merit and unfair”.

“I have since 2013 tried to take full responsibility for my mistakes, and make amends wherever possible,” he said.

“I rode my heart out for the Postal cycling team, and was always especially proud to wear the red, white and blue eagle on my chest when competing in the Tour de France. Those memories are very real and mean a lot to me.

“I’m looking forward to devoting myself to the many great things in my life - my five kids, my wife, my podcast, several exciting writing and film projects, my work as a cancer survivor, and my passion for sports and competition.”

The lawsuit was filed by Armstrong’s former US Postal team-mate Floyd Landis in 2010, before being joined by the government in 2013.

Landis, who was stripped of the 2006 Tour title after testing positive for a banned substance, is eligible to receive 25% of the settlement as the original claimant. Armstrong has also agreed to pay \$1.65m (£1.2m) to cover Landis’ legal fees.

He sued Armstrong under the federal False Claims Act, alleging Armstrong and his team defrauded the government by using banned substances while riding under the Postal Service banner.

The US Postal Service team ran from 1996 to 2004, with Armstrong winning seven Tour titles between 1999 and 2005.

The team were paid about \$32m (£23m) between 2000 and 2004, with the government potentially able to pursue ‘treble’ damages under the lawsuit, resulting in the \$100m figure.

(Source: BBC)

Iran delay Adidas 2018 World Cup kit reveal

S P O R T S Almost every nation d e s k have now unveiled their home and away kits for the 2018 World Cup, but Iran's kit has not been unveiled yet.

The new design, which has been published on some Iranian social media, resembles undershirt, however Iran Football Federation has not confirmed that.

With less than two months left until the start of the 2018 World Cup, the Iranian federation and kit supplier Adidas have not unveiled Team Melli's kit and the federation has received criticism from fans about the delay when other nations are being supplied.

Endangered Asiatic Cheetah was imprinted on Team Melli's jersey during the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2015 AFC Asian Cup, but it seems the image will not be stamped on Iran's kit in the 2018 World Cup.

Carlos Queiroz's team have been drawn in Group B of the 2018 World Cup along with Spain, Morocco and Portugal. The Iran national football team will open the campaign with a match against Morocco at Saint Petersburg on June 15.



Iranian GM Maghsoodloo wins Sharjah Masters Chess

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Seventeen-year-old Grandmaster Parham Maghsoodloo of Iran forced a draw with Yuriy Kryvoruchko of Ukraine in the final round to win the 2nd Sharjah Masters Chess Championship.

The Iranian GM won the title with an amazing 8 points out of 9 rounds in the event.

The 2018 Sharjah Masters was a 9-round Swiss Open

which took place from 12-19 April at the Sharjah Chess & Culture Club in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates.

The prize pool was \$60,000, with \$15,000 for first prize, fide.com reported.

Tied for second slot at 7 points each are defending champion Wang Hao of China and Eltaj Safarli of Azerbaijan who drew with each other in 31 moves of a Ruy Lopez game. Wang's only loss was to Maghsoodloo at the halfway 5th round.

AFC Champions League 2018 – Round of 16 set to thrill



AFC – KUALA LUMPUR, The Continent's top 16 teams advanced to the knockout stage of the 2018 AFC Champions League as the group stage concluded on Wednesday.

The Round of 16 stage promises to be a thrilling affair with several former AFC Champions League winners taking their place alongside teams who will be aiming to win the coveted title for the first time.

Among those seeking to win the title for the first time will be Qatar's Al Duhail, who advanced to the last 16 stage with a perfect record of six wins in Group B.

Al Duhail's title ambitions are sure, however, to be tested by Al Ain. The United Arab Emirates club were champions in 2003 and more recently, quarter-finalists in 2017.

With 2017 champions Urawa Red Diamonds failing to qualify for the 2018 AFC Champions League and runners-up Al Hilal eliminated in the group stage, last year's semi-finalists Persepolis and Shanghai SIPG will be aiming to go one better this time around.

The Islamic Republic of Iran's Persepolis, who finished as Group C winners, will play Al Jazira of the UAE in the last 16 while China PR's Shanghai SIPG, the Group F winners, will face Japanese side Kashima Antlers.

Two-time winners Jeonbuk Hyundai

Motors will face Thailand's Buriram United with the Korea Republic club last having tasted AFC Champions League glory in 2016.

Guangzhou Evergrande, also two-time AFC Champions League winners, will square off against fellow Chinese side Tianjin Quanjian.

There will be an all-Korean affair between Suwon Samsung Bluewings and Ulsan Hyundai, both former champions, while Zobahan and Esteghlal, also two-time winners, will square off in an all-Iranian tie.

Qatar's Al Sadd, twice winners, will face two-time runners-up Al Ahli in the remaining Round of 16 tie.

■ ROUND OF 16 FIXTURES:
1ST LEG FIXTURES (MAY 7-9)
AL JAZIRA (UAE) v PERSEPOLIS (IRN)
AL SADD (QAT) v AL AHLI SAUDI (KSA)

ZOBAHAN FC (IRN) v ESTEGHLAL (IRN)

AL AIN (UAE) v AL DUHAIL (QAT)

TIANJIN QUANJIAN (CHN) v GUANGZHOU EVERGRANDE

BURIRAM UNITED (THA) v JEONBUK HYUNDAI MOTORS (KOR)

ULSAN HYUNDAI v (KOR) SUWON SAMSUNG BLUEWINGS (KOR)

KASHIMA ANTLERS (JPN) v SHANGHAI SIPG FC (CHN)

(Return Leg: May 14-16)

Asia 50, 2018: A host of European-based superstars round out our Top 10



This is it, our countdown of who we believe have been the 10 best Asian footballers across the globe over the past 12 months. There is a mix of experienced players and prodigious youngsters.

Iran has three players on the list.

■ EZA GHOOCHANNEJHAD

While Iranian young gun Alireza Jahanbakhsh continues to steal headlines in the Eredivisie this season, his countryman Ghoochannejhad has shown that he also has what it takes to be a leading light.

Ghoochannejhad produced 20 goals in the 2016/17 season, finishing second in the Dutch league scoring charts. The 30-year-old has had a quieter season this time round, yet to hit double figures in this campaign.

But when it comes to the leading Asian frontmen in Europe, Ghoochannejhad is right up there with the best of them and Iran will have a potent frontline going into the World Cup. – Matthew Mohan

■ SARDAR AZMOUN

One of Asia's biggest stars, there has been plenty of speculation as to where Azmoun will go when he leaves Rubin Kazan in Russia.

The 23-year-old has shown time and time again that he can score goals at any stage: Russia, Asia, the Asian Cup, World Cup qualifiers and the UEFA Champions League.

The striker is set to lead the line for Iran at the World Cup and has the capability to score all kinds of goals.

It is no surprise that he has been linked with teams like Liverpool and it is only a matter of time before the big move comes. – John Duerden

■ ALIREZA JAHANBAKHSH

The winger has been one of the best players in the Netherlands this season, an exciting match-winner who AZ Alkmaar fans have taken to their hearts.

The 24-year-old is near the top of the goalscoring charts and has recorded plenty of assists too. In general, he has been excellent.

The Dutch league does not command the profile that it once did, but he is also a star of the Iranian national team and the right-sided attacker will get a chance at the World Cup to show everyone else what the Netherlands has been seeing for some time. – John Duerden

(Source: FourFourTwo)

Iran unveils rugs woven for rivals at 2018 World Cup

IFP — Iran has unveiled three rugs woven by highly-skilled Iranian artists to be gifted to Team Melli's Group Stage rivals at the upcoming FIFA World Cup in Russia.

These Persian rugs are to be given to the captains of Morocco, Spain, and Portugal, the three rivals of Iran at the Group Stage.

Four other precious carpets are also being prepared by the weavers of Tabriz to be offered to the FIFA Museum, the Russian Football Federation, the Iranian Football Federation, and the Museum of Astan Quds Razavi (located in the holy city of Mashhad), among others.



Interestingly, one other carpet is also being woven to be gifted to Iran's rival at the knockout stage in case the country manages to advance to the next level for the first time ever.

Persian carpets, widely believed to have been around for more than 2,500 years, are deeply rooted in the Iranian national identity.

The 2018 World Cup will be the fifth time Iran is qualifying for a FIFA World Cup where it has failed to advance past the group stage in 1978, 1998, 2006, and 2014.

The 21st edition of FIFA world cup will kick off on June 14th, 2018 with the opening game taking place at Luzhniki Stadium, in Moscow, Russia.

Alireza Jahanbakhsh scores hat-trick in Eredivisie

Iranian international midfielder Alireza Jahanbakhsh hit a hat-trick in AZ Alkmaar's thrilling 4-3 victory against Vitesse Arnhem Wednesday night.

The host, bidding to overtake Ajax in the race for second, were two goals to the good within 12 minutes following Wout Weghorst's header and Jahanbakhsh's first of the night, skysports.com reported.

Vitesse was back on level terms moments before the break only for Jahanbakhsh to net his second in first-half stoppage-time and restore AZ's lead.

Jahanbakhsh completed his hat-trick eight minutes into the second half. Mason Mount pulled one back for Vitesse, but the visitor saw out the win to move to within two points of Ajax.

(Source: Football-Oranje)

AZ coach John van den Brom lauds Jahanbakhsh

Persian League — AZ coach John van den Brom lauded his team's Iranian player Alireza Jahanbakhsh after his glittering performance against Vitesse Arnhem.

Jahanbakhsh scored a hat-trick in AZ's thrilling 4-3 victory against Vitesse Arnhem on Wednesday.

"You're never talking about individuals, but after such a game, you can definitely talk about him. He's just a fantastic player and a great person. He's a neat and civilized person and we are very happy to have him in our team," John van den Brom said.

The Iranian national football team has been drawn with Spain, Portugal and Morocco in the 2018 FIFA World Cup and the AZ coach knows well Jahanbakhsh will catch the eyes of the great teams in the summer.

"We are not worried about that," adds Van den Brom. "There will undoubtedly be an interest in him. We just want to enjoy for as long as we have him."

It's said Italian giant Napoli has reached an agreement to sign Jahanbakhsh.

Manchester City eye Iranian Daniel Arzani

TASNIM — English Premier League winners Manchester City have shown interest in signing Iranian Daniel Arzani but Melbourne City believe their club are the right place for the youngster to flourish.

With Manchester City, five other clubs under the group's umbrella and various loan partnerships open to Arzani, the-worldgame.sbs.com.au reported.

"It's safe to assume he'll be here next year. We have no intention of selling," Melbourne City Football Group executive Brian Marwood said.

"What he needs is games. He needs games in a competitive environment. Like many young players that have left Australia, they've gone and they've very quickly come back," he added.

"Right now, it's going to be incredibly unhelpful for him if he goes somewhere and doesn't play. To stay here and get those games under his belt, to continue to learn in a good environment, I genuinely believe that is the right thing for him," Marwood said.

Iran defeat Russia in Super 6 Sitting Volleyball competition

Press TV — The Iran men's national sitting volleyball team have trounced Russia in straight sets at the World Para Volley Men's World Super 6 Sitting Volleyball Competition.

On Thursday evening, the Iranians sealed their first win of the tournament by seeing off the European squad 3-0 (25-22, 25-20, 25-17) in a match played at Sadra Sport Complex in the northwestern Iranian city of Tabriz.

The Iranians started the match with vim and vigor, and dug and spiked effectively throughout the first set. They went ahead and won it 25-22.

The Iranian team kept its dominant performance in the second set of the game with some good attacks, and took it 25-20.

Iran stood firm against their rivals in the last set and powered through to claim it by 25 points to 17.

The World Para Volley Men's World Super 6 Sitting Volleyball Competition kicked off on April 19, and will run through April 24.

The event has attracted national teams from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Germany, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Russia, Ukraine and the United States.

Dan Gaspar leaves Iranian national team after six years

American Dan Gaspar, who was the Iranian national team's assistant coach, team coordinator and goalkeeper coach, has left Iran two months before he would have gone to the World Cup with Team Melli for a second time.

Gaspar, who has worked under Iran's Portuguese head coach, Carlos Queiroz, for many years, did not go in the details of his departure in an email with Soccer America.

"I am excited to explore new opportunities and share the valuable knowledge and experiences I gained working on this amazing and challenging project," he said. "I am proud that I was a part of the team that qualified for the 2014 Brazil World Cup, 2015 Asian Cup and 2018 Russia World Cup – triumphs for the Iranian people. Our many successes were the result of a hardworking and talented technical staff and administrators. I am honored to have worked alongside them all."

After Iran qualified for the World Cup, Gaspar traveled around Russia to inspect training bases for the Iranian national team. "I have admiration for the Team Melli players. Despite the many obstacles, they played with courage, determination and love for their country. I have enormous gratitude for the fans that offered incredible support during the entire journey. They are amazing passionate soccer fans. I wish the Iranian national team success as they prepare for the 2018 Russia World Cup. I have no doubt they will represent their country with dignity."

(Source: socceramerica.com)

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Iran celebrates 120 years of national film history

1 → Iranian director Majid Majidi's "Beyond the Clouds" was the opening film of the event, which was screened in Hindi with English and Persian subtitles.

The film, which was made in India in 2017, revolves around the life of a young boy, Amir, and his sister, Tara, in Mumbai. When on the run from the cops, Amir finds his estranged sister, who, in a bid to protect her brother, lands in jail. Their entire lives are clouded by despair when, unexpectedly, the light shines on them from beyond the clouds.

Tehran's Charsu Cineplex will host the festival running until April 27.

In addition, a collection of photos by the Paris-based Iranian photographer Alfred Yaqubzadeh on Palestine's Intifada opened at the 14 Gallery as part of the programs arranged for the festival.

The collection named "Intifada Uprising" puts the spotlight on Palestinians and three decades of their uprising against the Israeli occupation of their homeland.

The exhibit is being organized in the Broken Olive Branches section, which is screening films on the upheavals in today's Muslim world.

Yaqobzadeh has published a collection of his photos on Palestinians' struggle against the Zionist regime in a book titled "Promised Peace". His books "Iran-Iraq War" and "Faces of War" focus on the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

The gallery is located at No.14, Khark St., off Enqelab Ave.

Kalhor, Erzincan to perform in Turkey

A R T TEHRAN — The music duo Erdal Erzincan and Kayhan Kalhor will be in Istanbul this week to perform three concerts in the Turkish city.

Turkish baglama master Erzincan and world-renowned Iranian kamancheh virtuoso Kalhor will give their first performance on Monday at the TBA. Kalhor has announced in a post on his Facebook page.

They will also repeat their performance in the city on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Kalhor and his fellow tambur virtuoso, Ali Akbar Moradi, will also perform a duet at the Ankara Music Festival today.

Kalhor is scheduled to be in the Lithuanian cities of Vilnius and Kaunas on April 27 and 28 to give solo performances.

WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES

Painting

■ An exhibition of paintings by Hossein Tamjid is currently underway at Homa Gallery.

The exhibition will run until May 1 at the gallery located at No. 8, Fourth Alley, Sanai St., Karim Khan Ave.

■ Paintings by Afshin Baqeri are on display in an exhibition entitled "Caldarium" at Seyhun Gallery.

The exhibition will run until May 2 at the gallery located at No. 11, 4th St., Vozara Ave.

■ Ariana Gallery is playing host to a painting exhibition by Nadia Aleaga.

The exhibit named "Multiverse" runs until May 1 in the gallery located at 9 Fereshteh St., off East Maryam St., in the Elahieh neighborhood.

■ Paintings by Zahra Qiasi are on display in an exhibition entitled "Apoptosis" at Saleh Gallery.

The exhibit will continue until May 1 at the gallery located at 148 Karim Khan Ave.

Photo

■ An exhibition of photos by Sohrab Parvaz is underway at Golestan Gallery.

The exhibit will be running until April 25 at the gallery located at 34 Kamasai St. in the Darus neighborhood.

Print

■ Atbin Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of prints by Shahab Tayefeh-Mohajer.

The exhibit runs until May 1 at the gallery that can be found at 42 Khakzad Alley, Vali-e Asr Ave near the Parkway Intersection.

Prayer Times » Noon:13:03

Evening: 20:01

Dawn: 4:53 (tomorrow)

Sunrise: 6:23 (tomorrow)

APRIL 21, 2018

ART & CULTURE

Producer Jorn Donner says good filmmakers eliminate borders

By Manijeh Rezapoor

TEHRAN — The Swedish-speaking Finnish cineaste Jorn Donner who is most famous for his collaboration as a producer in Ingmar Bergman's films such as "Fanny and Alexander" says that good filmmakers are able to eliminate the borders between people by means of their films that make an important impression outside their national boundaries.

He made the remarks in a press conference held at Tehran's Charsu Cineplex on Friday just one day after his workshop, which was organized by the 36th Fajr International Film Festival.

"The better the films are, the easier they can cross the borders and be shown in the world, but that is not an easy thing to do," said Donner who is the founder of the Finnish Film Archive, which was later renamed the National Audiovisual Archive.

"Fewer people go to watch films in cinemas than before because of television, and that distribution on the internet is so widespread, but we still must remember that the basis of all filmmaking and all artistic activities is the freedom of expression," he said.

He also noted that he believes filmmaking is very hard, although he has made and produced many films.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he referred to men's dominance over the world's film industry and said that more female filmmakers should join the industry.

Donner next answered a few questions put to him by journalists.

Asked about the appearance of big film companies that are eager to cooperate with small countries, he replied, "The only thing



Finnish producer Jorn Donner (C) attends a press conference during the 36th Fajr International Film Festival at Tehran's Charsu Cineplex on April 20, 2018. (FIFF/Farnaz Azizi)

I know is that there are several companies that are competing in this field. I think those companies are more anxious to get into the European market and not the whole film

market. I still say we have to find money for our films from public sources or private sectors, or from our own companies; not from the big American companies."

Elsewhere, Donner said that he does not know Iranian cinema very well and he is here to get to know more about it through the festival.

Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam published in Hungarian

A R T TEHRAN — A selection of poems from the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam by the Persian poet Omar Khayyam Neyshaburi (1048-1131) has been published in Hungarian.

The collection, which also carries the English translation and Persian texts of the poems, has been translated under the auspices of the Embassy of Iran, the embassy reported on Thursday.

"As a cultural element, Persian poetry has a prominent place in Iranian society and plays a key role in establishing relations with other nations, in particular with Hungarians," Golam-Ali Rajabi said during a special ceremony organized by the embassy to introduce the collection.

"Accordingly, Hafez, Sadi, Rumi, Khayyam and many other Persian poets are familiar to the Hungarian people and

literati," he added.

The book also contains illustrations by Gizella Varga Sinai, a Hungarian artist who lives in Iran.

Khayyam was also a mathematician and astronomer. He is chiefly known to English-speaking readers through the translation by the English writer Edward Fitzgerald of a collection of his rubaiyat (quatrains) in the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam (1859).



Tomb of Omar Khayyam, Neyshabur

Saudi cinema launch ends decades-old ban, public screenings start Friday

RIYADH (Reuters) — Saudi Arabia launched its first commercial movie theater on Wednesday, ending a nearly 40-year ban on cinemas under a push by the crown prince to modernize the deeply conservative Muslim kingdom.

A red carpet invitation-only gala event attracted senior government officials, foreign dignitaries and select industry figures to watch Marvel's superhero movie "Black Panther" on a 45-foot screen at a converted symphony concert hall in Riyadh.

Tickets went on sale on Thursday for the first public viewings on Friday, according to Adam Aron, chief executive of operator AMC Entertainment Holdings.

"Saudis now are going to be able to go to a beautiful theater and watch movies the way they're supposed to be watched: on a big screen," he told Reuters ahead of the screening.

The smell of buttery popcorn filled the air as confetti rained down through the multi-story atrium where Aron and Saudi Minister of Culture and Information Awwad al-Awwad announced the launch and proceeded into the 450-seat hall.

The opening marks another milestone for reforms spearheaded by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to open the country culturally and diversify the economy of the world's top oil exporter.

The prince, 32, has already eased restrictions in the last two years, including on public concerts, women driving and gender mixing. The kingdom held its first-ever fashion show last week with a women-only audience.

Many Saudis have rejoiced at the end of the cinema ban, sharing praise and pictures of Prince Mohammed on social media.

There has been little apparent resistance to the social reforms, which seemed unthinkable just a few years ago, though the space for criticism is also limited.

Among Wednesday's movie-goers was Princess Reema bint Bandar, a second cousin of Prince Mohammed, who brought her 16-year-old son to experience what she called "an historical moment".

Saudis have nonetheless been avid consumers of Western media and culture. Hollywood films and television series are widely watched at home and private film screenings have been largely tolerated for years.

In 2017, the government said it would lift the ban in part to retain money that Saudis currently spend on entertainment during trips to Dubai, Bahrain and elsewhere.

To serve a population of more than 32 million, most of whom are under the age of 30, the authorities plan to set up around 350 cinemas with over 2,500 screens by 2030, which they hope will attract nearly \$1 billion in annual ticket sales.



MEHR CHAIN HOTELS

- * Mehr Traditional Hotel
- * Fahadan Museum Hotel
- * Malek-o-Tojjar Antique Hotel
- * Lab-e Khandaqh Historical Hotel
- * Abulmaali Traditional Restaurant
- * Tourist Information Office (carvansalare mehr)



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