



Soldier killer was a Pakistani national [2](#)



Saudi Arabia is godfather of terrorism [2](#)



Para shooter Javanmardi wins gold at Al Ain 2019 [15](#)



Gunther Uecker's "Tribute to Hafez" to travel to Isfahan [16](#)

Zarif lauds 'comprehensive strategic partnership' with China

Majlis speaker pushes for strong ties with Beijing



© Reuters

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif (L) and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi shake hands during their meeting at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing on Tuesday, Feb. 19, 2019.

See page 2

Japan to continue oil imports from Iran: envoy

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Japan's new ambassador to Tehran has said his country will continue importing oil from Iran, the portal of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) said in a report published on Tuesday.

Dismissing rumors that Japan would stop buying Iran's oil, Mitsugu Saito said his country's policy is to continue oil

imports from Iran.

Cementing economic ties between the two countries is Japan's first priority regarding its relations with Iran, the ambassador noted and said that presence of Japanese companies in Iran despite the U.S. re-imposition of sanctions against the Islamic Republic highlights the significance of Tokyo's relationship with Tehran. [→4](#)

22,700 inmates freed under Leader's mass pardon

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Head of Iran's Prisons Organization said on Tuesday that so far 22,700 prisoners have been released and the prison sentences of 13,400 others have been commuted under an amnesty granted by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Asghar Jahangir thanked judicial authorities and expressed the hope that in

the coming days all prisoners who can benefit from the Islamic Republic's mass pardon will be released or their sentences be reduced, ILNA reported.

Earlier this month, Judiciary chief Ayatollah Sadeq Amoli Larijani said Ayatollah Khamenei has granted pardon or commuted prison terms of fifty thousand inmates on the fortieth anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.

Assad adviser rejects idea of granting Syrian Kurds autonomy

A senior adviser to Syrian President Bashar Assad on Tuesday flatly rejected the idea of giving Syrian Kurds a measure of autonomy, saying such a move would open the door to the partition of the country.

The Kurdish-led authority that runs much of north and east Syria has presented a road map for a deal with Assad in recent meetings with his key ally Russia.

The Kurds want to safeguard their au-

tonomous region inside a decentralized state when U.S. troops currently backing them pull out. They also hope a deal with Damascus would dissuade neighboring Turkey from attacking them.

But when asked Tuesday if Damascus was willing to do a deal that would hand the Kurds some measure of autonomy, Bouthaina Shaaban, a senior adviser to Assad, flatly rejected the suggestion. [→13](#)



ARTICLE

Saeed Ghaffari
Political analyst

Russia's view on Syria's reconstruction

On the way to reconstruction, Syria needs connection to the world financial market to increase Bashar al-Assad's governance over the country and to earn the \$400 billion for rebuilding the state.

If Moscow succeeds in attracting European partners in reconstruction projects of Syria, the Kremlin will have the chance to compensate its foreign currency deficit through foreign investment.

Although, so far Russia has failed to attract Europeans and Saudis investment in Syria, it counts on China to get involved.

Chinese officials believe al-Assad prevents the spread of radical Islamists, a belief that has perhaps encouraged the Chinese government to pledge \$2 billion to invest in Syrian industry. But at the same time, the U.S. retreat from Syria and their quest for a balance of power in the Indian Ocean and Pacific Region have made China reluctant to invest further in Damascus.

Saudi Arabia will, too, be willing to invest in Syria only if Riyadh is certain al-Assad won't prefer Iran over Saudi Arabia and Riyadh can limit Iran's dominance in Damascus.

According to reports, Russia's priority is allocation of funds in reconstruction of Syria and Russian businessmen will be focusing more on energy sector and construction of Damascus.

In January 2018, in a bilateral agreement, Russia nearly monopolized the right to withdraw Syrian gas and oil resources. Then, in October of the same year, Moscow in a joint venture, agreed to raise the quality of Syrian oil production facilities.

Russian private firms have taken important steps in investing in Syrian private sectors and have inked various contracts including: energy production in Homs, construction of a railway from Damascus to city center, and establishment of factories essential in the future of Damascus.

Russia may be concerned over Iran's rivalry in Syria, but their biggest fear is China. In fact, it will be the Chinese companies limiting Russian's economic activity in the reconstruction of Syria. [→7](#)

Ambassador: Iran to close cases of Jordanian nationals

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Ambassador to Jordan, Mojtaba Ferdosipour, has said that the issues related to three Jordanian nationals held in Iran will be closed in coming days.

During a meeting with Jordanian Lower House Speaker Atef Tarawneh, Ferdosipour said that the detainees have been treated respectfully, ISNA reported on Tuesday.

Three Jordanian nationals were detained in Iranian waters on December 27, 2018.

Jordan's Foreign Ministry issued a statement



saying that the nationals went missing while on a fishing trip in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and entered the Iranian waters by mistake.

Commenting on relations, Ferdosipour attached great importance to expansion of parliamentary relations.

Tarawneh attached great importance to expansion of parliamentary cooperation among Islamic countries in line with supporting priorities of the world of Islam, especially the Palestine issue.

He also said that Jordan supports Syria's stability and integrity.

U.S. states sue Trump administration in showdown over border wall funds

A coalition of 16 U.S. states led by California sued President Donald Trump and top members of his administration on Monday to block his decision to declare a national emergency to obtain funds for building a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.

The lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California came after Trump invoked emergency powers on Friday to help build the wall that was his signature 2016 campaign promise.

Trump's order would allow him to spend on the wall money that Congress appropriated for other purposes. Congress declined to fulfill his request for \$5.7 billion to help build the wall this year.

"Today, on Presidents Day, we take President Trump to court to block his misuse of presidential power," California Attorney General Xavier Becerra said in a statement.

"We're suing President Trump to stop him from unilaterally robbing taxpayer funds lawfully set aside by Congress for the people of our states.

For most of us, the office of the presidency is not a place for theater," added Becerra, a Democrat. The White House declined to comment on the filing.

In a budget deal passed by Congress to avert a second government shutdown, nearly \$1.4 billion was allocated toward border fencing. Trump's emergency order would give him an additional \$6.7 billion beyond what lawmakers authorized.

Three Texas landowners and an environmental group filed the first lawsuit against Trump's move on Friday, saying it violated the Constitution and would infringe on their property rights.

The legal challenges could slow Trump's efforts to build the wall, which he says is needed to curb illegal immigration and drug trafficking. The lawsuits could end up at the conservative-leaning U.S. Supreme Court.

Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Virginia, and Michigan joined California in the lawsuit.

The states said Trump's order would cause them to lose millions of dollars in federal funding for national guard units dealing with counter-drug activities and redirection of funds from authorized military construction projects would damage their economies.

In television interviews on Sunday and Monday, Becerra said the lawsuit would use Trump's own words against him as evidence that there was no national emergency to declare.

Trump said on Friday he did not need to make the emergency declaration but wanted to speed the process of building the wall. That comment could undercut the government's legal argument.

"By the president's own admission, an emergency declaration is not necessary," the states said in the lawsuit. "The federal government's own data prove there is no national emergency at the southern border that warrants construction of a wall."

(Source: Reuters)



© Tehran Times/ Mohammad Moheymani

Fajr street performers entertain passersby in downtown Tehran

A troupe gives a street performance in the courtyard of Tehran's City Theater Complex during the 37th Fajr International Theater Festival on February 18, 2019.

Street performances arranged by the organizers of the festival have been warmly received by passersby since the beginning of the event on February 11.

Winners of the festival will be honored during the closing ceremony on Saturday.



PERSPECTIVE

Heshmatollah Rahnama
Latin American expert

U.S. gradual plan to intervene in Venezuelan affairs

The U.S. imposed sanctions on Venezuela following the Venezuelan presidential election of 2013 that led to Nicolas Maduro presidency.

According to the Economic Debates Unit of the Latin American Geopolitical Strategic Center (CELAG)'s report, the main reason behind Venezuela's economic crisis is the international financial blockade on Caracas.

The financial and economic blockade that was mainly promoted by Washington and enforced by its allies, cost Venezuela around \$350 billion in the production of goods and services between 2013 and 2017.

After this 5-year period, the spark of a parallel government in Venezuela came about in 2017 with the assistance of the Attorney General.

However, after the seizure of power by Juan Guidou on January 23, 2019, and the realization of a virtual government orchestrated by the United States and its allies, it was time to introduce diplomatic representatives and the selection of Citgo executives in the United States. Ironically, the majority of Citgo shares belongs to the National Petroleum Corporation of Venezuela.

Clearly, this virtual government cannot continue on operating on social media and should seek a state of government on Venezuelan soil. Undoubtedly, the U.S. military has a special plan for Venezuela with the experience gained in Syria, Iraq and Libya.

The U.S. military has kept an eye on two Venezuelan states: the state of Falcon, due to the 20-mile maritime connection to the Aruba Island and the Amuay refinery in Anzoategui, with a port, airport and petrochemical complex, which holds 40 percent of Orinoco's oil, and the state of Táchira, for sharing a border with Colombia.

The state of Táchira is the best option for U.S. military bases for its geopolitical conditions as it shares a border with Colombia.

The city of Cúcuta has become the hub of humanitarian aid in Venezuela for its close proximity to Colombia, no wonder why on February 23, 2019, the U.S. humanitarian aid for Juan Guidou will be launched from the same border town. [→7](#)

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Grand ayatollah calls for boosting defense power

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Grand Ayatollah Nasser Makarem Shirazi has called for a constant development of Iran's defense power to deter enemies from taking a military action against the country, Tasnim reported on Tuesday.

In a meeting with Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri, the Armed Forces Chief of Staff, Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi said, "We are not after attacking any country, and are not belligerent and expansionist either, but we need such (military) equipment to protect and defend ourselves."

He added that because of Iran's military power, the enemies have abandoned military option and instead are backing terrorists against Iran.



Interior Ministry: Terrorists receive support from certain Arab states

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The director general of the Interior Ministry for border Affairs has said parts of Pakistan's common borders with Iran are swarming with terrorist groups which receive financial support from certain Western and Arab states.

Shahriar Heydari pointed to the recent terrorist attack on IRGC forces, saying the enemies' plots for Iran is much more than such rare terrorist attacks inside Iran, the YJC reported on Tuesday.

"Such suicide acts are nothing considering the high level of the enemies' threats against our country," he remarked, adding that suicide attacks occur easily all around the world.



Iran calls for joint anti-piracy drills in Indian Ocean

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Navy has called on the member states of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) to draft a joint protocol for naval security and called for staging joint anti-piracy drills to boost cooperation in enforcing collective security in the water body.

"We have all convened here for the very same objective that is to promote convergence, consultation, and interaction for establishing security in the Indian Ocean which is one of the most strategic oceans in the world," Deputy Navy Commander Mohammad Reza Azizi said on Tuesday, Mehr reported.

He made the remarks during the meeting of the IONS Naval Security Commission in Iran's southern port city of Bandar Abbas.



Ambassador hails cancellation of Visegrad summit

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran's Ambassador to Britain Hamid Baeidinejad said on Monday that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu suffered a "heavy blow" after the cancellation of a two-day summit of the Central European countries known as the Visegrad group (V4) in the occupied Palestinian territories.

"The aftershocks of the Warsaw summit: With Poland's objection, the summit of heads of Central European countries, which was scheduled to be held in Israel, was canceled," Baeidinejad said in a tweet.

The summit of Central European leaders in Quds was cancelled after Poland withdrew on Monday, accusing Israel's acting foreign minister, Yisrael Katz, of "racist" and "totally unacceptable" statements.

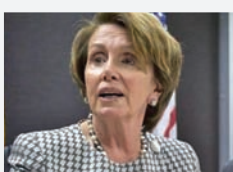


Envoy rejects Saudi Arabia's anti-Iran rhetoric

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Tehran's ambassador to Pakistan says Iran has been the biggest victim of terrorism and the recent anti-Iran rhetoric of Saudi Arabia's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Adel Al-Jubeir is a futile attempt to distort facts.

In an interview with IRNA published on Tuesday, Mehdi Honardoost said for the last forty years Iran has sacrificed a lot to eliminate the menace of terrorism and has suffered huge human and financial losses in this regard.

He added that despite all these sacrifices the statement of the Saudi official against Iran shows he wants to distort the facts and tries to divert the world's attention from Saudi Arabia's aggressive approach.



Pelosi: Trump admin 'completely wrong' on Iran

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has described the Trump administration's approach toward Iran, including its withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal, as "completely wrong".

Pelosi made the remarks in an interview with MSNBC at the Munich Security Conference, which was broadcasted on Monday.

Discussing Vice President Mike Pence's calls for European allies to follow the Trump administration's exit from the 2015 nuclear deal, she said, "The vice president is an articulate spokesperson for his point of view, which I think on the subject of Iran is completely wrong. And he did not get much response to it here I'm happy to say."

Soldier killer was a Pakistani national, general says



POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The IRGC desk ground force commander announced on Tuesday that the person who carried out suicide attack on IRGC forces last Wednesday in the border province of Sistan-Baluchestan was a Pakistani national.

Brigadier General Mohammad Pakpour said some other members of the terrorist team were Pakistani nationals as well.

"Two members of the terrorist team were Pakistani and the suicide bomber was someone named Hafiz Mohamed Ali from Pakistan and also there was another person from Pakistan in the team," Pakpour said, according to Tasnim.

He added that two of the terrorists have been arrested while one is still on the run. "God willing, the other one will be arrested soon," the general predicted.

The commander said the IRGC found traces about the terrorist attack first by detaining a woman on Sunday that finally led to arrest of some others.

On Wednesday, an explosives-laden car rammed into a bus carrying members of the

Tehran: Saudi Arabia is godfather of terrorism

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman said on Tuesday that Saudi Arabia as the birthplace of extremist ideology and a source of organized international terrorism lacks competence to accuse other countries of supporting terrorism.

Bahram Qassemi's comments came in reaction to "totally false and hateful" remarks against Iran by Saudi minister of state for foreign affairs Adel Al-Jubeir during a joint press conference with Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi in Islamabad on Monday.

According to Saudi Gazette, Jubeir said Iran has been the chief sponsor of terrorism for decades.

The Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) chief Ali Jafari has blamed Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates for a last week terrorist attack on Iranian military forces near the border with Pakistan which led to the death of 27 IRGC forces. Jafari also criticized Pakistan for failing to fully guard its border with Iran.

The Jaish al-Adl group, which claimed responsibility for the attack, uses Pakistan's soil to launch terror attacks in Iran.

Taha Siddiqui, a Pakistani journalist and founder of safenewsrooms.org, has told Al Jazeera that "many of these groups have Saudi funding, but since Pakistan is dependent on Saudi aid, it turns a blind eye," on the existence of Jaish al-Adl and other armed groups.

In his Tuesday statement, Qassemi said, "The empty and hateful remarks by [Jubeir], who has a long record of making lies and showing hatred towards Iran and Ira-

nians, will not change the reality that the real godfather of Takfiri terrorism in the world and the region is nobody but his government."

He added, "There is no need for further explanation for those who know a little bit about [Jubeir's] hypocritical face."

The Foreign Ministry spokesman called Saudi Arabia as the source of terrorism which its officials have no right to accuse others of backing terrorism.

"Saudi Arabia as the birthplace of the fundamentalist ideology and the source of exporting organized terrorism at the international level has no competence and credit to accuse other countries of supporting terrorism."

The Foreign Ministry official said al-Jubeir should be held accountable for the terrorism rooted in his country's ruling structure.

"Instead of pinning the blame on others and making vain efforts to divert the world's public opinion away from his role in establishing and spreading such cruel and killer groups, the Saudi minister of state for foreign affairs should be answerable for the terrorism rooted in the structure of the establishment of Saudi Arabia and narrate the big inhumane crimes and catastrophes resulted from the military invasion against the Yemeni people and the killing of innocent people of other countries in the region and the world by the terrorist groups created by it in the region and the world."

Qassemi said as human rights groups have repeatedly mentioned Saudi Arabia grossly violates human rights. "Human rights groups have frequently issued resolutions

attracting attentions to gross human rights violations in Saudi Arabia. However, this country is still supported by the U.S. and the Western communities."

The ministry official said the West's support for the royals in Riyadh has emboldened Saudi Arabia in spreading terrorism.

"Emboldened by the support and shielded by double standards of the U.S. and some (other) Western governments, Saudi Arabia has for years been spreading extremism and arming and training its tamed terrorists."

While Iran is unhappy with Islamabad's failure to crack down on terrorists based in Pakistan which commit terror attacks once in a while in the border province of Sistan-Baluchestan, Qassemi said the two sides have the right understanding and knowledge of their neighborhood relations.

"Iran expects Pakistan to deal more decisively with terrorist groups who use the country's soil for orchestrating and carrying out terrorist operations against targets in Iran," he said.

"Considering the level and depth of our relations with Pakistan, we will express these criticisms or expectations through regular political, intelligence and military channels with related officials of this country and will follow up."

Qassemi said Tehran will pursue issues resulting from spoiling acts of criminal terrorists while taking into account realities of relations between the two neighboring countries.

"Certainly, there is vigilance and insight among the two countries of Iran and Pakistan so the hateful Saudi officials cannot satanically misuse recent incidents to harm Tehran-Islamabad relations," Qassemi concluded.

Foreign elements seek to poison Iran-Pakistan ties: diplomat

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Riffat Masood, the Pakistani ambassador to Tehran, has said that foreign elements seek to poison good relationship between Iran and Pakistan.

"Foreign elements seek to undermine the good relations between the two brotherly countries of Iran and Pakistan. We should not let them succeed," she said in an interview with IRNA published on Tuesday.

On February 13, a car laden with explosives hit a bus of IRGC soldiers on Za-

hedan-Khash road in the border province of Sistan-Baluchestan, killing 27 and injuring the remaining 13.

Iran has strongly criticized Islamabad for failing to protect its borders with Iran, saying Pakistan has been turned into a safe haven for terrorist outfits such as Jaish al-Adl, which claimed responsibility for the attack.

Ambassador Masood said, "Pakistan will continue to work with Iran to bring an end to terrorism that affects our region."

She called the terrorist attack a cowardly act, saying, "Our deepest sympathies to all those affected by this heinous attack."

Elsewhere, Masood said, "We feel that the United States is an important county; it is one of our largest trading partners, but we have to be very careful and very watchful of the U.S. policy in Afghanistan and the U.S. intentions in our region. That is why Pakistan is a country that believes in engagement."

She attached great importance to talks

with Taliban as a political force and a party in Afghanistan.

"In order for any peace process to succeed in Afghanistan, you need to talk to Taliban as well," she noted.

She added, "I think now there is a realization not only among the U.S. and the European Union but even among the countries in the region including Russia, China, India and Iran that Taliban are a party or a political force in Afghanistan and we have to negotiate with them."

Warsaw summit meant to buttress U.S. against Iran: Moscow

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The recent Warsaw summit on the Middle East was held in line with Washington's anti-Iran position, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman has said.

"The main goal of the Warsaw forum, as it was expected, was an attempt to consolidate its participants' positions on supporting Washington's destructive agenda of total counteraction to Tehran, which had to be viewed as the main source of instability in the [Middle East] region," Maria Zakharova said on Monday, according to Sputnik.

The summit showed that the United States wanted to create new separating lines in the Middle East region while the decision to establish working groups to solve the regional problems demonstrates the U.S. wish to act unilaterally, the Russian diplomat said.

"The conference was planned and held not for the sake of serious discussion of the Middle East problems. Its main outcome is creation of several special working groups to discuss a number of global challenges and threats, such as terrorism, non-proliferation, humanitarian issues and



Left to right: U.S. VP Mike Pence, Polish President Andrzej Duda and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the Warsaw summit, February 13, 2019. Kacper Pempel, Reuters

refugees. What is that, if not an attempt to launch a parallel process that will work on developing unilateral decisions?" Zakharova asked.

On Wednesday and Thursday, the Polish capital hosted a

Zarif lauds 'comprehensive strategic partnership' with China

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif who traveled to China on Tuesday, accompanying a delegation that includes Iranian Parliament speaker Ali Larijani and Oil Minister Bijan Zanganeh, said Tehran values "comprehensive strategic partnership" with Beijing.

Meeting with his Chinese counterpart Minister Wang Yi, Zarif said, "Our relationship with China is very valuable to us."

He added, "We consider the comprehensive strategic partnership between Iran and China as one of our most important relations."

Wang, for his part, said he had watched Zarif's Sunday speech at the Munich Security

Conference, where he had accused Israel of looking for war.

"I saw on television how you defended the rights of Iran loud and clear at the Munich Security Conference. I think an audience of hundreds of millions of Chinese also watched

what you said and you are a famous person now," Wang said, in brief remarks in front of reporters.

"I would like to take this opportunity to have this in depth strategic communication with my old friend to deepen the strategic

China's foreign minister says: "I would like to have in depth strategic communication with my old friend (Zarif) to deepen the strategic trust between our two countries and to ensure fresh progress of the bilateral comprehensive and strategic partnership."

trust between our two countries and to ensure fresh progress of the bilateral comprehensive and strategic partnership," he said.

■ Majlis speaker pushes for strong ties with China

Iranian Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani also said on Tuesday that Iran is ready to boost ties with China in various areas.

"Relations between Iran and China have always been based on friendship," he said during a meeting with Li Zhanshu, Chinese chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, in Beijing.

Li said that the two countries are determined to expand relations.

Two safe corridors opened for displaced Syrians at Rukban camp

Russian and Syrian coordination centers on returning refugees have managed to open two humanitarian corridors for thousands of displaced Syrians stranded in a camp near the Jordanian border to leave the site toward government-controlled areas.

"In accordance with the February 16 joint statement by the Russian and Syrian coordination centers on opening the humanitarian corridors for the evacuation of Syrians from the Rukban camp, two checkpoints at Jleb and Jabal al-Ghurab opened today," the chief of Russia's National Defense Control Center, Major General Mikhail Mizintsev, said in a statement on Tuesday.

He added that the Syrian refugees will be provided with voluntary, unimpeded and safe exit from the camp to places of their choice of residence within 24 hours.

"The situation in al-Rukban camp is catastrophic, and civilians are being held hostage by terrorist groups under the auspices of the United States. They are hovering between life and death. They continue to live in appalling conditions despite the arrival of humanitarian convoys to the camp," Mizintsev said.

The Russian official added, "The camp is suffering from lack of basic healthcare. The fact is that women, children and people with disabilities do not receive the lowest level of medical assistance. Eight children suffered food poisoning last month alone."

Russian officials have accused the United States and Washington-backed militants of holding people in Rukban hostage.

U.S. illegitimate presence in Syria contributes to instability: Lavrov

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov says the illegal presence of the United States military forces in Syria is a source of instability in the conflict-plagued Arab country, stressing that any solution to the Syria crisis must be in accordance with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254.

"We share stance on Syria. The Security Council Resolution 2254 has no alternative.



It should be fully implemented, and in this context we have informed our interlocutors about the efforts taken in this direction by the guarantor states of the Astana peace process – Russia, Iran and Turkey, including the outcome of the February 14 summit of the Astana format in Sochi," Lavrov said during a joint press conference with his Omani counterpart Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah in Moscow on Monday.

Resolution 2254 endorses a road map for a peace process in Syria. It calls for a nationwide ceasefire in the country, the formation of a "credible, inclusive and non-sectarian" government within six months and UN-supervised "free and fair elections" within 18 months.

Moscow, Tehran, and Ankara have been mediating peace negotiations between representatives from Damascus and Syrian opposition groups in a series of rounds held in the Kazakh capital city of Astana and other places since January 2017.

Russia has also hosted parallel talks in

the resort city of Sochi aimed at solidifying the three countries' cooperation towards returning peace and stability to Syria.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Lavrov noted that the presence of American troops in Syria is contributing to instability, and is impeding a political settlement of the nearly eight-year conflict in the country.

The top Russian diplomat went on to say that the U.S. forces are unlawfully deployed to al-Tanf region in southern Syria, training terrorists, who carry out acts of terror across Syria and prevent the return of displaced people in the Rukban refugee camp to their hometowns.

"We, along with the Syrian government, are calling for this to take place. But the United States and the extremists, whom it sponsors and are in control of the camp, do not let people leave (the camp)," Lavrov said.

The senior Russian official also urged UN humanitarian envoys to "see that everything is far from being in order" in Rukban and report back their findings to the UN Security Council.

Russian officials have accused the U.S. and Washington-backed militants of holding people in Rukban hostage.

"We call on the American command and leaders of illegal militant groups in the al-Tanf region to put an end to the forcible keeping of women and children, mostly affected by cold, illness and malnutrition in the camp. All of them will be given necessary assistance," Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Major General Igor Konashenkov said on February 15 as a humanitarian convoy of the United Nations and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) delivered aid, including medical supplies and basic commodities, to Rukban.

Konashenkov added that Russia and Syria would jointly establish a temporary housing area for refugees from the camp.

The UN says about 45,000 people, mostly women and children, are trapped inside the Rukban refugee camp, where conditions are desperate.

Also in his remarks, Lavrov touched on Syria's suspension from the Arab League (AL), emphasizing that Syria's return to the organization will contribute to a political solution to the Syria crisis and normalization of relations between Damascus and Arab states.

The Arab League suspended Syria's membership in November 2011, citing alleged crackdown by Damascus on opposition protests. Syria denounced the move as "illegal and a violation of the organization's charter."

Alawi, for his part, underlined the need for a political settlement of the ongoing crisis in Syria, lauding Russia's efforts to work out a solution to the conflict and secure the return of all displaced Syrians back to their homeland.

Syria has been gripped by foreign-backed militancy since March 2011. The Syrian government says the Israeli regime and its Western and regional allies are aiding Takfiri terrorist groups wreaking havoc in the country.

(Source: Press TV)

Pakistan warns India against military action

Pakistan has warned it will retaliate if India takes military action against it after a militant attack on Indian forces in Indian-administered Kashmir.

Prime Minister Imran Khan went on television to call on India to provide evidence to support its claims that Pakistan was involved.

India responded that Mr. Khan was again making excuses. More than 40 members of India's security forces died in Thursday's suicide bombing on their convoy.

Pakistan-based militant group Jaish-e-Mohammad said it was behind it.

The attack has raised tensions between India and Pakistan, which have fought two wars and a limited conflict in the region and are both nuclear powers.

-----Pakistan asks UN to help defuse tensions with India
Pakistan recalled its ambassador from India and appealed Tuesday for UN help to de-escalate and defuse tensions with New Delhi after last week's attack in India's sector of disputed Kashmir that killed at least 40 Indian troops.

Tensions between the two nuclear-armed neighbors soared following the attack in which a militant rammed an explosive-laden van into a paramilitary bus last Thursday. It was the worst attack against Indian government forces in Kashmir's history. On Monday, four Indian soldiers, three

suspected militants, a police official and a civilian were killed as Indian soldiers searched for militants.

India blamed the attack on Pakistan and promised a "jaw-breaking response" while Pakistan warned India against linking it to the attack without an investigation.

According to Tuesday's statement, Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi sent a letter to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres alleging that "for domestic political reasons, India has deliberately ratcheted up its hostile rhetoric against Pakistan and created a tense environment."

Also, Pakistani Ambassador Suhail Mahmood was asked Monday to return home from India, after New Delhi recalled its own envoy from Islamabad.

"It is with a sense of urgency that I draw your attention to the deteriorating security situation in our region resulting from the threat of use of force against Pakistan by India," Qureshi said.

There were expectations that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who concluded a two-day visit to Pakistan on Monday and travelled on to India, could encourage the two South Asian neighbors to try to resolve their issues through talks.

India's Ministry of External Affairs said it had no comment



on Pakistan's letter to the UN.

India and Pakistan each administer a part of Kashmir, but both claim the territory in its entirety. They have fought two of their three wars over it.

Rebels have been fighting Indian rule since 1989, demanding Indian-controlled Kashmir be united either under Pakistani rule or established as an independent country.

(Source: agencies)

UAE buys \$1.8 billion in U.S. arms amid Yemen war

The United Arab Emirates (UAE), the House of Saud regime's main partner in a Riyadh-led coalition invading Yemen, has bought around \$1.8 billion worth of American arms at an Abu Dhabi military exhibition.

Monday marked the second day of the International Defense Exhibition and Conference (Idex), which is to last through Thursday.

During the day, the Emirates signed 5.73 billion dirham (\$1.5 billion) worth of contracts with the United States arms giant Raytheon to buy its Patriot missile systems, said the exhibition's spokesman General Mohammed Al Hassani, AFP reported.

A day earlier, it had signed a 1.3-billion-dirhams (\$353-million) contract with the company for the systems.

Respectively, the Emirati military awarded 5.87 and 4.97 billion dirhams worth of contracts to international companies over the first two days of the show. Those include Eos Defense of Australia, which specializes in making electro-optic systems.



"The value of deals during the five-day event is likely to exceed the 19.17 billion dirhams reached in 2017," Emirati daily The National reported, citing Idex organizers.

The coalition launched the war in March 2015 to restore Yemen's former Saudi-backed

officials.

The World Health Organization (WHO) says some 10,000 people have been killed since the coalition launched the war, but rights groups put the death toll at five times higher.

Besides contributing most to the war

among the many other Saudi allies that compose the coalition, the Emirates also backs militants based in southern Yemen, who have been campaigning to break away from the rest of the country.

The U.S. has been generously providing arms support for the kingdom and its allies over the course of the war. It also lends the coalition logistical assistance, including bombing coordinates. A U.S. commando force is, meanwhile, deployed near the Saudi regime-Yemeni border to seek and destroy the arms caches belonging to Yemen's popular Ansarullah (Houthi) movement, which defends the country against the invaders.

Despite the dire need for a ceasefire in the violence-scarred country, Major General David C. Hill, deputy commander of the U.S. Army Central, confirmed in remarks to AFP on Sunday that the U.S. continues to "provide support to the coalition."

(Source: Press TV)

Trump pleads with Venezuela's military to back Guaido

Donald Trump on Monday pleaded with Venezuela's military to support opposition leader Juan Guaido and issued a dire warning if they continue to stand with President Nicolas Maduro's government.

"You will find no safe harbor, no easy exit and no way out. You will lose everything," Trump said in a speech at Florida International University in Miami before large American and Venezuelan flags. Trump added: "We seek a peaceful transition of power, but all options are open."

The Venezuelan military could play a decisive role in the stalemate but has largely remained loyal to Maduro.

In remarks broadcast on state television, Maduro accused the U.S. president of speaking in an "almost Nazi style" and lashed out at Trump for thinking he can deliver orders to Venezuela's military.

"Who is the commander of the armed forces, Donald Trump from Miami?" Maduro said. "They think they're the owners of the country."

Trump said "a new day is coming in Latin America," as he sought to rally support among the largest Venezuelan community in the U.S. for Guaido. The U.S. recognizes him as the country's rightful president and condemns Maduro's

government and its socialist policies.

As the monthslong political crisis stretched on, the military has blocked the U.S. from moving tons of humanitarian aid airlifted in recent days to the Colombian border with Venezuela. The aid shipments have been meant in part to dramatize the hyperinflation and shortages of food and medicine that are gripping Venezuela. Trump said of Maduro, "He would rather see his people starve than give them aid."

Critics say Maduro's re-election last year was fraudulent, making his second term illegal.

(Source: AP)

Hunt: German halt in Saudi arms sales to hit British defense industry

Britain's foreign minister has written to Germany's foreign minister expressing concern about the effect of Germany's halt in exports to Saudi Arabia on both the British and European defense industry, a magazine reported on Tuesday.

"I am very concerned about the impact of the German government's decision on the British and European defense industry and the consequences for Europe's ability to fulfil its NATO commitments," Jeremy Hunt wrote in a letter, Der Spiegel reported.

Hunt said British defense firms would not be able to fulfil several contracts with Saudi Arabia such as the Eurofighter model called Typhoon or the Tornado fighter jet, both of which are made with parts affected by the stop in deliveries to Saudi.

(Source: AFP)

S. Korea ready to resume inter-Korean cooperation to help denuclearization

South Korean President Moon Jae-in said his country is ready to resume inter-Korean cooperation if it will help the process of denuclearizing North Korea, Yonhap News Agency reported on Monday.

Moon spoke with U.S. President Donald Trump on the phone on Monday about the upcoming summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, Yonhap reported, saying that Trump expects great progress at his second meeting with Kim.

(Source: Reuters)

Sen. Bernie Sanders says he's running for president in 2020

Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, whose insurgent 2016 presidential campaign reshaped Democratic politics, announced Tuesday that he is running for president in 2020.

"Our campaign is not only about defeating Donald Trump," the 77-year-old self-described democratic socialist said in an email to supporters. "Our campaign is about transforming our country and creating a government based on the principles of economic, social, racial and environmental justice."

An enthusiastic progressive who embraces proposals ranging from Medicare for All to free college tuition, Sanders stunned the Democratic establishment in 2016 with his spirited challenge to Hillary Clinton. While she ultimately became the party's nominee, his campaign helped lay the groundwork for the leftward lurch that has dominated Democratic politics in the Trump era.

The question now for Sanders is whether he can stand out in a crowded field of Democratic presidential candidates who also embrace many of his policy ideas and are newer to the national political stage. That's far different from 2016, when he was Clinton's lone progressive adversary.

Still, there is no question that Sanders will be a formidable contender for the Democratic nomination. He won more than 13 million votes in 2016 and dozens of primaries and caucuses. He opens his campaign with a nationwide organization and a proven small-dollar fundraising effort.

And he could be well positioned to compete in the nation's first primary in neighboring New Hampshire, which he won by 22 points in 2016. But he won't have the state to himself.

Sen. Kamala Harris of California, another Democratic presidential contender, was in New Hampshire on Monday and said she'd compete for the state. She also appeared to take a dig at Sanders.

"The people of New Hampshire will tell me what's required to compete in New Hampshire," she told shoppers at a bookstore in Concord. "But I will tell you I'm not a democratic socialist."

Sen. Elizabeth Warren of nearby Massachusetts will be in New Hampshire on Friday.

One of the biggest questions surrounding Sanders' candidacy is how he'll compete against someone like Warren, who shares many of his policy goals. Warren has already launched her campaign and has planned an aggressive swing through the early primary states.

Shortly after announcing her exploratory committee, Warren hired Brendan Summers, who managed Sanders' 2016 Iowa campaign. Other staffers from Sanders' first bid also have said they would consider working for other candidates in 2020.

The crowded field includes a number of other candidates who will likely make strong appeals to the Democratic base including Harris and Sens. Cory Booker of New Jersey, Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota and Kirsten Gillibrand of New York. The field could also grow, with a number of high-profile Democrats still considering presidential bids, including former Vice President Joe Biden and former Texas Rep. Beto O'Rourke.

While Sanders had been working to lay the groundwork for a second campaign for months, it was unclear whether he will be able to expand his appeal beyond his largely white base of supporters. In 2016, Sanders notably struggled to garner support from black voters, an issue that could become particularly pervasive during a primary race that could include several non-white candidates.

Last month, he joined Booker at an event in Columbia, South Carolina, marking the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday. In 2016, Sanders lost the South Carolina primary, which features a heavily black electorate, by 47 points.

Sanders also faces different pressures in the #MeToo era. Some of his male staffers and supporters in 2016 were described as "Bernie bros" for their treatment of women.

In the run-up to Sanders' 2020 announcement, persistent allegations emerged of sexual harassment of women by male staffers during his 2016 campaign. Politico and The New York Times reported several allegations of unwanted sexual advances and pay inequity.

In an interview with CNN after the initial allegations surfaced, Sanders apologized but also noted he was "a little busy running around the country trying to make the case."

As additional allegations emerged, he offered a more unequivocal apology. "What they experienced was absolutely unacceptable and certainly not what a progressive campaign - or any campaign - should be about," Sanders said Jan. 10 on Capitol Hill. "Every woman in this country who goes to work today or tomorrow has the right to make sure that she is working in an environment which is free of harassment, which is safe and is comfortable, and I will do my best to make that happen."

(Source: AP)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	157387.5
IFX	1965.2

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,444 rials
GBP	54,170 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$66.36/b
WTI	\$56.37/b
OPEC Basket	\$64.87/b
Gold	\$1,337.60 /oz
Silver	\$15.93/oz
Platinum	\$820.55 oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Japan to continue oil imports from Iran: envoy

1 → Japan is among the eight countries with the U.S.'s 180-day waivers allowing them to keep importing Iranian oil through May 4. Confusion surrounding shipping, insurance and banking rules under the U.S. sanctions kept some of the countries from resuming imports for months after the U.S. granted waivers on November 5.

On February 3, S&P Global Platts reported that Japan's largest refiner JXTG Nippon Oil & Energy was set to resume loading of Iranian crude oil as early as Monday (February 4), almost three months after the U.S. sanctions waiver was granted.

The same day, a JXTG Nippon Oil & Energy spokesman confirmed that the refiner is resuming its Iranian crude oil loading in February.



JXTG Nippon Oil & Energy is the fourth Japanese refiner to resume Iranian oil loading, after Showa Shell, Fuji Oil and Cosmo Oil resumed crude oil loading from Iran in January - the first in four months - totaling around 4.9 million barrels.

With other refiners planning to resume imports in February, Japan is expected to load about 14 million barrels over January-February, according to Platts calculations based on market information.

That would put Japan's average Iranian oil imports at 78,000 b/d during the 180-day waiver, down 49% from 153,000 b/d imported over May-October 2018, according to Platts calculations.

Japan may have to halt loadings again in March as lifters need to complete voyages before government-backed shipping insurance expires at the end of March for expected renewal on April 1, according to Japanese industry sources.

Germany, with bumper current account surplus, frets about car tariffs

Germany recorded the world's largest current account surplus for the third year running in 2018 due to strong exports that are vexing U.S. President Donald Trump and raising the risk of U.S. tariffs on German cars.

Germany's current account surplus, which measures the flow of goods, services and investments, shrank but was the world's largest last year at \$294 billion, followed by Japan with \$173 billion, data, from Germany's Ifo institute showed on Tuesday.

The data is likely to inflame passions in the White House, where Trump has frequently criticized Germany's large trade surplus with the United States.

A confidential U.S. Commerce Department report sent to Trump over the weekend is widely expected to clear the way for him to threaten tariffs of up to 25 percent on imported autos and auto parts by designating the imports a national security threat.

"For some weeks and months now, we're observing with concern that the U.S. is tightening its trade policies, that tensions are increasing," German Economy Minister Peter Altmaier told Deutschlandfunk radio.

"The impact can already be seen in the world economy, global growth has slowed," Altmaier said, adding that "the most difficult part" in trade talks with Washington was still ahead.

Asked about the risk of higher U.S. car tariffs, Altmaier said he did not buy the argument that imported cars would threaten U.S. national security - echoing impassioned comments from Merkel at the weekend.

"We are proud of our cars and so we should be," Merkel said on Saturday, adding, however, that many were built in the United States and exported to China.

"If that is viewed as a security threat to the United States, then we are shocked," she told the Munich Security Conference to applause from the audience.

Jean-Claude Juncker, the head of the European Commission, said he had a deal with Trump that there would be no higher tariffs on imports of European cars for now.

(Source: Reuters)

35,000 barrels of crude oil sold at IRENEX in fifth offering

ENERGY DESK TEHRAN — National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) sold 35,000 barrels of light crude oil at Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX) at the base price of \$52.25 per barrel for the fifth time on Monday, IRIB reported.

It is while NIOC had previously announced that it would offer one million barrels of light crude oil at IRENEX at the base price of \$56.81 per barrel and the least amount of sale would be 35,000 barrels like the previous round of offering.

As previously announced prepayment of six percent and possibility of total payment in rials would be some advantages of the fifth round; moreover, the payment deadline would be 90 days as of the shipment date.

The experts believe that the remained offered barrels were not sold at this round because this process (offering crude oil at stock market) is new and it takes some time for the applicants adapting to the new condition.

The fourth round of offering took place



on February 4, when one million barrels of light crude oil was offered at the base price of \$56.24 per barrel and the least amount of

sale was 35,000 barrels. This round ended with no deals.

IRENEX Managing Director Ali Hosseini

Heads of Iranian research institutes, technology centers, laboratories gather in IPPI

By Ebrahim Fallahi

TEHRAN –Heads of Iranian Universities' central laboratories and research and technology institutes gathered together on Tuesday at Iran Polymer and Petrochemical Institute (IPPI) for the third round of an annual conferences to discuss various issues regarding the country's research and technology centers.

The conference was attended by a handful of officials including the IPPI Head Mehdi Nekoumanesh and representatives from the ministry of science, research and technology as well as various universities and research institutes envoys across the country.

The conference was started by the remarks of Nekoumanesh who welcomed the attendees and mentioned the IPPI's significant role in creating a knowledge-based

environment and platform for developing the country's petrochemical industry.

"To be able to keep up with the world's latest innovations and achievements and also to have an optimal output, there should always be coordination and collaboration between the research and industrial bodies of any dynamic industry," the official said.

Elsewhere in his remarks Nekoumanesh noted that IPPI is currently cooperating with various research institutes and companies from different countries including France, Italy and Germany.

Further in the conference, other issues including HSE, monitoring of air pollution etc. were also addressed by various speakers.

Finally, in the event the comprehensive network of Iran's major laboratories was also unveiled.



S. Korea ships in over \$100m worth of Iranian oil in Jan.

ENERGY DESK TEHRAN – After a five-month hiatus, South Korea imported \$101.2 million worth of Iranian crude oil in January, Yonhap reported on Tuesday citing Korea Customs Service data.

South Korean companies stopped importing Iranian crude oil in September 2018, but the country was allowed to continue to buy Iranian oil over the next six months.

However, despite the waiver, South Korean companies resumed importing oil from Iran in January in which they shipped in less than one-fifth of \$539 million, the average monthly Iranian crude oil imports for the first seven months of 2018.

South Korean refiners and chemical firms



had relied heavily on Iranian condensate for production of various petrochemical products thanks to a stable supply and price competitiveness.

South Korea is the third-largest buyer of Iranian oil.

Above 1.5m TEUs of cargos loaded, unloaded at Shahid Rajaei Port since last March

ECONOMY DESK TEHRAN — More than 1.564 million TEUs of cargos have been loaded and unload at Iran's largest container port, Shahid Rajaei, since the beginning of the present Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2018), the Director General of Ports and Maritime Department of Hormozgan Province Allah-Morad Afifpour told the reporters on Tuesday.

"The amount included 1.181 million TEUs of full containers and 383,609 TEUs of empty ones," he said.

"In this period, 295,597 TEUs of cargos were loaded at Shahid Rajaei, to be ex-

ported to different parts of the world and 326,267 TEUs, containing imported goods, were unloaded," he added, "Some 297,690 TEUs of commodities were transited and 206,982 TEUs were transshipped in the said time via the port."

The official previously announced that the annual loading and unloading capacity of Shahid Rajaei Port stands at 100 million tons.

"Some 80 million tons of cargos were loaded and unloaded at the port in the preceding year with minerals accounting for 20 million tons of the amount," he said then.

Condensate to be sold at IRENEX on Feb. 25 for 2nd round

ENERGY DESK TEHRAN — The second round of offering gas condensate of South Pars gas field will be done at Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX) on February 25, National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC)'s representative in IRENEX, Amir Hossein Tebyanian, announced on Tuesday.

As IRIB reported, at this round of offering, one million barrels of condensate in 35,000-barrels cargos will be sold at the base price of \$62.76, he added.

The consumers can load their purchased cargos at the country's Kharg terminal or that in Asalouyeh to be exported to any destination in the

world, he said.

The customers can make a six-percent pre-payment and the payments can be done up to 100 percent in rial, Tebyanian described.

From the time of loading their purchased cargo, the purchasers have 90 days to clear all their debts, he added.

"In a bid to implement the policies of resistance economy, offerings of gas condensate and light crude oil at IRENEX will be done weekly and on a regular basis," he underlined.

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

Majlis approves exempting next year's securities from tax

ECONOMY DESK TEHRAN — The Iranian parliament (Majlis) on Tuesday gave approval to exempting the securities that will be issued in the next Iranian calendar year 1398 (begins on March 21, 2019) from tax, IRNA reported.

This exemption was approved while the MPs were discussing different sections related to the government's income estimated in the budget bill for the next Iranian year.

President Hassan Rouhani presented the administration's draft of the national budget bill for the next year to the Majlis

on December 25.

The proposed bill amounts to 17.03 quadrillion rials (about \$405 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials).

Supplying basic goods, treatment and medical equipment; securing livelihood; supporting production and employment; promoting tourism; and preserving water resources and environment are the focal points of the bill.

It estimates the oil income at 1.425 quadrillion rials (about \$34 billion) with 410 trillion rials (about \$9.7 billion) rise year on year.

Praet says ECB could change rate guidance if outlook worsens

The European Central Bank's chief economist added to the chorus of policy makers signaling concern on the economic slowdown, saying officials could push back plans to raise interest rates as a first response against a deeper downturn.

"If the euro-area economy were to slow more sharply, we could adapt our forward guidance on interest rates and this could be complemented by other measures," Peter Praet said in an interview with German newspaper Boersen-Zeitung published late Monday. "But one thing is clear: the ECB's Governing Council will always find ways and means of acting if it needs to."

Praet, who proposes policy to the ECB's Governing Council, is the second official in as many days to flag a potential shift in language that currently pledges unchanged borrowing costs at least through the summer. France's Francois Villeroy de Galhau also mentioned a change in wording as an option to deal with a more protracted slowdown.

Traders in money markets aren't pricing the first 10-basis-point interest-rate hike until June 2020. Slowing growth has also triggered a rally across the region's bond markets, with the yield on 10-year German bunds threatening to go negative for the first time since 2016.

Asked whether he expected an adjustment to forward



guidance already at the ECB's March 7 meeting, Praet said he wasn't able to say "at this stage." While next month's projections will likely show downward revisions to 2019 growth and inflation, the policy is set with medium-term prospects in mind, he said.

The extent of the weakness in the 19-nation economy has taken policy makers by surprise. Italy entered recession and Germany only narrowly avoided the same fate at the end of 2018.

Political uncertainty, particularly related to protectionism

and Brexit is "by far" the biggest problem constraining growth, said Praet, who will retire from the Executive Board in May. "The more time passes, the greater their likely negative impact on the economy," he said. "It is high time to put an end to these uncertainties in a positive way."

While a rebound in activity is likely, it's "too early to say by how much," said Praet.

His colleague Benoit Coeure has held out the prospect of fresh long-term loans amid a slowdown that's "clearly stronger and broader." Speaking on Friday, the Frenchman said discussions about a new funding round are under way at the ECB -- comments that weakened the euro and sparked a rally in European bank stocks.

Praet said so-called TLTROs "have been a very useful tool to deal with impairments in the transmission of monetary policy."

More than 720 billion euros (\$813 billion) in current four-year financing will start to mature from June next year. Some officials including Coeure have said policy makers will need to find a monetary-policy case to offer a new round.

According to Praet, officials will assess the current and expected state of bank transmission at their March meeting.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Oil hovers below 2019 highs on OPEC cuts, trade talks in focus

Oil stayed within sight of its 2019 high of almost \$67 a barrel on Tuesday, supported by OPEC-led supply cuts although concern about slowing economic growth that would curb demand weighed.

The supply curbs led by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries have helped crude prices to rise more than 20 percent this year. U.S. sanctions against OPEC members Iran and Venezuela have also tightened the market.

Brent crude slipped 28 cents to \$66.22 a barrel by 1011 GMT, not far from the 2019 high of \$66.83 reached on Monday. U.S. crude was up 54 cents at \$56.13.

“The market is slowly regaining its bullish footing, subject to the perception of economic risks tied to U.S.-China trade talks,” said Harry Tchilinguirian, global head of commodity markets strategy at BNP Paribas.

Demand-side worries remain the main drag on prices. HSBC Holdings warned on Tuesday that an economic slowdown in China and Britain would throw up further hurdles this year.



More talks between the United States and China to resolve their trade dispute will take place in Washington on Tuesday. Traders said they were cautious on taking large new positions before the outcome of the talks.

“If they falter, we run the risk of sell-offs like we had in December,” Tchilinguirian said. OPEC last week lowered its forecast for growth in world oil demand in 2019 to 1.24 million barrels per day and some analysts believe it could be weaker still.

“Given a continuously uncertain economic picture, our already relatively bearish outlook for 2019 of below 1 million bpd in global oil demand growth may be subject to further downwards revisions,” said analysts at JBC Energy.

To stop a buildup of inventories that could weigh on prices, the group of OPEC and non-OPEC producers known as OPEC+ began a new supply cut of 1.2 million bpd on Jan. 1.

Top crude exporter Saudi Arabia has sharply reduced production and exports to ensure that the deal gets off to a strong start.

In keeping with that aim, the kingdom plans to reduce light crude oil supplies to Asian customers for March, two sources with knowledge of the matter said on Tuesday.

Further providing the oil market with support are U.S. sanctions against exporters Iran and Venezuela.

Venezuela is a major crude supplier to U.S. refineries while Iran is a key exporter to major demand centers in Asia, especially China and India.

(Source: Reuters)

EU hits 17.5 percent renewable energy share in 2017

The renewables share in gross final energy consumption in the European Union (EU) has reached 17.5 percent in 2017, up from 17 percent registered the year earlier, the latest Eurostat figures show.

The EU’s renewables share was 8.5 percent in 2004, the first year when the data became available. The bloc has set a 20 percent target by 2020 and at least 32 percent by 2030, with every country having its own goal based on different starting points, renewable energy potential and economic performance.

As was the case in 2016, Sweden, Finland and Latvia continued to lead the ranking. Sweden generated 54.5 percent of its gross final energy consumption from renewable energy sources in 2017, surpassing its national target of 49 percent for 2020 and moving up from 53.8 percent in 2016.

Finland, with 41 percent of energy coming from renewables, also exceeded its 2020 target of 38 percent. Latvia took the third spot with a 39 percent share approaching its 40 percent goal.

On the bottom of the list are Malta, the Netherlands and Luxembourg with the renewables share of 7.2 percent, 6.6 percent and 6.4 percent, respectively.

In 2017, there were no new additions to the list of 11 member states that already achieved their 2020 national targets by 2016. They are Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Croatia, Italy, Lithuania, Hungary, Romania, Finland and Sweden.

The Netherlands, France and Ireland are still behind on their 2020 national goals, although they narrowed the distance compared to the 2016 figures. In 2017, the Netherlands was 7.4 percentage points away from reaching its 2020 target of 14 percent. France will need to up its renewables share by 6.7 percentage points to make it to 23 percent, while Ireland is 5.3 percentage points away from its 16 percent target.

Eurostat also compiled data on non-EU members Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia (formerly known as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Serbia, Turkey and Kosovo. Of them, Montenegro and Albania had the highest renewables share of 40 percent and 34.6 percent, respectively. Data on Iceland and Norway, which featured in the 2016 list, were not included in the latest report.

(Source: Renewable Now)

Kenya says crude oil capacity insufficient for refinery

Crude oil deposits discovered in Kenya are insufficient to justify construction of a refinery, a senior petroleum ministry official said on Tuesday.

Kenya discovered commercial oil in 2012 in its Lokichar basin, which Tullow Oil estimates contains an estimated 560 million barrels in proven and probable reserves. Tullow has said this would translate to 60,000 to 100,000 barrels per day of gross production.

It is proven the world over that a refinery would make money only when it has refining capacity of at least 400,000 barrels a day. Andrew Kamau, principal secretary at the petroleum and mining ministry, told reporters.

“And we have 80,000 barrels a day, so where are we going to make money on that? We can import cheaper from India,” he added.

Kenya, which does not export any oil, previously had a crude oil refinery at its port city of Mombasa but halted operations in 2013 after plans for a \$1.2 billion upgrade were abandoned on the advice of consultants who said it was not economically viable.

The government took it over in 2016 and converted it into a storage facility. Other partners in the blocks with crude



oil discoveries are Africa Oil Corp and Total.

Last week Tullow said it expected commercial framework agreements from the government and deals over land acquisition for an 800 km pipeline and oilfield infrastructure in the first quarter.

The government announced its intention to list state-run National Oil Corporation of Kenya in November 2017 to raise \$1 billion in a dual listing on the Nairobi bourse and London Stock Exchange (LSE) by early 2019.

The Nairobi Securities Exchange has said the local listing will be by the end of 2019.

Kamau said the listing will only take place after a final investment decision (FID) is agreed. Tullow says it expects that decision to happen by the end of this year.

(Source: Reuters)

Europe feels strain from tighter sour crude oil market

European refiners are feeling the pinch from purchasing sour crude grades at higher prices, hurting already weakening refining margins.

Refineries in this region are often complex and so feast on a diet of heavy and medium sour crudes such as Russia’s Urals, Iraq’s Basrah Light, UK’s Forties and Saud Arabia’s Arabian Light.

U.S. sanctions on Iran and Venezuela’s state-owned PDVSA have meant less heavy sour crude is being exported to Europe. OPEC and non-OPEC cuts are also reducing crude flows to this region, putting pressure on refining and pushing prices for medium sour crudes to multi-year highs.

“Looking ahead to April and May it will also be interesting, given that the Venezuelan is gone, and Iran waivers will [likely not be extended],” said a crude trader, adding that the crunch looks to be even more extreme in the coming months.

“Overall, heavier crudes do very well -- heavy North Sea grades, Urals, also we heard heavy sweet from WAF [West Africa] are seeing good deals because the sour market is tight,” he added.

Refining margins have weakened in the past month, weighed down by a weaker gasoline and light-ends complex.

Fuel oil remains unseasonably robust and middle distillate crack spreads have been strong, but demand for crudes of this quality are still in strong demand.

Imports of Iraqi crude such as Basrah Light and Basrah Heavy, which is very popular amid European refineries, have also been lower recently as OPEC members have been diverting some of these barrels to Asia.

“There are no destination-free Basrah cargoes at the moment coming to Europe for the end of February as they’re targeting Asia,” a second trader said. “And overall very little available Basrah, with the spot market dead.”

“And very little availability of [other sour grades]. Some [Mexican] Mayan arrived in February but with the prices now, there are views it could be too expensive,” he added. “Also Colombian, no Venezuelan -- it will be interesting to see what the [Iberian Peninsula] refineries do.”

If the heavy market tightens further, refineries --- many of which have invested significantly in crackers and cokers --- will be faced with the choice of chasing more expensive barrels or switching to a less optimal lighter crude diet, according to sources.

There are already some signs refiners are gradually sweetening their crude slates ahead of IMO 2020. The appeal of light and sweet crudes from West Africa has broadened recently due to higher middle distillate margins and viable arbitrage economics.

Some sour grades in Europe and the U.S. are also being traded at premiums to sweeter crudes as the imbalance between light and heavy crude oil supplies is growing.

Differentials for Urals crude, a high sulfur grade from Russia, for example, have averaged a premium of \$0.57/b CIF Augusta over the Mediterranean Dated Brent strip, S&P Global Platts data showed. Urals CIF Augusta averaged minus \$1.19/b and \$0.96/b in 2018 and 2017, respectively.

This compared with a lighter crude CPC Blend from Kazakhstan which has been trading at an average of minus \$1.54/b this year.

In the Mediterranean, trading sources said Urals levels in the region were staying in a relatively narrow range, despite demand loosening up going into March due to upcoming maintenance work by major buyers, as the sour market in general remains tight.

“With not as many options, it seems like [refineries] are able to pay up for grades like Urals, or [Iraq’s] Basrah -- they’re forced to pay up for sour material,” the second crude trader said.

Kurdish KBT crude, which is also heavy and sour, has also seen a boost in differentials, with some trading sources saying it was trading at a premium of at least a dollar over the Kirkuk OSP of Dated Brent minus \$2.50/b in February.

(Source: Platts)

Why the oil rally isn’t over yet

Crude oil sentiment is shifting in a bullish direction, with OPEC+ cuts and a growing list of serious outages taking supply off of the market.

Saudi Arabia recently signaled that it would slash its production to just 9.8 million barrels per day (mb/d), or about 0.5 mb/d more than required under the OPEC+ deal. That would take Saudi production down to close to a four-year low, a sign that Riyadh is aggressively trying to push up oil prices.

That is significant, especially since Russia is not really carrying its weight. Russia cut output by 42,000 bpd in January, according to Bloomberg, only about one-sixth of its promised 230,000 bpd reduction as part of the deal.

But Saudi Arabia is more than making up for its lagging partner. Meanwhile, the outages in Venezuela could mushroom in the days and weeks ahead. The crisis is fast-moving and the precise amount of oil that is knocked offline will be tricky to gauge, but it’s a safe bet that the losses will mount.

Iran could also add to the supply woes. U.S. Vice President Mike Pence was met with a frosty reception at the Munich Security Conference in recent days, as the Europeans are loath to cooperate on Washington’s “maximum pressure” campaign. Pence had expected several of his lines to be met with applause, but instead they were met with awkward silences.

Nevertheless, U.S. foreign policy has grown much more aggressive in the year since Mike Pompeo became Secretary of State and John Bolton became National Security Adviser. The U.S. still hopes to zero out Iran’s oil exports, although that could prove tricky as the oil market is tightening up.

More recently, an unexpected outage at a Saudi offshore oil field has added to the supply outages.

Meanwhile, President Trump appears to be warming up to a trade deal with China. Over the weekend he tweeted “Big progress being made on soooo many different fronts!” in the negotiations with



China, which suggests that both sides are eager to dial down the tensions. The March 1 deadline is fast approaching, but the odds of a major hike in tariffs seems to be waning.

All of this is boosting bullish sentiment in crude oil. Major hedge funds and other money managers increased their bullish bets on oil futures at the fastest rate in nearly six months on February 12. “Many of the worries we’ve had about demand have dissipated,” Bart Melek, head commodities strategist at TD Securities in Toronto, told Bloomberg. “That’s convinced people to strap on some risk again.” Brent oil prices are at three-month highs.

Of course, further gains are not inevitable. “We view the current price rise as exaggerated and see growing correction potential. The fact that oil production in the US is currently rising significantly more sharply than previously expected is being completely ignored at present,” Commerzbank wrote in a note. The EIA recently revised up its forecast for U.S. oil production growth for 2019 by 300,000 bpd, estimating production at 12.4 mb/d for the year.

The largest downside risks to oil

prices can likely be chalked up to a combination of the potential for a global economic slowdown, weaker demand, and rising U.S. supply.

But there is also the risk that Saudi Arabia becomes fed up with non-compliance by Russia, especially if unilaterally cuts are only met with surging U.S. shale supply. Saudi Arabia won’t want to shoulder the burden of balancing the oil market forever. Riyadh is running sizable budget deficits and is turning to the bond markets to fill the gap. If production cuts are not met with higher prices, the pain will grow. “Hence Saudi Arabia will not keep turning the spigots off if it is not succeeding in supporting prices, either because of poor compliance from other OPEC+ members or if US production was to rise enough to pour cold water on their efforts from last Dec’18 decision,” JPMorgan Chase wrote in a note.

For now, Riyadh will want to let its strategy run its course. So far, prices are up sharply this year, offering some evidence that the cuts are working. The supply curbs have already begun to drain off the surplus. Meanwhile, aggressive U.S. foreign policy will also contribute to a tighter oil market.

(Source: oilprice.com)

EMBASSY OF INDIA SCHOOL KENDRIYA VIDYALAYA TEHRAN

Tehran, Saidi Avenue, Qayedi Ave. Noormohammadi Ave. Darvish Street. No.24
Tel. No. +98-21-77531183, 77635033 Fax: +98-21-77520242

Admissions open for the Academic Session 2019-20 for class LKG to XII (Science & Commerce Stream)

Embassy of India School-Kendriya Vidyalaya Tehran is a global standard school established in 2004 under the patronage of embassy of India in Tehran. The school caters the educational needs of the children of employees of Embassy of India, Diplomatic missions of Iran, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, Kenya, Nepal, Romania, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Tanzania Vietnam, Australia, German, Azerbaijan, Lebanon, Pakistan and Uganda, MNC’s, Indian Professionals, Other Foreign Nationals, Local Indian Community, and other students belonging to more than 19 Nations. This school is one of the 1192 Kendriya Vidyalayas in India and abroad under the control of Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS), New Delhi (www.kvsangathan.nic.in) an autonomous organization under Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) Govt. of India, New Delhi. The Kendriya Vidyalayas has come to be known as Centers of Excellence in the field of secondary and Senior Secondary Education in India and abroad, promoting National Integration and International Understanding among the children.

SALIENT FEATURES AND OBJECTIVES THE SCHOOL

- Highly qualified, professionally trained, experienced, dedicated and committed teachers are deputed by Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, New Delhi.
- It has classes from LKG to XII (A-Level). The medium of instruction is English. Besides English-French, Persian, Hindi and Punjabi languages are also taught at different levels. Science and Commerce Streams are available at ‘A’ level.
- All classes are smart classes, learning through activity, play-way methods using Interactive Boards, e-learning, use of various Teaching Learning Materials (TLM), School Readiness Programmes, bridge Courses are adopted.
- Well maintained class rooms, well equipped Computer Laboratory, Science Laboratories, and Library with ideal Teacher- Student ratio (1:15) enables the teachers to give individual attention to students.
- Innovative e-learning, e-library facilities, Coaching for Entrance Exams - IIT, NEET, CLAT conducting various competitions like Olympiads, KVPY, NTSE, Spell-Bee, Counseling Cell and Book Store etc.
- Well-developed Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities for Foot-Ball, Table Tennis, Badminton, Volley-Ball Chess, Athletics’ etc. are available
- 100% results with quality every year since 2004.
- Spoken English classes for the parents and others (after school hours) are available.
- Multi-Purpose Auditorium having about 600 seating capacity.
- Yoga is practiced as a part of curriculum also Yoga classes for adults after school hours
- Passed out students are getting admissions in various reputed and renowned professional Institutions in India and abroad
- Our Alumni are well established and settled in different nations of the globe
- This school also imparts training to the teachers of other CBSE affiliated schools
- To pursue excellence and set pace in the field of school education.
- To initiate and promote experimentation and innovativeness in education in collaboration with other bodies like Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), New Delhi.

For Application Forms, Fee Structure and other details please contact the school office and see the Frequently asked questions (FAQ) in the school website.

Principal

Trump's alarming abuse of executive power

By Bruce Fein

There may be worse executive power abuses than President Donald Trump's declaration of a national emergency to build a wall on the Mexican border that Congress has steadfastly refused to fund. But if there are, they don't readily come to mind.

Trump's national emergency declaration is worse than the 59 others declared by presidents since 1976 because it was employed to usurp the express power of the purse—the most important congressional check on executive abuses.

Only two of the prior national emergency declarations involved the expenditure of funds not appropriated by Congress: one by George H.W. Bush in 1990 during the run-up to the Persian Gulf War, and the other by George W. Bush in 2001 after the 9/11 attacks.

In both cases, the funds were transferred among military accounts in response to immediate (not protracted) developments for a military purpose. In neither case, had Congress repeatedly rejected the President's proposed expenditure of funds, rather Congress acquiesced in the expenditures. In Trump's case, he is expending funds for a purpose that Congress has consistently and steadfastly denied over long months. Trump is defying Congress, not working in collaboration with it, over a power Congress has a right to exercise.

Under the National Emergencies Act of 1976, Congress may pass a joint resolution to terminate the president's declaration. If Trump persists, the United States Supreme Court can hold the executive usurpation of the congressional power of the purse unconstitutional. Further, Trump's direction that funds be expended that have not been appropriated by Congress for that purpose would be criminal under the Anti-Deficiency Act and an impeachable high crime and misdemeanor.

The Anti-Deficiency Act criminalizes the knowing authorization of a federal expenditure exceeding the amount it was appropriated for. In my opinion, a presidential crime that usurps a core congressional power constitutes an impeachable offense. Alexander Hamilton explained in Federalist 65:

The subjects of [impeachment] jurisdiction are those offenses which proceed from the misconduct of public men, or, in other words, from the abuse or violation of some public trust. They are of a nature which may with peculiar propriety be denominated POLITICAL, as they relate chiefly to injuries done immediately to the society itself.

The only 'national emergency' is a president who violates the Constitution to get his way.

Trump knows his national emergency demarche on the Constitution will shipwreck. He raced forward anyway to excite his base and to save face after coming out of the shutdown with less than he promised. Article I, section 9, clause 7 prohibits the president from spending money not appropriated by Congress: "No money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in consequence of appropriations made by law."

James Madison described the congressional power of the purse as the cornerstone against executive abuses. He elaborated in Federalist 58:

This power over the purse may, in fact, be regarded as the most complete and effectual weapon with which any constitution can arm the immediate representatives of the people, for obtaining a redress of every grievance, and for carrying into effect every just and salutary measure.

The power of the purse was used to terminate the Vietnam War after President Richard Nixon persisted in belligerency despite repeal of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution (perhaps one of the great examples of this practice in modern times).

Accordingly, any presidential expenditure must be justified by a congressional appropriation. The president has no inherent Article II power to spend. Moreover, Congress is prohibited by the non-delegation doctrine from endowing the president with limitless discretion to declare a national emergency and spend money as he sees fit without any intelligible statutory standards. Thus, Congress could not, in the manner of Humpty Dumpty, make a national emergency mean whatever the president wants it to mean, neither more nor less.

Congress has never specifically defined a national emergency. But every definition in the English language requires circumstances necessitating an "immediate" response. Trump has conceded, "I didn't need to do this, but I'd rather do it much faster." In other words, there was no need for immediate action. Indeed, the president waited for months — including a 35-day government shutdown — before declaring a national emergency without any change in circumstances.

According to the Center for Migration Studies, most undocumented aliens in the United States have overstayed their visas. They have not illegally crossed the border and will be unaffected by a wall. According to the Trump administration's own statistics, 80 to 90 percent of illegal drugs interdicted by law enforcement are at the ports of entry and unaffected by a border wall. Illegal immigration is at historic lows, and the incidence of crime among the undocumented is less than among American citizens. These statistics help explain Trump's inability to persuade Congress or a popular majority that a national emergency exists along the Mexican border.

Federal courts will be equally unpersuaded. As Justice Benjamin Cardozo observed, "The great tides and currents which engulf the rest of men, do not turn aside in their course and pass the judges by." Thus did the Supreme Court repudiate Nixon's bogus invocation of executive authority during the Vietnam War when he tried to suppress publication of the Pentagon Papers in New York Times v. United States (1971). Likewise did it reject President Harry Truman's national emergency argument during the Korean War to seize steel mills in Youngstown Sheet & Tube v. Sawyer (1952).

The Democrat-controlled House of Representatives will likely sue to block the national emergency measure. The trailblazer case here is U.S. House of Representatives v. Burwell in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia. There, the Republican-controlled House was granted standing to sue over Affordable Care Act expenditures that had not been funded by Congress.

Only scrupulous adherence to constitutional processes will keep the law supreme in America. Justice Robert Jackson reminded us in Youngstown Sheet & Tube, "With all its defects, delays and inconveniences, men have discovered no technique for long preserving free government except that the Executive be under the law, and that the law be made by parliamentary deliberations." It's time for Trump to heed his words.

(Source: The American Conservative)

U.S.-European relations are on the rocks, they won't get better anytime soon.

By Henry Olsen

Democrats frequently decry President Trump for purportedly weakening our ties with our European allies. But a recent security conference in Germany shows that tensions between the United States and Europe would likely recur under any Republican president — and perhaps under Democratic leadership as well.

The fact is that Republican orthodoxy is at odds with many commonly shared European viewpoints. Take climate change. Europeans of all political stripes share a commitment to the Paris Agreement and are willing to pursue tax and regulatory policies to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions. German Chancellor Angela Merkel, for example, recently announced that Germany would phase out all coal-fired electricity plants by 2038, forcing utilities to find new sources for about half of Germany's electricity output. No Republican president would come even close to matching that, yet European pressure to move policies in their direction will only intensify.

Vice President Pence's presentation at the 2019 Munich Security Conference shows how starkly the European and Republican worldviews collide. He staunchly defended the Trump administration's withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. He criticized Britain, France and Germany for staying in the Iranian nuclear deal, from which Trump has withdrawn the United States. He called on the European Union to recognize Juan Guaidó as Venezuela's rightful president. He defended the administration's tariffs on China and its insistence that all NATO members spend at least 2 percent of gross domestic product on defense and 20 percent of that spending on equipment procurement. And in each case, he was in stark opposition to the desires of a significant number of our allies.

Most, if not all, of these policies would be pursued by any conceivable Republican



Vice President Pence's presentation at the 2019 Munich Security Conference shows how starkly the European and Republican worldviews collide.

president. Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), for example, has been a leader in pushing for the recognition of Guaidó as president and the removal of the Maduro government from power. Rubio is also one of the Senate's leading China hawks, calling repeatedly for an aggressive federal policy to combat unfair Chinese trade practices and prevent China from overtaking U.S. leadership in military technology. Sen. Ted Cruz (Tex.), one of Trump's final Republican opponents in 2016, was as staunchly opposed to the Iranian deal and Paris Agreement as Trump. Europeans might wish for a return to the

kinder, gentler days of George H.W. Bush-led Republicanism, but that is simply not where today's GOP stands.

Former vice president Joe Biden's speech was, in contrast, music to European ears. He praised efforts to fight climate change and expressed support for multilateral action. He also called U.S. border policy "an embarrassment" and told the assembled leaders that the United States "will be back," with "back" clearly serving as code for "more in tune with your views."

But even Democratic leadership might rest uneasily with European desires. It is

Repatriating ISIS fighters is more complex than Trump realizes

Donald Trump has declared that Britain, France and Germany should take back and put on trial its citizens who have gone to fight for ISIS in Syria. The U.S. has captured some 800 such fighters, and the president has threatened to release them if the UK and other European nations do not do so.

It is easy to see why the U.S. is pushing this line. In December Trump, against the advice of the U.S. military leadership, decided to withdraw troops from Syria. As The Independent's Middle East correspondent Patrick Cockburn has argued, this decision was more rational than the president's opponents claim.

But it does create the huge practical problem of what to do with the people the U.S. has captured when its troops leave. Under international law, once a conflict between nations is over, former combatants that have been held as prisoners of war should be returned to their countries of origin.

Here, however, the legal situation is less clear, for the fighters were not combatants of a formally recognized state; rather, they could be classified as terrorists — ISIS itself has declared itself the orchestrator of a number of terrorist attacks around the world, even if it maintains that it should be formally recognized.

The U.S. and France have both agreed to accept citizens suspected of ISIS membership. Other countries, including the UK, have not. Under these circumstances, for the U.S. simply to release the former fighters would be the default option.

But while it is easy to see why the U.S. is pressing coun-



The U.S. and France have both agreed to accept citizens suspected of ISIS membership.

tries to accept their citizens, there are good reasons not to allow the U.S. to dictate to other countries their approach to security.

As far as Britain is concerned, the situation is further complicated by the case of Shamima Begum, the runaway

ISIS bride who now says she wishes to return to the UK. She was a non-combatant, unlike the fighters held by the U.S.

It would be hard to argue that she should not be allowed to return while former fighters are repatriated, although whether or not Begum should actually be allowed to return is more complex than yes or no.

Ultimately two things should be paramount. The first is the rule of law; the second the security of the country.

We need a considered legal judgment as to the status and rights of UK citizens who have chosen to travel abroad and involve themselves, actively or passively, in a foreign conflict.

Each case should be considered on its merits. If a person has the right to return, and the practicalities of repatriation can be satisfied, then they should come back and, if appropriate, face charges. This should not be a political decision; it should be a legal one.

The government of the day does, however, have responsibility for the security of the country. If it can demonstrate that allowing a UK citizen who has fought abroad back into the country is a credible threat to national security, then it should not shy away from that responsibility.

It is these two principles, which may come into conflict with each other, that should govern the UK response to Trump's challenge. If we take the fighters back, we do so for legal and security reasons, not because we are urged to do so by an American president.

(Source: Independent)

Australia's offshore refugee policy has failed

By Anna Neistat

Conducting Amnesty International's investigation on Nauru, one of the island nations where Australia sends its unwanted refugees, I felt furious and desperate.

I was furious to see hundreds of women, men and children subjected to physical and psychological harm that could only be characterised as torture: They were attacked, held in inhumane conditions, deprived of vital medical help and driven to insanity, self-harm and suicide. On Manus Island, in Papua New Guinea, my colleagues witnessed a similarly shocking situation.

I felt desperate because, despite overwhelming evidence of the abuse, for years Australian authorities continued to claim - with no evidence - that the policy of sending asylum seekers to remote offshore locations is the only way to save lives by deterring people from trying to reach Australia's shores. They did not seem prepared to move an inch.

Yet the work of a formidable alliance of people detained on Manus and Nauru, international and Australian civil society organisations, investigative journalists, as well as Australian human rights lawyers, might finally be bearing fruit.

Last week, Prime Minister Scott Morrison's government suffered an unprecedented defeat, as Parliament passed a law making it easier for refugees from offshore locations to receive medical treatment in Australia. This may not sound like a ground-breaking development, particularly since the government now intends to reopen a detention centre on the Australian territory of Christmas Island.

But the law's significance is clear when you



consider that for years, Australia's ministry of immigration refused to transfer even critically ill patients from Manus and Nauru to Australia - saying it would be easier for them to get legal assistance and stay in the country.

On Nauru, in 2016, I spoke to an elderly man who was briefly evacuated to Australia after suffering a heart attack. He was promptly sent back to the island against the doctor's advice - and subsequently suffered another heart attack, as the doctors had feared.

I interviewed other refugees suffering from cancer, diabetes, untreated fractures, gynaecological problems and many other conditions, none of which could be treated on the island - and all of them were refused a transfer for treatment. That is not to mention those, including children, who suffered from such serious mental health issues that they were repeatedly trying to kill themselves or ended up locked up

in an improvised mental hospital - but again, not allowed treatment in Australia.

The new law will literally save lives. And it is another sign that Australia's long-standing "offshore detention" policy is slowly being whittled away as it is exposed, time and again, for what it is: a vicious attack on people for the simple act of having sought sanctuary.

Only a few weeks ago, the government of Australia confirmed that all children would be leaving Nauru. Several hundred refugees have already settled in the United States under a deal signed between the two countries. One after the other, companies that the Australian government relied on to run its offshore detention system withdrew, and finding new ones proved to be hard as businesses worried about the reputational damage from complicity in such blatant abuse.

Perhaps equally significant is the inter-

national recognition of the very people that the Australian government tried to make invisible, delegitimise, silence, and deprive of agency and hope.

One is Kurdish Iranian writer Behrouz Boochani, a refugee on Manus, who earlier this month won the \$25,000 non-fiction prize at the Victorian premier's literary award, as well as the \$100,000 Victorian prize for literature. No Friend but the Mountains was his first book, which he wrote by text messages from the detention centre on the island.

The other is Behrouz's fellow detainee from Manus Island, Sudanese human rights defender Abdul Aziz Muhamat, who last week won the prestigious Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights. Aziz has worked continuously to advocate for humane living conditions and adequate medical care on Manus, including through mass peaceful protests.

All of these developments indicate that the Australian government's "offshore detention" policy has utterly failed. The only way to avoid further suffering for the refugees and shame for the country is to put a decisive end to it, accept responsibility, and do everything possible to rebuild hundreds of lives affected by years of abuse.

There is also an important lesson here for other countries who might be looking at Australia's policy as an example of how to stoke fear about - and among - people seeking safety. Such policies may seem like a quick win with some domestic constituencies, but they are not wins in the long run. Ultimately they are inhumane, unlawful, unsustainable, costly, and damaging to a country's reputation.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

‘INSTEX a Trojan Horse tool to infiltrate into Iran’s banking, defense sectors’

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — An independent political and economic researcher from Los Angeles described a long-awaited mechanism to safeguard European trade ties with Tehran called INSTEX as another “Trojan Horse tool” to infiltrate into Iran’s banking, defense and energy sectors.

“The launch of INSTEX — or the “Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges” — by France, Germany and the UK to facilitate non-dollar trade with Iran, is seemingly a European circumvention of unilateral US sanctions on Iran, yet I believe it is merely another Trojan Horse tool in a wider transatlantic ‘good cop / bad cop’ production meant to inevitably infiltrate Iran’s banking, energy, industrial, defense, security and technological firewall capabilities across various industries,” Pye Ian told Tasnim.

Pye Ian is an independent economic and geopolitical researcher as well as a strategic planning and business development advisor. His articles and analyses on international affairs, economic trends and cultural topics have been published in various mainstream and alternative press sources. Ian’s wider intellectual interests are reflected in his writings on the convergence of foreign affairs, political philosophy, history, global finance and energy policy. He has undergraduate degrees in economics and political science from the University of California and a Master’s degree in finance from Cambridge University.

Following is the full text of the interview:

■ After months of foot-dragging, Britain, France and Germany in early Feb. issued a joint statement on the creation of a new trading system called the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX) that will allow trade between the EU and Iran without relying on direct financial transactions. What do you think about this mechanism?

A: The launch of INSTEX — or the “Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges” — by France, Germany and the UK to facilitate non-dollar trade with Iran, is seemingly a European circumvention of unilateral US sanctions on Iran, yet I believe it is merely another Trojan Horse tool in a wider transatlantic ‘good cop / bad cop’ production meant to inevitably infiltrate Iran’s banking, energy, industrial, defense, security and technological firewall capabilities across various industries. The US obviously serving as bad cop here, with its EU partners serving as good cops, all meant ultimately to penetrate Iranian financial and production capacities as much as possible under the auspices of facilitating humanitarian goods-related transactions only, including food, medicine, and medical equipment.

Let’s not forget that the damaging Stuxnet virus of a decade ago, which was launched by US and Israeli cyber-terrorism efforts, reached its target via the networks of trusted business partners. Early versions of the malware seemed dedicated to intelligence gathering, but then later versions started attacking internal infrastructure.

That mal-intentioned history is fairly recent, as is the more tellingly united transatlantic approach to Iranian ally and fellow heavy oil-rich independent nation, Venezuela, where you have the UK, France, Spain, Belgium and the wider EU all on the same page as Washington with regard to demanding that President Maduro step down in favor of a more western-compliant leadership. A return to puppet-state status, basically. Ask why the US & EU would necessarily differ in their collective approaches toward Iran & Venezuela, when both nations are deemed as needing “regime change” ASAP by said Atlanticists? It’s simply because of assigned tactical differences, yet the same underlying strategy toward both persists.

Also, Iran is launching its ‘crypto-Rial’ cryptocurrency, reportedly meant for facilitating future banking and institutional transactions, and will be followed by a cryptocurrency that will be for more mainstream use. Related, Venezuela’s already launched its Petro cryptocurrency, which is meant ultimately for pricing & trading oil and other resources globally as well. The Petro in Caracas is seen as a deep systemic fiscal threat by Washington, especially because the Russian/Chinese allied approach toward Venezuela is helping with it. The clearly unified transatlantic, Atlanticist west, which invented the internet & blockchain technologies, will thus certainly not allow Russian & Chinese-allied Iran nor Venezuela to simply circumvent its economic, fiscal & thus political mandates — especially in oil pricing & trading - yet ostensibly needs different tools for addressing each country, seeing that, despite heavy sanctions, trade & currency wars against each nation, Iran’s internal situation is today more sophisticated than Venezuela’s. Hence the deployment of seemingly friendly European states in supposedly “going around” US sanctions.

■ In one of your recent interviews, you equated the generally “belligerent western approaches toward both Venezuela and



Iran, essentially due to the same reasons i.e. oil, gold, independence, leaning East and South globally and de-dollarization”. Please explain more.

A: It’s no secret that, as mentioned, Iran & Venezuela both retain vast amounts of untapped oil and other valuable natural resources. Yet both are also working independently to circumvent dollar reliance for their energy resource pricing, trading and receipt recycling. This significant political step is due in part to punishing dollar-based economic sanctions, currency attacks, embargoes and trade wars imposed against both Tehran and Caracas by the west, and partly because their global eastern and southern hemispheric allies — foremost Russia and China — are seeking to hoist and sustain

2016, with tacit Russian assistance) have been to individually and more importantly, collectively, seek “de-dollarization”, which includes generally seeking to reduce dollar-based transactions, dumping US Treasury Bonds out of their national reserves, relying upon bilateral currency usages with other nations (I.E. ruble/yuan, lira/ruble, rial/yuan, etc.), and most critically, aiming at reimplementing key commodity backing for their currencies. In the cases of both the Iranian and Venezuelan national currencies, the reintroduction of the use of physical gold for affording solvency & credibility to their currencies has been carried out over the past few years.

In turn, tying such rejuvenated currencies to how they wish to price, trade and recycle

Iran is launching its ‘crypto-Rial’ cryptocurrency, reportedly meant for facilitating future banking and institutional transactions, and will be followed by a cryptocurrency that will be for more mainstream use. Related, Venezuela’s already launched its Petro cryptocurrency, which is meant ultimately for pricing & trading oil and other resources globally as well.

a multipolar international economic and geopolitical order free of imperial, “Full Spectrum Dominance” mandates from the increasingly belligerent actors pushing “The Washington Consensus”.

The US dollar has served as global reserve currency since the end of World War II. It has also been a fiat currency — meaning a currency that a government has declared to be legal tender, but which is not backed by a physical commodity — since August 15th, 1971, when the Nixon Administration in the US ended the convertibility of dollars into physical gold, which was a key economic stipulation resulting from the Bretton Woods Conference held just before the end of World War II.

Two years after “the gold window” ended, Washington struck a key deal with Saudi Arabia to have oil exclusively priced in US dollars, with the rest of OPEC following suit with said plan in 1975. “Petrodollar Recycling” resulted, where dollar earnings for oil production & commerce would be ‘recycled’ into US Treasury Bonds. The total deal ended up replacing direct gold tethering with indirect oil reliance, essentially, with regard to the means for continuing to prop the US dollar up as reserve currency. “Confidence” in the dollar continues unabated because oil bought anywhere must be priced, traded & reinvested using dollars. It also allowed Washington to, in essence, print dollars infinitely for any purpose without endangering its deficits like any other nation would.

Said deal also enabled the dollar to eventually be used as a weapon against any other currency on earth, considering that the rest of the world’s currencies are, by default, fiat as well, following the dollar’s imposed lead. That ‘dollar weaponization’ thus results in the rather easy ability of Washington to negatively target dollar exchange rates. We’ve seen the purposefully deleterious results of such a tool fall upon the Iranian rial, the Venezuelan bolivar, the Russian ruble, the Zimbabwean dollar, and certainly even the Turkish lira, all as political acts from Washington and London. As the national currency weakens, the intention goes, so would eventually the targeted government’s hold on power, thereby resulting in — at the least — mass, continuing, destabilizing riots in the streets. If the targeted government doesn’t ‘change its ways’, then the pressure is ratcheted up via sustaining those mass riots while a military coup or its ilk would be planned within said nation.

The responses from nations such as Iran, Venezuela, Russia, China and even NATO-membered Turkey (which defeated its Washington-backed coup attempt in

the earnings for oil, natural gas and minerals trades out of their respective territories has also been spearheaded as a geostrategic response to years of economic harassment & outright acts of war from the west.

Lastly, innovation research into exploring how safe, protected and deployable (scalability-wise) the use of cryptocurrencies would be vis-à-vis both the gold and oil tie-ins for national currencies has been proceeding in said independent nations as well.

Importantly, the assistance of Russia and China for conceptualizing, implementing and inevitably scaling such de-dollarization has been vital because Moscow & Beijing are more tightly allied now than ever before. Through the combination of their natural resources (oil, natural gas, gold, steel, coal, copper, etc.), economic prowess (China’s is the strongest human resource production engine in world history), political visions and international institutional mobilizations (the Eurasian Economic Union, New Silk Road, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Asian Infrastructure Bank & New Development Bank, BRICS, etc.), and last but not least, combined military capabilities (millions of combined personnel, both nuclear-armed, and having conducted countless joint military drills for many years now), Russia and China lend continual guidance, reassurance & protection to their Eurasian, West Asian, East Asian, African, Latin American and, yes, even European allies & trading partners.

The Atlanticist west, led by the US but including the UK, UK Commonwealth, EU, Israel, Saudi Arabia & other Persian Gulf states, is collectively determined to prevent such independent Eurasian movement away from dollar hegemony, foremost because such a move — successfully actualized and expanded — would devastate the already over-leveraged state of transatlantic banking and finance, which sits on combined amounts of debt numbering in the tens of trillions of dollars. Once synthetic derivatives contracts and other ‘dark finance pool’ instruments are included, then the risk profile issued from western financial institutions measures a cascading fiscal cataclysm as involving hundreds of trillions of dollars.

Why are said massive debt figures significant? Because the sanctity of a) continuing to issue debts endlessly, and b) preventing said debt bubbles from unraveling violently, unpredictably and in politically threatening ways, all rely upon maintaining the US dollar as both the perennial reserve currency and petro-currency standard until the ruling transatlantic Establishment decides to replace said protocols themselves (be it with Special Drawing Rights issued by

the IMF as dollar-replacements, or with state-approved cryptocurrencies, or the like). Torpedoing dollar and petrodollar hegemony are what the global East and South seek, and hence the world economy right now resembles a ‘Tug of War’, with currency credibility serving as the ‘rope’ in said battle.

■ As you know, EU officials have repeatedly expressed the bloc’s determination to preserve the JCPOA. Recently, US Vice President Mike Pence said, “(This is) an ill-advised step that will only strengthen Iran, weaken the EU and create still more distance between Europe and the US”. Do you believe that the EU will finally stand up to the US or it is just a bluff game?

A: As I’ve stated, and based upon a sober reading of both history, viable economics and even of esoteric philosophy (as read by the ruling Establishment), it is a bluff game, foremost because the governments, banks & general economic systems of the US, UK, EU and their subject nations are run by the same ultimate Syndicate of power, which is very old, very occult in its epistemological provenance, make-up and aims, and very coordinated in meeting its universal challenges, despite seemingly contradictory stances taken by, say, the US and EU with regard to Iran.

So, EU nations seemingly differ with Washington on Iran, yet I’d be very cautious if I were in Tehran. Where we’ve ended up here on the JCPOA clearly is NOT about preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, but about — as mentioned above - sovereign independent national economic imperatives vs. those of an Atlanticist empire which won’t tolerate disobedience.

You’ll notice how the EU is on the same page as Washington & London regarding wanting Maduro out of power in Venezuela in favor of their corporate compliant puppet, Juan Guaidó. And yet we’re led to believe that the US & EU, by contrast, genuinely differ regarding medium to long term preferences on Iran? When, as mentioned, both Iran & Venezuela are oil & resource-rich independent nations working with the global East in divorcing from dollar hegemony?

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas over-spoke in his recent speech by admitting that “our goal remains an Iran without nuclear weapons, precisely because we see clearly how Iran is destabilizing the region”.

Wow. Really, Europe? If that is how you truly feel, then Maas just revealed some of the transatlantic community’s playing cards, as this is clearly a ‘good cop/bad cop’ theatrical routine, with the EU playing good cop & the US & its tightest allies playing bad cops.

Iran does NOT intend upon pursuing nuclear weapons & Tehran has made that abundantly clear for years now by holding steadfastly to the JCPOA nuclear agreement. Instead, this is really about preventing Iran from pursuing an independent economic & global energy policy, just as it is against Venezuela doing the same. Sustained global non-dollar oil trading by Iran, Venezuela, Russia, China & Turkey would trigger incalculable instability across global bond and equity markets, causing immediate failure for already endangered banks which carry trillions in debts on (and purposefully off of) their official balance sheets. Hence the ramped up belligerent talk by Washington against both Iran & Venezuela.

US Vice President Pence also criticized the initiative of France, Germany and Britain to allow European companies to continue operating in Iran despite US sanctions. That is also a tool of deception, via a smokescreen criticism, as the US, UK & EU want corporate, technological & intelligence transparency across the totality of Iranian banks, companies, and everything else, one way or another.

■ Will the JCPOA stand?

A: It is hard to tell, yet the proverbial ball is in the court of the US and its faithfully compliant allies. This is because — again — Iran has been both adherent to the JCPOA’s mandates and stipulations, and forthright in goodwill fashion about its wish to continue to abide by the JCPOA.

Yet the JCPOA obviously did not achieve what it partly set out to do — namely, either force a presumably frustrated Iran to pull out of the agreement — thereby giving a casus belli for the west to take harsher measures against Tehran — or yield other desired political capital, such as blowback at home, where Iranians revolt against a seemingly weak government. Hence why the Trump Administration — run ultimately by behind-the-scenes neoconservative and neoliberal planners beholden conclusively to the sweeping, coordinated Syndicate or Establishment I referenced above, rather than by either Trump, his Cabinet or even his ‘advisors’ — voiced irrational frustration over the JCPOA from even before Trump’s admission into the White House. They’ve been out-witted and outclassed by Tehran, and so now need to mix strategies up a bit via their appointed “Madman Theory”-laden disruptive politician in chief.

Russia’s view on Syria’s reconstruction



1 → Russia’s limited funds will prevent the country from investing further in Syria. The joint financial channel between China and Russia may provide sufficient funds for Syria, but Russian authorities will be apprehensive about the Chinese rivalries.

There are two questions over Syria’s reconstruction. First, how is Iran going to participate with Russia in rebuilding Damascus? And how will Russians view us in the joint venture?

Second, in all reality, what is Iran’s main capacity in reconstruction of Damascus? Does Iran have a proper long-term plan and a road map in Syria that will entail Iran’s interest as well?

Finally, for the past two years, Russians have proven to “target Syria”, i.e. they are prepared to face different conditions.

U.S. gradual plan to intervene in Venezuelan affairs



1 → If the crisis in Venezuela leads to war, the Venezuelan military-defense structure will make a quick battle impossible. For this reason, the contingency war will be multivariate and imbalanced and will be a major threat to the region. A long-term military intervention will lead to Venezuela’s collective immigration to the regional countries that cannot host immigrants. The consolidation of Washington’s influence and leadership in Latin America will depend not only on removing the incumbent Venezuelan government but also on the pace of the changes.



The question now is whether the United States intends to create a regional crisis in Latin America.

To answer the question, Venezuela is one of the countries that holds the world’s largest oil reserves and is one of the closest oil exporters to the United States.

Maybe that’s why Florida State Senator Marco Rubio and the White House National Security Adviser John Bolton shouts that the self-declared President Guaidó will give more money to U.S. oil companies than Maduro. On the other hand, as former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry has said, the change in the Venezuelan government for the U.S. would mean regaining Caracas’s resources through a puppet government.

When Former Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez came to power in 1999, he had a tremendous impact on undermining United States influence in the region, and the regional countries formed strategic alliances to counteract the influence of Washington in Latin America. At the same time, many Latin American countries have strengthened their diplomatic relations with countries such as Iran, Russia and China, and promoted large investments with China and Russia. Thus, the overthrow of the Venezuelan government, which has played a significant role in diminishing Washington’s influence in the Latin American region over the past two decades, will be considered an important victory for the United States.

Pars Diplomatic Real Estate

Apartment

Apt in Elahieh
brand new, 7th floor, 370 sq.m
4 Bdrs., fully furn, equipped
kitchen, gathering room, gym
sauna, Jacuzzi, billiard, squash
saloon, BBQ lobby, city view
storage parking spots

\$6500

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Apt in Jordan
120 sq.m, 2 Bdrs., fully furn
parking spot

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Qeytarieh
2th floor, 164 sq.m, 3 Bdrs.
furn, equipped kitchen
2 parking spots, **\$1500**

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Apt in Vanak - Shiraz
almost new, 6th floor, 120 sq.m
2 Bdrs., fully furn, balcony
equipped kitchen
parking spot

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Zafaranih
brand new, 180 sq.m, 3 Bdrs.
beautiful furn, roof garden
parking spot, **\$3000**

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Apt in Fereshteh
250 sq.m, 3 Bdrs.
furn, equipped kitchen
spj, elevator, city view
storage, 2 parking spots
\$3500

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Villa

Triplex Villa in Jordan
3700 sq.m land, 1300 sq.m
7 Bdrs., 6 bathrooms, furn outdoor
pool, renovated
3-side entrances, **\$20000**

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Villa in Shahrak Qarb
duplex, 140 sq.m, 2 Bdrs. unfurn,
yard, renovated, roof garden,
storage, parking spot

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Duplex Villa in
Shariti-Mirdamad
290 sq.m, 4 Bdrs., unfurn, balcony,
fire place, parking spot

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Triplex Villa in Zafaranih
1200 sq.m, 15 Bdrs. unfurn
parking spot, **\$10000**

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Duplex Villa in Niavaran
650 sq.m land, 450 sq.m built up, 4
Bdrs., fully furn
outdoor swimming pool
yard, parking spot, **\$2600**

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Villa in Darous
3 floors, 640 sq.m, swimming pool,
6 parking spots, yard

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Villa in Zafaranih
brand new, 105 sq.m, 2 Bdrs. with
one75 sq.m suit, unfurn
parking spot, **\$1400**

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156



Holder of

ISO 9001:2008

ISO 10004:2012

ISO 10002:2014

From Oxford Cert Universal

Best Consultation

Best Services, Best Result

Intl. Department Manager "Tina 09128103205"

Tel: 22662452-8, Fax: 22667173

Hot Line: 28141

info@parsdiplomatic.com

www.parsdiplomatic.com

Building & Office

Whole Building in Jordan
3 floors, 500 sq.m land, totally
650 sq.m built up, swimming pool
Renovated, parking spot

\$7000

*Suitable for
Embassies, International companies
& Guesthouses*

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Whole Building in Zafar
brand new, 6 floors, 6 apts
sq.m administrative office 1400
license, 400 sq.m commercial flat
elevator, 16 parking spots

\$25000

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Whole Building in Mahmoodieh
5 floors, each floor one apt each
apt 170 sq.m with 3 Bdrs.
unfurn, spj, 8 parking spots
storage, elevator

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Whole Building in Darous
2 floors, 700 sq.m land
one apt 330 sq.m with 4 Bdrs.
another duplex apt 300 sq.m with
5 Bdrs., furn, equipped kitchen,
renovated, huge terrace
mountain view, parking spot

\$6000

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Whole Building in
Saadat Abad
2 apts 75 sq.m, 2 apts 150 sq.m
renovated, parking spot

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Ideal Offers

Apt in Jordan
almost new, 110 sq.m, 2 Bdrs.
fully furn, elevator
storage, parking spot, **\$1200**

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Fereshteh
125 sq.m, 2 Bdrs., furn, spj
billiard table, parking spot

\$1300

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Apartment in Velenjak
6th floor, 175 sq.m, 3 Bdrs. furn,
spj, lobby, lobby man
renovated, parking spot

\$2300

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Elahieh
3th floor, 280 sq.m, 3 Bdrs.
fully furn, terrace, spj, gym
parking spot, **\$2000**

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Suite in Yusef Abad
63 sq.m, 1 Bdr, fully, equipped
kitchen, renovated, yard

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Zafaranih
4th floor, 220 sq.m
3 Bdr., fully furn, spj
parking spot, **\$1600**

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Apt in Jordan
4th floor, 83 sq.m, 1 Bdr.
fully furn, parking spot
\$800

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

مالکین محترم

ملک های فروش و اجاره ای خود را (آپارتمان،
ویلا، مستغلات، اداری و تجاری) به ما بسپارید.

بهترین مشاوره، برترین سرویس، بالاترین رضایت

مالکین محترم املاک مبله و غیر مبله، مسکونی، اداری و تجاری، ویلا و مستغلات
شما را جهت اجاره به سفارتخانه ها و شرکت های خارجی نیازمندیم.

مالکین محترم

ویلاهای شما را جهت اجاره به منزل سفیر و مدیران
شرکت های بین المللی در مناطق شمالی تهران
نیازمندیم.

SHANON
Shanon_tari@yahoo.com
+989121907875
Tel : 88745542

Jordan (\$1800) 220sq.m, 3bdrs balcony, & F.F	Zafaranih (\$2600) 250sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p Sauna, J, pkg, F.F	Fereshteh Villa 1500sq.m, 5bdrs S/p, yard (\$4000)
Elahieh (\$1800) 180sq.m, 3bdrs S/p, S, J, & F.F	Farmaneh (\$3000) 200sq.m, 3bdrs S/pool, S, J, & F.F	Darrous bldg 3stoery, 10bdrs pkgs (\$8000)

Don't Waste Your Time

Visit our website to choose your desired rental Properties

www.DeltaHOME.ir

The Most Specialized Website for Foreigners

HOME
Real Estate

Member of DELTA Real Estate Group
(021) 88888865

FIRST INDIAN RESTAURANT
IN IRAN

PRIVATE PARKING LOT

Jahan Hotel (Exelsior) – Rahimzade Alley – Taleqani
Crossroads – Valiasr St. Tel: 66476855

TEHRAN TIMES

Iran's Leading
International Daily

Advertising Dept

Tel:
021 - 430 51 450

TEHRAN TIMES
Iran's Leading International Daily

ENGLISH PERSIAN GLOSSARY

واژه نامه اصطلاحات مطبوعات
انگلیسی - فارسی

The Tehran Times new pocket-sized glossary is now available on the market. The reader-friendly is a rich source of the most common journalistic terminology collected by the daily's retired staff.

It can benefit a wide range of tastes from students to professional journalists. Persian equivalents have been given for all entries, including idioms and expressions. The glossary also includes example sentences for entries the authors thought it would be a bit difficult to learn.

For more information contact:

Tel: 021 - 430 51 450

times1979@gmail.com

Iran to produce Insulin by late 2019

HEALTH **TEHRAN**— Iran will start producing insulin by late 2019, said the managing director of Novo Nordisk Pars Company.

According to IRIB, Dr. Qobad Shahbazi further announced that the factory for production of insulin is ready to work and all the required equipment are imported.

The factory's construction started in 2005 in Savojbolagh County, Alborz Province.

Shahbazi made the remarks on Monday on the sidelines of a conference called "Tehran, the Capital of Changing Diabetes".

Projects to address diabetes' prevalence in Tehran

Over the conference, an official with Tehran Municipality said "Tehran, the Capital of Changing Diabetes" is a new project that is expected to be implemented over the next three years.

Zeinab Nasiri, the director of Health Department at Tehran Municipality added that the project is aimed at establishing urban areas and facilities that fit the needs of Diabetic patients.

According to Nasiri, the prevalence of diabetes is 11% in the country, but it averages 13% in Tehran.

"The urban life style in metropolises like Tehran heightens the risk of diabetes, so we must make changes in many areas including the diet and exercise patterns," she further remarked.

"The Municipality is aiming to give peo-



Zeinab Nasiri, the director of Health Department at Tehran Municipality, speaking at a conference for combatting diabetes.

ple more walking areas with changing the urban design so that the city becomes more pedestrian-oriented rather than car oriented," she said.

"In this project, 352 Social Groups

cooperated with 352 groups of volunteer doctors in the field of diabetes, so that proper facilities are set up across the city where people are provided with medical care as well as educational and preventive

programs," added Nasiri.

■ **"Diabeto", an online application**
According to Nasiri, Setting up an online application called "Diabeto" is another purpose in this project.

The application will introduce all available walking areas, sports centers as well as screening and medical centers for people who suffer diabetes or want to prevent it, she said.

According to Dr. Abdolreza Maadi, the director of "Diabeto" project, the application will be available by the end of the Iranian month of Farvardin (April 22).

In mid-November 2018, the Health Ministry's director for non-communicable diseases said that among Iranians over the age of 25, 11 percent suffer from diabetes type 2 and 18 percent are pre-diabetic.

Afshin Ostovar also announced that diabetes has direct and indirect costs for Iran to the tune of \$4 billion per year.

Alireza Mahdavi, the director of National Program for Prevention and Control of Diabetes, also said that annually one percent is added to the population of diabetics in the country.

According to the World Health Organization, the number of people with diabetes has risen from 108 million in 1980 to 422 million in 2014. In 2015, diabetes was the direct cause of 1.6 million deaths and in 2012 high blood glucose was the cause of another 2.2 million deaths.

Ability to do pushups may predict cardiovascular risk

A new study suggests that the more pushups a man is able to complete, the lower his cardiovascular risk and vice versa. These findings may establish a new measure of risk assessment that is simple and does not require costly specialized equipment.

Being able to do more pushups may correlate with a lower cardiovascular risk in men, a new study shows.

World Health Organization (WHO) data indicate that every year there are 17.9 million deaths due to cardiovascular diseases (CVDs), accounting for approximately 31 percent of global deaths.

Many of the factors that increase the risk of CVD are modifiable, chiefly an unhealthy diet, a lack of physical activity, smoking, or frequent consumption of alcohol.

The link between exercise — particularly physical fitness — and CVD, therefore, is not a new one.

Yet current methods of correctly assessing physical fitness in relation to cardiovascular risk, such as the cardiac exercise stress test (or submaximal treadmill exercise test), are costly and can take a fair amount of time to conduct.

Now, the findings of a new study from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health in Boston, MA, may allow physicians to estimate risk more easily, based simply on a person's capacity to complete multiple pushups.

The results, which appear in JAMA Network Open and are accessible online, indicate that physically active men who are able to do more than 40 pushups may have a lower CVD risk than peers who can complete fewer pushups.

"Our findings provide evidence that pushup capacity could be an easy, no-cost method to help assess cardiovascular disease risk in almost any setting," says first author Justin Yang, M.D.

"Surprisingly, pushup capacity was more strongly associated with cardiovascular disease risk than the results of submaximal treadmill tests," he adds.

■ The more pushups you can do, the better

In the current study — which is probably the first of its kind — the research team collected and analyzed the health information of 1,104 active male firefighters with a mean age of 39.6 and mean BMI of 28.7. These data covered a period of 10 years, between 2000 and 2010.

At the beginning of the study, the researchers measured both the pushup capacity and the submaximal treadmill exercise tolerance of each participant.

The investigators gathered the remaining relevant data through the participants' yearly physical exams and by asking them to fill in a series of medical questionnaires.

(Source: medical news today)



A "superfood" medicinal plant industrialized

HEALTH **TEHRAN** — Researchers at the National Institute of Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology successfully extracted peptides isolated from seeds of a tropical tree, Moringa.

Moringa, native to parts of Africa and Asia, is the sole genus in the flowering plant family Moringaceae. The most widely cultivated species is Moringa oleifera, a fast-growing, drought-resistant tree, native to tropical and subtropical regions of South Asia. It is widely cultivated for its young seed pods and leaves used as vegetables and for traditional herbal medicine. It is also used for water purification.

The plant is marketed as a superfood, health food, and medicinal plant.

The technology of this procedure was sold to a knowledge-based company who are now using the substance



for producing shampoos and sprays, said the company's managing director, Vahid Gorji, ISNA reported on Tuesday.

According to Gorji, the extracts of Moringa were formerly imported into the country; however, this species is largely found in Sistan-Baluchestan province, southeastern Iran.

"The extraction of proteins from this plant is a rather complicated process, and the product will display the expected effects if only the substances were extracted properly," Gorji further explained.

According to him, the peptides extracted from Moringa can protect the face and body from pollution. Furthermore, the Moringa oil can be used as a food supplement, as a base for cosmetics, and for hair and the skin.

He further noticed that Moringa trees have been used to combat malnutrition, especially among infants and nursing mothers.

TASHRIFAT INTERNATIONAL REAL ESTATE AGENCY

**SATISFACTION
GUARANTEED**

APARTMENT

- Jordan**
4 Bdrs,fully
furn,260sq.m,spj,\$3000
- Elahiyeh Chenaran**
Fantastic 4 Bdrs,500 Sq.m, for
those seeking the best
- Darous**
2Bdrs,fully furn,3rd fl.,brand
new,100 sqm,lobby
1600
- Zaferaniyeh-Yekta,**
Apartment-villa
French-style
3Bdrs,fully furn 360 sq.m.sp,
EURO 5000
- Valiasre-Bagheferdos**
3 Bdrs,fully furn,brand
new,5th fl., 150 sq.m ,indoor
spj,\$1900
- Mirdamad-Naft**
3 Bdrs,fully furn,5th fl.,200
sq.m, \$ 2000
Close to Paladium Shopping
center
3Bdrs,180 sq.m,fully
furn,lobby,sp,garden,\$2000

VILLA

- Elahiyeh**
Triplex-800 sq.m built up,1000
sq.m land,Semi-furn,7
Bdrs,spj,\$9000
- Zaferaniyeh**
Duplex, 4 Bdrs,unfurn,350
sq.m,spj,\$8000
- Niavaran**
2000 sq.m land,green
garden,500 sq.m built up
area,indoor spj,4Bdrs,fully
furn,triplex,\$15000
- Darous**
1000 sq.m land,400 sq.m built
up area, flat.4 Bdrs,spj.\$7000
- Jordan**
850 sq.m land,500 sq.m
built up,5 Bdrs,spj,furn/
unfurn,duplex,\$7000



Mr. Shahin

Nobody does it better

09121081212

Since: 1987

مالکین محترم املاک مسکونی و اداری شما را
جهت اجاره به خارجی نیازمندیم

Tel: 22723121

tehranfirstchoice@gmail.com

**We give service with a
difference...We care!**
✓Long & Short term rentals
✓Purchase Properties

**FURNISHED - UNFURNISHED
Villa-Apartment-Office-
Building**

OFFICE

- From 50 to 8000 sq.m available**
**With all facilities in different
areas**
Jordan
100 sq.m,3
rooms,parking,brand new
3rd fl.,\$1700
- Valiasre**
150 sq.m brand new, all
facilities,5th fl.,\$2300
- Vozara**
250 sq.m,all facilities
8th fl.,,\$4000
- Mirdamad-Naft**
120 sq.m,6th fl., \$1700
- vanak**
shariati
pasdaran
shahrak gharb
saadatabad
4000-3000-5000-4000-1000
sq.m,full,reasonable price

FOR: EMBASSY/COMPANY

- Farmaniyeh,**
4-storey building,1000 sq.m,
all facilities,\$10000
- Zaferaniyeh**
Triplex villa,800 sq.m,built
up,1000 sq.m land,12
rooms,\$8500
- Niavaran**
Triplex villa,2000 sq.m
land,600 sq.m built up ,spj,all
facilities,\$15000
- Darous**
Duplex villa,600 sq.m built
up,1000 sq.m land ,all
facilities,\$8000
- Other areas:**
Farmaniyeh
Aghdasiyeh
Shahrak Gharb
Shariati-Pasdaran
Valiasre
Tajrish
Jordan
Vanak
Arjantin
Zafar...
nice cases ready to move in.

ISA calls on universities to propose plans for cooperation

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Space Agency (ISA) has called on universities to propose plans for further cooperation, the ISA director Morteza Barari said, IRNA reported on Monday.

The emerging space economy is one of the important issues, which has global impacts and cannot be disregarded, he said.



Innovation and entrepreneurship is the second issue, which is widely discussed as a result of space technology nowadays, he added.

“According to global research, 20 percent of space economy is related to teamwork and 80 percent belongs to services.”

Several startups active in the field of space industry is forming and the innovative young generation is consider space as a new market, he explained.

According to Morgan Stanley, it is estimates that the global space industry could generate revenue of \$1.1 trillion or more in 2040, up from \$350 billion, currently. Yet, the most significant short- and medium-term opportunities may come from satellite broadband Internet access.

It estimates that satellite broadband will represent 50% of the projected growth of the global space economy by 2040—and as much as 70% in the most bullish scenario. Launching satellites that offer broadband Internet service will help to drive down the cost of data, just as demand for that data explodes.

Tehran to host festival on innovation in urban management

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — Tehran Urban Research and Planning Center will host a festival on research and innovation in urban management in the third Iranian calendar month Khordad (May 22-June 21).

The sharing and development of global scientific findings in the field of urban management is one the main aims of the festival, which will be held on the urban branding this year, the secretary of the event Meysam Basirat announced.

Management infrastructure and urban financial development, social and cultural urban development, application of research projects, urban transportation, urban services and environment, architecture and urban engineering, safety and crisis are some items discussed during the event, he said.

He said that Tehran Municipality’s motto will be “To Tehran 1400” during the next Iranian calendar year 1398, which begins on March 21.

According to sciencedirect.com, urban branding is a new approach toward urban development of sustainable cities. City branding, a novel aspect of urban communication, improves marketing of the city image in various ways by converting the visual image of the city into a brand image.

Unique characteristics of the city are featured and a sustainable urban image is created. This paper will focus on city branding as a powerful image-building strategy.

Car helps you avoid red lights by suggesting speeds

Cars already tell you how long a red light will last, but now they’ll help you avoid those red lights in the first place. It’s launching the first implementation of the Green Light Optimization Speed Advisory (GLOSA), a system that provides speed recommendations to reduce the amount of time you spend at red lights. The extension of Traffic Light Information technology combines your car’s position and traffic light data to calculate an ideal speed that shows up on your vehicle’s instrument cluster or heads-up display. In theory, you could save time by driving slightly slower and catching an uninterrupted string of green lights.



Speed suggestions and TLI are available as part of an Audi Connect Prime feature on 2017 and newer models outside of the A3 and TT. You’re still limited to using them in certain areas, however. TLI is currently available in 13 urban regions, including Dallas, Denver, Gainesville, Houston, Kansas City, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, New York (White Plains), Orlando, Phoenix, Portland, the San Francisco Bay Area (Palo Alto and Walnut Creek) and Washington, DC.

The technology could become more useful in the future, though. Future TLI upgrades might use a car’s automatic stop/start system to restart the engine when a red light is turning green, and a navigation tie-in could plan routes that minimize stops. Think of this as another small step toward autonomous cars. You might still have to take the wheel, but computers are minimizing many of the little annoyances.

(Source: engadget.com)

‘Knowledge-based systems in agriculture secure food safety’

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — Due to lack of natural resources, knowledge-based systems in the agriculture sector are the only way that secure food safety, an official with the Ministry of Agriculture has said.

Agriculture is one of the main principles for national development and steps should be taken to develop knowledge-based systems for it, Ali Akbar Moayyedi explained.

Instead of resource-based agriculture, the skills for innovation and research should be strengthened amongst the farmers, he said, Mehr reported on Monday.

Universities, research centers and the Basij should use their complete capacities to help knowledge-based systems in agriculture, he said.

There are 600 agricultural research plan are conducted by over 2000 academics in universities and research centers, he said.

Over 150 findings in the field of agriculture provides nationwide annually, which paved the way for knowledge-based agriculture, he added.

In early February 2019, the head of soil protection unit of the Forests, Range, and Watershed Management Organization Hooshang Jazi announced that soil erosion and pollution are the two major important environmental problems in the country, as some 16.7 tons of soil per hectare erodes annually.

However the Information and Communication Technology Ministry and the Ministry of Agriculture signed an agreement in July 2018 to boost smart irrigation in a bid to help deal with water shortage in the country and helps the farmers to protect their fields for pest control through space technology.

According to the agreement, it is projected that at least 20 percent of the agricultural economy to be linked with the digital economy over the course of four years so that the private sector’s contribution to smart agriculture would rise by 300 percent.

Besides, some startups in Iran have recently been launched providing services for farmers with some space-based data on meteorology and smart agriculture.



Agriculture is one of the main principles for national development and steps should be taken to develop knowledge-based systems for it.

Hotline optimized to register ICT complaints in Iran



TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — The hotline 195 has been optimized for individuals who are willing to file complaints regarding information and communication technology (ICT) crimes, the deputy ICT minister has said, Mehr reported on Monday.

Hossein Fallah Joushaqani called the protection of right of internet, telecommunication and post services users as one of the main duties of telecommunication regulators.

The hotline 195 was established years ago, however was optimized according to new technologies according to the users’ demands, he said.

The complainants can attach GPS latitude and other documents for their

complaints via the hotline, he explained.

The complaints on landline, internet, cellphone, post services and radiation from cell phone towers can be submitted to the hotline, he said.

He said that the users can make their complaints through typing #195# the name of operator in all social media.

According to phys.org, the influence of ICT on traditional crimes such as burglary, robbery, intimidation and fraud is on the rise. ICT plays a greater role in common crimes than people tend to think. In addition, ICT had brought about a number of shifts in the profiles of the perpetrator and victim: digital crimes appear to involve a growing female and juvenile component.

Iran heading towards 5G telecom network: minister



TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Ministry aims to develop the 5th Generation (5G) -- the latest generation of cellular mobile communications -- and Internet of things (IoT) in the next Iranian calendar year 1398 (starting on March 21).

“Heading towards 5G! It is an aim we pursue besides development of IoT in 1398. Now, all the Iranian cities and over 66 percent of villages have 3G/4G coverage. We do our best for development of public access in next year despite sanctions. The new generation of telecommunication is waiting for us!” ICT Minister Mohammad Javad

Azari Jahromi wrote on his Twitter account, ILNA reported on Monday.

According to the UN report released in June 2018, Iran moved 20 notches up to rank 86 among 193 countries in the United Nations E-Government Development Index (EGDI 2018) in comparison with EGDI 2017.

Iran’s EGDI value was 0.6083 this year. Regarding the sub-items, the country got 0.6319 score in the online service index (OSI), 0.4566 in the telecommunication infrastructure index (TII), and 0.7364 in the human capital index (HCI) this year.

Iran was amongst 17 countries that transitioned from Middle- to High-EGDI level group.

Amirkabir named most innovative university of Iran

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — Amirkabir University of Technology was named the most innovative Iranian university for the current Iranian calendar year 1397 (started on March 21, 2018), Mehr reported on Monday.

According to the statistics released by the Iran Patent Center, one third of international patents registered by the universities and research centers belonged to Amirkabir University during the Iranian calendar years 1394 (March 2015-March 2016) and 1395 (March 2016-March 2017).

During the Iranian calendar year 1396 (ended on March 20, 2018), still 31 percent of the patent registration belonged to Amirkabir University, the academic at the university Mehdi Majidpour announced.

Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, incubator center



at Tarbiat Modarres University and Iran Polymer and Petrochemical Institute follow Amirkabir University on the list, he said.

Amirkabir University applied for 28 patent registration during current year, out of which six were approved, he concluded.

According to a report released in mid-July 2018, Iran ranks second amongst 9 central and southeast Asian countries in Global Innovation Index (GII) 2018.

With score 33.44 out of 100, Iran ranks 16 in 34 upper middle income countries and with 0.82 Innovation Efficiency Ratio it ranks 11 amongst 126 countries.

In 2017, Iran ranked 75 amongst 127 countries on GI, which is published by World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and Cornell University, INSEAD.

Travel buyers not impressed with new technology

Travel buyers are yet to be convinced by next generation technology, according to research conducted by the Business Travel Show. Approximately one fifth of the 134 European buyers polled believe that by 2022, bots, Blockchain and alternative realities (AR, VR, MR, XR) will ‘significantly improve booking, saving time and money’, but more than half claim it will have minimal to no impact on the industry over the next three years.

The data suggests there is more faith in the opportunities presented by AI: 17% believe it has the potential to ‘revolutionize’ the travel industry by 2022, one quarter feel it will ‘significantly enhance the traveler experience’ in that time, and 39% believe it will have little

or no impact.

The survey also asked buyers how the industry will best survive the next three years. Despite the apparent nonchalance surrounding new technology, two thirds of those polled claim its survival will depend on innovation; 30% believe it will be through evolution. Just 4% think the sector needs a total reboot.

We Build Bots founder Paul Shepherd, who is taking part in a panel session about bots at Business Travel Show, February 20 at 10am, commented: “When built and used correctly, chatbots can transform customer service, increase efficiencies and even help companies to save and make money. Multinational airlines and online travel sites would offer a competitive advantage if they were to

offer a full integrated chatbot using AI and machine learning combined with customer service agent support in order to deliver a 24/7/365 intuitive service.”

On the next three years, he added: “Natural Language Processing (NLP) will continue to improve, which means that chatbots will become easier and more intuitive to interact with. As well as this, the rise in voice will continue to have a huge impact. The possibilities of using voice are endless. Imagine asking your smart home device to check you into your next flight and receiving your boarding pass directly into your inbox. Or alternatively, ask it to search for a holiday that meets your needs, whether that be in school holidays, a particular temperature



or less than a four-hour flight away. Chatbots use of voice is improving and evolving consistently and going forward, we’re sure to see huge developments in this space.”

The Business Travel Show takes place at Olympia London, 20-21 February. (Source: conference-news.co.uk)

Chinese scientists want to build a power station in space by 2030

The design would sit in Earth's orbit and turn the sun's rays into electricity before beaming the energy back to Earth.

It would provide a near-constant supply of electricity if the technology needed can be developed ahead of the 2030 guideline set by the Chinese space agency.

A test of the technology is expected to take place between 2021 and 2025 in the stratosphere before a one megawatt solar facility is spent into space by 2030, according to the state-backed Science and Technology Daily.

The Asian superpower has the second largest amount of state money allocated for space exploration - behind only the U.S.

China's \$8 billion (£6.19 billion) annual budget has seen it rapidly catch rivals such as Russia and the U.S. in the battle for space superiority.

Using 3D printing technology

The country has also claimed it wants to be the first country to establish a base on the moon and says it will build it using 3D printing technology.

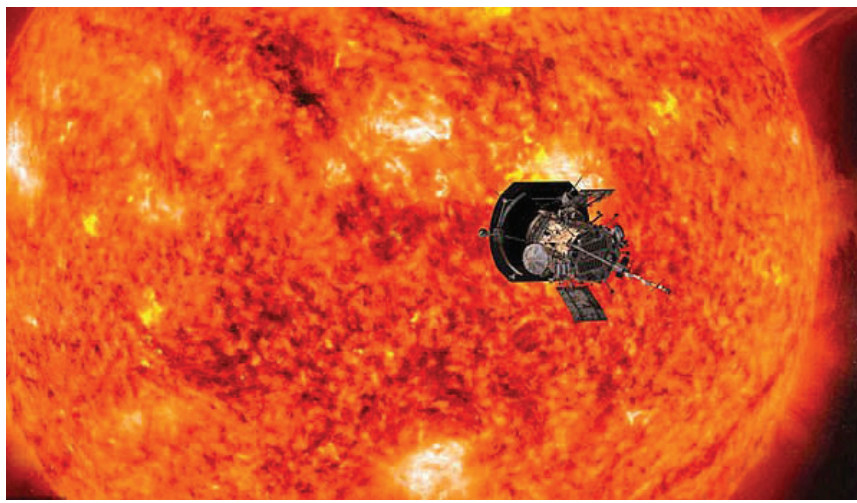
Officials from the Chinese space agency also said the country will return to the moon by the end of the year with the Chang'e-5 mission.

Three successive missions will further explore the barren surface and the viability of building houses there.

China is swiftly establishing a reputation as one of the forerunners in the renaissance of the space race with its continued investment in both Martian and lunar missions.

After Chang'e-5 returns lunar rocks from the surface the next mission, Chang'e-6 will be the first mission to explore the south pole of the moon.

Chang'e-7 will study the land surface, composition and space environment in a



comprehensive mission, it was claimed, while Chang'e-8 will focus on technical surface analysis.

Officials from the Chinese space agency have said the country will return to the moon by the end of 2019 with the Chang'e-5 mission.

This will collect rocks from the near side of the moon and return them to Earth for further study.

Chang'e-6 will be the first mission to explore the south pole of the moon.

Chang'e-7 will study the land surface, composition, space environment in a comprehensive mission, it was claimed, while Chang'e-8 will focus on technical surface analysis.

China is also reportedly working on building a lunar base using 3D printing technology.

Mission number eight will likely lay the groundwork for this as it strives to verify the technology earmarked for the project and if it is viable as a scientific base.

A test of the technology is expected to take place between 2021 and 2025 in the stratosphere before a one megawatt solar facility is spent into space by 2030, according to the state-backed Science and Technology Daily.

(Source: dailymail.co.uk)

Grasses found to cheat evolution by stealing genes from their neighbors

Researchers have found that a species of grass known as *Alloteropsis semialata* can steal genes from its neighbors to give it an evolutionary advantage.

Who among us didn't cheat on a test at school by copying off kids nearby? Well it turns out that grasses are doing the same thing on an evolutionary level. Scientists have found evidence that some species of grasses are stealing genes from their neighbors to help them adapt, effectively bypassing millions of years' worth of evolution.

Traditionally, gene transfer happens "vertically," passed down from parents to their offspring. But some organisms can transfer genes horizontally or laterally. Most notoriously, bacteria use the cheeky technique to quickly develop resistance to antibiotics and share it around.

Now researchers at the University of Sheffield have found that, surprisingly, some grasses are also running a "counterfeit genes" ring. The discovery was made by studying the genome of

Alloteropsis semialata grass, and comparing it to the genomes of 150 other grass species. The similarity of certain DNA sequences showed that they had been acquired laterally from their natural neighbors.

Genetic information

"Grasses are simply stealing genes and taking an evolutionary shortcut," says Luke Dunning, an author of the study. "They are acting as a sponge, absorbing useful genetic information from their neighbors to out compete their relatives and survive in hostile habitats without putting in the millions of years it usually takes to evolve these adaptations."

Interestingly enough, the study also showed that *Alloteropsis semialata* wasn't



the only kind of grass using the trick. On the surface it might seem like a good thing: it helps grass thrive, and we need grass - especially considering that broad name includes foods like wheat, maize, rice and sugar cane.

But there could be a darker side to a bit of sneaky gene stealing. The researchers point out that natural grasses could copy certain genes from genetically-modified (GM) crops, allowing these lab-made additions to "escape" into the wild. While scientists currently take plenty of precautions to prevent losing control of GM organisms, this could undo that hard work and potentially wreak havoc on ecosystems.

"This research may make us as a society reconsider how we view GM technology as grasses have naturally exploited a similar process," says Dunning. "Eventually, this research may also help us to understand how genes can escape from GM crops to wild species or other non-GM crops, and provide solutions to reduce the likelihood of this happening. The next step is to understand the biological mechanism behind this phenomenon and we will carry out further studies to answer this."

(Source: newatlas.com)

Spherical display brings virtual collaboration closer to reality

Virtual reality can often make a user feel isolated from the world, with only computer-generated characters for company. But researchers at the University of British Columbia and University of Saskatchewan think they may have found a way to encourage a more sociable virtual reality.

The researchers have developed a ball-shaped VR display that supports up to two users at a time, using advanced calibration and graphics rendering techniques that produce a complete, distortion-free 3D image even when viewed from multiple angles.

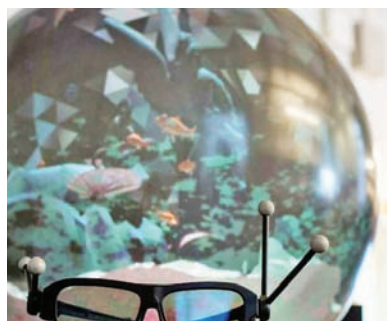
Most spherical VR displays in the market are capable of showing a correct image only from a single viewpoint, said lead researcher Sidney Fels, an electrical and computer engineering professor at UBC.

"When you look at our globe, the 3D illusion is rich and correct from any angle," explained Fels. "This allows two users to use the display to do some sort of collaborative task or enjoy a multiplayer game, while being in the same space. It's one of the very first spherical VR systems with this capability."

Creating the images

The system, which the researchers are calling Crystal, includes a 24-inch (600 millimetre) hollow ball-shaped display. The display surface was custom-made to specifications in Ottawa, while four high-speed projectors and one camera used for creating the images, calibration and touch sensing were purchased off-the-shelf.

The researchers are working on a four-person system and see many potential



uses for their display in the future, including multiplayer virtual reality games, virtual surgery and VR-aided learning. However, they are focusing on teleconferencing applications and computer-aided design for now.

"Imagine a remote user joining a meeting of local users. At either location you can have a Crystal globe, which is great for seeing people's heads and faces in 3D," said Ian Stavness, a computer science professor at the University of Saskatchewan and a member of the research team. "Or you can have a team of industrial designers in a room, perfecting a design with the help of VR and motion tracking technology."

While the technology is young, the researchers are forecasting a good future for it.

"We're not saying that spherical VR will replace flat screens or headsets," said Fels, adding "but we think it can be a good option for VR activities where you still want to see and talk to other people--be it at home or in the office, for work or play."

(Source: eurekaalert.org)

Global warming pioneer Wallace Smith Broecker dies

Wallace Smith Broecker, the scientist who brought the term "global warming" into public awareness, has died at the age of 87.

Broecker, who became known as the "Grandfather of Climate Science," predicted in the 1970s that rising levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere would lead to an increase in global temperatures. He also recognized what is known as the Ocean Conveyor Belt -- a major scientific breakthrough that linked oceanography to climate.

A spokesman from Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory said Broecker passed away at a New York City hospital on Monday. He had been ailing for the last few months, Associated Press reports.

Princeton University professor Michael Oppenheimer told the news agency that Broecker -- known as Wally to his friends -- was "unique, brilliant and combative." He said Broecker's discoveries were fundamental to understanding how Earth's climate had changed.

"No scientist was more stimulating to engage with," Oppenheimer said. "He was an instigator in a good way, willing to press unpopular ideas, like lofting particles to offset climate change. But it was always a two-way conversation, never dull, always educational. I'll miss him."

Michael Mann, director of the Earth System Science Center at Pennsylvania State University, told AP: "Broecker single-handedly popularized the notion that this could lead to a dramatic climate change 'tipping point' and, more generally, Broecker helped communicate to the public and policymakers the potential for abrupt climate changes and unwelcome 'surprises' as a result of climate change."

Stefan Rahmstorf, head of Earth System Analysis at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, said Broecker was a "great inspiration" and that it had been a privilege to work with him on the Panel on Abrupt Climate Change.

Robert Rohde, Lead scientist at the California-based non-profit Berkeley Earth, said Broecker was a "legend of climate science who gave us the term 'global warming.'"

Broecker joined Columbia University in 1959. In a page dedicated to him, the university says he was a "genius and pioneer" and "arguably one of the world's greatest" geoscientists. It describes how throughout his career Broecker was a leader in the "war on anthropogenic climate change," the university notes.

(Source: Reuters)

Saving the bats, one cave at a time, say biologists

A crew of five wildlife biologists wearing overalls, helmets and headlamps walked up the flanks of a juniper-studded mountain and climbed through stout steel bars to enter an abandoned mine that serves as a bat hibernaculum.

The swinging white light of the headlamps probed cracks and crevices in the walls of the long dark and narrow tunnel, as the team walked half a mile into the Earth. When they spied a bat, they gently plucked the mouse-sized, chestnut brown mammal -- Townsend's long eared and Western small footed are the two most abundant species here -- off the walls and deposited them in white cloth bags. A lone big brown bat was also gathered.

During the survey in November, the bats were in their pre-hibernation phase, clinging to the gray rock wall with tiny grappling hook-like feet, gently breathing. They are in full hibernation mode now.

Cute, interesting and facing a deeply uncertain future. This foray is part of a continentwide effort, from Canada to Oklahoma, to plumb mines and caves in hopes of figuring out how a virulent and rapidly spreading invasive fungal bat disease called white-nose syndrome, which is bearing down on the West, will behave when it hits the native populations here.

"White-nose syndrome represents one of the most consequential wildlife diseases of modern times," wrote the authors of one recent paper published in *mSphere*, a journal of the American Society for Microbiology. Since 2006, the "disease has killed millions of bats and threatens several formerly abundant species with extirpation or extinction."

After some 30 animals were gathered from the mine walls, the researchers hiked back out of the tunnel, disrobed and put their clothes into plastic bags to launder, and washed their helmets and other equipment with alcohol to avoid inadvertently spreading the fungus, should it be present.

(Source: NYT)

Ultra-lightweight ceramic material withstands extreme temperatures: new study

Researchers have created an extremely light, very durable ceramic aerogel. The material could be used for applications like insulating spacecraft because it can withstand the intense heat and severe temperature changes that space missions endure.

UCLA researchers and collaborators at eight other research institutions have created an extremely light, very durable ceramic aerogel. The material could be used for applications like insulating spacecraft because it can withstand the intense heat and severe temperature changes that space missions endure.

Ceramic aerogels have been used to insulate industrial equipment since the 1990s, and they have been used to insulate scientific equipment on NASA's Mars rover missions.

But the new version is much more durable after exposure to extreme heat and repeated temperature spikes, and much lighter. Its unique atomic composition and microscopic structure also make it unusually elastic.

When it's heated, the material contracts rather than expanding like other ceramics do. It also contracts perpendicularly to the direction that it's compressed -- imagine pressing a tennis ball on a table and having the center of the ball move inward rather than expanding out -- the opposite of how most materials react when compressed.

As a result, the material is far more flexible and less brittle than current state-of-the-art ceramic aerogels:

It can be compressed to 5 percent of its original volume and fully recover, while other existing aerogels can be compressed to only about 20 percent. The research was led by Xiangfeng Duan, a UCLA professor of chemistry and biochemistry; Yu Huang, a UCLA professor of materials science and engineering; and Hui Li of Harbin Institute of Technology, China.

(Source: sciencedaily.com)

Plastics reach remote pristine environments, scientists say

Scientists have warned about the impact of plastic pollution in the most pristine corners of the world after discovering chemical additives in birds' eggs in the High Arctic.

Eggs laid by northern fulmars on Prince Leopold Island in the Canadian Arctic tested positive for hormone-disrupting phthalates, a family of chemicals that are added to plastics to keep them flexible. It is the first time the additives have been found in Arctic birds' eggs.

The contaminants are thought to have leached from plastic debris that the birds ingested while hunting for fish, squid and shrimp in the Lancaster Sound at the entrance to the Northwest Passage. The birds spend most of their lives feeding at sea, returning to their nests only to breed.

Northern fulmars have an oily fluid in their stomachs, which they projectile-vomit at invaders that threaten their nests. Scientists believe the phthalates found their way into the fluid, and from there passed into the bloodstream and the eggs that females were producing.

The pristine environment

Jennifer Provencher at the Canadian Wildlife Service said it was worrying to find the additives in the eggs of birds in such a pristine environment. The northern fulmars in the Arctic tend to come across far less plastic than other birds.

Provencher's tests revealed that mothers passed on a cocktail of contaminants to their unborn chicks. "It's really tragic," she said at a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Washington DC. "That bird, from the very beginning of its development, will have



those contaminants inside it."

She analyzed the yolk and albumin of five northern fulmar eggs collected on Prince Leopold Island and found that one tested positive for phthalates. The chemicals disrupt hormones, or the endocrine system, and have been linked to birth defects, fertility problems and a host of metabolic diseases. Many phthalates have been banned in children's toys on safety grounds.

More work is needed to confirm whether the additives cause any harm. "We know that these chemicals are often endocrine disruptors, and we know that they can interrupt

hormonal development and cause deformations. But whether they actually cause any harm in the eggs is something we don't know," Provencher said.

Other plastic contaminants

Further tests found traces of other plastic contaminants in northern fulmar and black-legged kittiwake eggs collected from the same nesting sites. Eggs from both birds tested positive for SDPAs and BZT-UVs, which are added to plastics to stop them degrading and losing their color in sunlight, respectively.

Northern fulmars are large, albatross-like birds that soar low over the waves in search of food. More than half a million breeding pairs nest on the cliffs of Britain, with most on the Scottish coastline and Northern Isles.

Because northern fulmars can live for 40 years or more, the birds have been exposed to significant plastic debris in the seas for only a few generations. That meant the birds had not had time to adapt to the changing environment, Provencher said.

Alex Bond, a conservation biologist who studies seabirds and marine debris at the Natural History Museum in London, said: "It's another example of the often invisible impacts that plastics can have on wildlife. It may not be enough to result in mortality, but it's certainly not a positive thing, and combined with the pressures from other contaminants -- from plastics and from the birds' prey -- contributes to the increased threats that many of the world's seabirds are facing."

(Source: The Guardian)

Six metro stations to be inaugurated within month

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Six new stations in lines 6 and 7 of Tehran subway will be inaugurated by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20), director for Tehran Urban and Suburban Railway Operation Company has announced.

“Some 3 stations on southern part of line 6 stretching to 9 kilometers and 3 stations on northern part of line 7 stretching to 7.5 kilometers will be operational within the next month,” Tasnim quoted Ali Emam as saying on Monday.



Construction measures have been completed on the aforementioned stations, currently, subway cars and other required facilities which have entered the country a week ago, are being installed, he added.

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

Free health care services for over 108,000 people in deprived areas

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) has provided free health care services to 108,732 patients residing in underprivileged areas during the Iranian calendar month of Bahman (January 21-February 19), head of the Red Crescent volunteer organization has said.

Groups of volunteer health care providers have been dispatched to 471 underprivileged villages in 31 provinces of the country, IRNA quoted Mohammad Nasiri as saying on Monday.

He further explained that health groups consisting of 2,584 general practitioners, specialists, dentists, and surgeons provide financially struggling individuals with free educational, health, medical and dental services.

He also noted that arrangements have been made to establish a field hospital and supply medicines for most prevalent diseases in the region

Moreover, medical consumables and equipment including syringes, needles, sutures, and sealants worth of 8 billion rials (about \$200,000) and some 10,534 medical equipment and devices have been sent to the areas for better services, he concluded.

LEARN ENGLISH

You Missed the Deadline!

A: And so, I just wanted to check in with you and find out where we are with this project. As you know, you’ve missed a **fairly significant** deadline last week, and this will negatively **impact** the team’s ability to **move forward** with the next stages of this project.

B: I know, I’m really sorry that I missed the deadline. But really, it wasn’t my fault. You see, we had all of these **unexpected** technical problems at the **last minute**, and that I couldn’t get into the database and extract the kind of information that I needed for the data analysis. You know, if the tech guys would have done their job and kept the CRM stable, then I wouldn’t have missed my deadline.

A: Oh, come on! An excuse like that is **tantamount** to lying. You’re **essentially** blaming the tech team for your time management issues, rather than accepting responsibility for the fact that you were **procrastinating** for the past two weeks.

B: No, I’m not trying to **pass the buck** here; I know that it was me who is **ultimately** responsible for getting this done. But the thing is, I could have finished on time if the system hadn’t gone down. And you know, with everything I’ve got going on now, I can’t afford to waste time dealing with technical problems. I’ve got a lot **on my plate** and there are only twenty-four hours in a day...

A: I’m not going to accept this excuse. You’re using these small technical glitches **as a crutch** and trying to **rationalize** the fact that you’ve missed your deadline. Look, we have standards and I expect you to live up to those standards. No **phonier** excuses. If you’re **in over your head**, you tell me. No more missed deadlines. Now, I want that data on my desk by nine am!

■ **Key vocabulary**
fairly significant: very important or very relevant
impact: to have an effect on something
move forward: continue, go on
unexpected: coming without warning
last minute: at the last moment
tantamount: same as, equivalent to
essentially: in essence, basically
procrastinate: leave tasks or duties for a later time
pass the buck: blame someone else, pass on the responsibility
ultimately: at last; in the end; eventually
on my plate: another way of saying I have many things to do
as a crutch: used to indicate you justify failure with excuses
rationalize: to explain bad behavior in a way that (falsely) makes it seem proper or better
phony: not true, fake or false
in over your head: too much to handle
■ **Supplementary vocabulary**
behind schedule: later than expected
procrastination: the action of delaying one’s work
fabricate: to create an untrue story
justify: to give the reasons why you did something wrong
tardiness: the quality of being late often
(Source: irlanguage.com)

Iran seeking Chinese expertise for fighting SDSs

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — Iran is going to use China’s expertise on tackling sand and dust storms (SDSs) and take steps to halt the external SDS hotspots affecting south-eastern and southwestern parts of the country, head of the national working group on SDSs has said.

“Sand and dust storms is a major environmental issue, which has put many Iranians, especially those residing in southwestern areas of Iran, to considerable inconvenience,” IRNA quoted Ali Mohammad Tahmasbi-Birgani as saying on Tuesday.

To deal with the issue, Iran has made extensive efforts gaining numerous experiences which is among the world leading countries active in this field, he said, adding, while due to the urgent eradication of the issue, we are trying to use international experience.

“So far, we have been cooperating with Japan, which is mostly involved in software and advanced air quality control devices,” he stated, adding, therefore, we decided to call on China having successful experiences on overcoming SDSs.

In past recent years, Japan and South Korea joined hands to provide us funds to deal with SDSs, also China and Mongolia have emerged as the project leader for the



plans successfully implemented so far, he further explained.

Tahmasbi-Birgani went on to say that SDSs also hit Tokyo in Japan which is originally generated from China, so that the country has gone far to eliminate the problem in the country of origin.

Water flow in Hour al-Azim wetland contains SDSs: official

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — Hour al-Azim wetland being filled with water after recent above normal rainfalls and receiving amounts of its water right, has contained sand and dust storm (SDSs) haunting the southwestern Khuzestan province, director for wetlands ecosystem office of the Department of Environment (DOE) has said.

Hour al-Azim wetland is an important wetland on the border of Iran and Iraq, which was dried up and turned to a major sand and dust storm hotspot due to oil sector projects and not being granted its water right.

As long as Karkheh dam was entirely filled with rainwater recently, the Ministry of Energy has opted to open the dam and release water to Hour al-Azim wetland, which brought back life to the wetland, ISNA quoted Masoud Baqerzadeh as saying on Tuesday.

Considering recent precipitation and good water condition in the wetland, he noted that the country’s southwestern part recently received above normal rainfall which has been unprecedented for the past three decades.

Water flow in the wetland will positively affect the area’s weather condition as soil is moisturized and irreparable damages of SDSs will considerably reduce in the first six months of the next Iranian calendar year (March 20-September 22).



Additionally, the economic and social impacts of water is indisputable, as fishing and agriculture will grow along with tourism, he also added.

It is planned to fill the whole wetland by demanding the Energy Ministry to flow more water into the wetland granting its water right, he highlighted.

Responding to the DOE’s plans on preserving the wetland’s current condition, he stated that however, the water level drops significantly in the coming months due to evaporation and temperatures rise, it can be maintained through providing its water right and preventing illegal water withdrawal.

Fortunately, in accordance with the law on the conservation and restoration of wetlands, the exact amount of water right has been clearly announced to the Ministry of Energy, he highlighted, adding, it is expected that the ministry will have the necessary resources to provide the wetland’s water right.

Hundreds of animal species are at risk of extinction because wildlife trade restrictions are taking too long to come into effect, a major new study warns.

Over a quarter of animals on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) red list – the world’s most critically endangered – are not protected by Cites (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora).

Cites is regarded as the primary international framework for preventing species extinction due to international wildlife trade. It came into force in 1975 in order to coordinate and regulate trade in wildlife products, and can put into effect

bans on sales of certain species or their body parts.

The research also revealed the long wait species have to gain recognition by Cites.

Even among IUCN’s red-list species, 62 per cent of those protected by Cites had waited as long as 19 years for recognition or are still waiting to be listed up to 24 years after being first considered.

“It’s absolutely critical that policymakers allow science to inform a speedy protection process,” said Eyal Frank, co-author of the study and an assistant professor at the University of Chicago.

He said: “New trends in wildlife trade can develop quickly,

Motorcyclists responsible for 63% of accidents in Tehran

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Motorcycle riders are the highest contributors to road fatality being responsible for 63 percent of the accidents happened in the Iranian capital in the first 10 months of the current [Iranian calendar] year (starting on March 21, 2018), head of accidents department of Tehran Traffic Police has said.

Unfortunately, motorcycle users represent over 38 percent of the total traffic fatalities happened in the aforementioned period, Tasnim quoted Ehsan Momeni as saying on Tuesday.

As per the figures revealed by forensics, young motorcyclists aged 18-28 years constituted 33 percent of the fatal crashes resulted in their deaths, while being blamed for over 63 percent of the total accidents, he lamented.

He further regretted that 87 percent of motorcycle riders have lost their lives due to concussion, so it is imperative for the motorcyclists to wear a helmet, and preferably not to ride in highways.

Pointing out that 53 percent of motorcycle crashes happened in Tehran highways, he added that motorcycle drivers must be fully attentive while riding and take safety measures, as well as not doing distractive activities such as using mobile phones, smoking, eating or drinking.

Reckless riding is the biggest cause

that we can draw up a plan under the auspices of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in order to convince the neighboring countries to take action toward tackling SDSs.

It is scheduled that a delegation from China come to visit Iran for a meeting on discussing the efficient solutions for containing SDSs in the country, which is hoped to happen by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20), he concluded.

The early signs of sporadic SDS in southwestern regions, especially Khuzestan Province, was appeared in 2005. This challenge showed its strength and reached a degree that in late January the concentration of fine dust was recorded as 20 times above the standard range in some cities of the province.

According to Iran Meteorological Organization, SDS is fed by external hotspots in Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Although most of these sand and dust storms arise from external sources but one cannot neglect the internal hotspots which, as estimations show, account for about 30 percent of the problem.

Excessive water withdrawal, dam building projects and not granting the water right of wetlands are listed as the main causes for turning wetlands and once fertile grounds and pastures in the province to internal SDS hotspots.



of motorcycle accidents by 28 percent, Momeni further noted.

He went on to say that reckless lane changes, not having license, lane splitting, driving wrong direction up one-way streets, carrying heavy loads which can affect the stability and handling of your motorcycles, riding more than two people on a motorcycle, running red lights, and speaking on the cell phone are among other causes of fatal motorcycles’ accidents.

According to the World Health Organization almost half of all deaths on the world’s roads are among those with the least protection – motorcyclists, cyclists and pedestrians.

However, the likelihood of dying on the road as a motorcyclist, cyclist or pedestrian varies by region: The African Region has the highest proportion of pedestrian and cyclist deaths at 43 percent of all road traffic deaths, while these rates are relatively low in the South-East Asia Region.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

‘Satellite data efficient to contain environmental issues’

TEHRAN – Satellite images and acquisition of various satellite data makes many solutions available to reduce or even prevent environmental issues, while requires a timely utilization, head of Aerospace Research Institute (ARI) has said.

Satellite data can be used toward protecting the environment and improving the country’s ecological conditions, which is of great importance, IRNA quoted Fathollah Ommi as saying on Tuesday.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-derm, -derma, -dermis”

■ **Meaning:** skin
■ **For example:** In animal embryos, the **ectoderm** is the outer germ layer of the embryo.

PHRASAL VERB

Move around

■ **Meaning:** to change where you live very frequently, or living in many different parts of a country
■ **For example:** My dad was in the army, so we moved around a lot.

IDIOM

Count your blessings

■ **Explanation:** to focus your thoughts on all the good things in your life rather than on the negative ones
■ **For example:** Whenever anyone in the family starts to complain, my mother always advises us to count our blessings.

داده های ماهواره ای راهگشای مشکلات محیط زیست

رییس پژوهشگاه هوافضا اظهار داشت: تصاویر ماهواره ای و دستیابی به اطلاعات مختلف فضایی، راه حل های بسیاری را برای کاهش مشکلات محیط زیستی و حتی پیشگیری از آنها در دسترس قرار داده است، دستاوردی که مستلزم استفاده به موقع از این فناوری نوین است.

دکتر فتح الله امی روز سه شنبه در گفت وگو با خبرنگار علمی ایرنا افزود: داده های فضایی راهگشای بسیاری از مشکلات محیط زیستی کشور هستند و در بهبود موقعیت اکولوژیک کشور نقش به سزایی دارند.

Assad adviser rejects idea of granting Syrian Kurds autonomy

➔ “Autonomy means the partition of Syria. We have no way to partition Syria,” she told Reuters on the sidelines of a Middle East conference in Moscow organized by the Valdai Discussion Club.

“Syria is a country that is a melting pot for all people and all people are equal in front of Syrian law and in front of the Syrian constitution,” she added, calling the Kurds “a precious and very important part of the Syrian people”.

Her comments come after Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad expressed optimism last month over dialogue with Kurdish groups, and suggest the Kurds will face an uphill struggle to wring concessions from Damascus, which has said it wants to retake every inch of territory lost during eight years of war.

Shaaban sat next to Russia's Deputy For-

eign Minister at the conference and lavishly praised Moscow for its Syria intervention, saying it had shown “amazing consistency in dealing with facts on the ground”.

She was scathing about Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his idea of carving out “a safe zone” in northeast Syria however. Shaaban said the idea smacked of an illegal land grab.

“Turkey has all the new ambition to occupy other people's land and I think we are facing Erdogan who has dreams of reinvigorating and recreating the Ottoman Empire,” she said.

“But I don't think he will be able to do that because our people are there to defend our land.”

Turkey backs the anti-Assad opposition that still has a foothold in northwestern Syria, and has troops in that area.

(Source: Reuters)



News anchor: Israel turning troops into ‘human animals’

A leading Israeli news anchor has slammed Tel Aviv for turning troops into “human animals” after new reports emerged about the abuse of Palestinians in detention.

Channel 13 TV's Oshrat Kotler made the remarks on Saturday night, commenting on Israeli forces brutally beating a handcuffed and blindfolded father and forcing his son to watch it.

According to Haaretz, the Israeli soldiers slapped, punched and bludgeoned the two detainees until the father's ribs and nose were broken on January 8.

“They send children to the army, to the territories, and get them back human animals. That's the result of the occupation,” Kotler said.

Israeli mistreatment of Palestinian detainees has long been reported by rights activists and their lawyers but public access to new social media and information devices has brought new aspects of the regime's brutality to light.

Over the past year, videos of Israeli snipers rejoicing over the “successful” shooting of unarmed Palestinians have triggered a global outcry. Rights bodies have said the shootings and other violations represent what is the rule for the Israeli military.

Kotler's comments on Saturday outraged Israeli leaders who rushed to the defense of their troops, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu saying “the journalist's words deserve all condemnation.”

“Oshrat, you're confused,” hawkish Israeli education minister Naftali Bennett wrote. His new party, Hayamin Hehadash, tweeted that it would appeal to the attorney general to bring Kotler to trial.

Peace Now, an Israeli anti-settlement group that monitors settlement activity in the West Bank, supported Kotler. Channel 13 news also rallied behind Kotler.

Rising, criticism however, including from Israeli secular-nationalist Yisrael Beiteinu party, forced the anchor to clarify her statements.

“My criticism was directed only at those soldiers led by our control over the Palestinians to hurt innocent people,” she said.

The Israeli military regularly opens fire on Palestinians, accusing them of attempting to carry out stabbing attacks against its forces.

Human rights groups have criticized Tel Aviv for its shoot-to-kill policy as a large number of the Palestinians killed at the scene of attacks did not pose any serious threat to Israelis.

■ Hebrew University professor: Israel tests weapons on Palestinian children

Meantime, an Arab professor of the Hebrew University of al-Quds (Jerusalem) says the Israeli military tests various weapons against innocent Palestinians, even children, in order to learn which are the most powerful, a report said on Sunday.

Professor Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian said in a lecture last Tuesday at Columbia University that “Israel does weapons tests on Palestinian children” and that “Palestinian spaces are laboratories for the Israeli security industry.”

Shalhoub-Kevorkian, an Arab professor of social work from the Hebrew University, quoted from the testimony of a few children to assert that the Israeli military specifically targets the younger generation for these alleged tests, said a report by Israel's Army Radio.

The professor's speech, titled “Violent Technologies in Palestinian Jerusalem,” was based on the research she did in Israel during her tenure at Hebrew University. It is also presented abroad as a Hebrew University study, Dabush reported.

The university has not condemned the lecture, and has just said that the views expressed by the professor do not represent the Hebrew University's views.

The new allegations against the Israeli troops come as several media reports had earlier said the regime's military harvest organs from the Palestinian kids it kills.

Robrecht Vanderbeeken, the cultural secretary of Belgium's



ACOD trade union and a philosophy of science scholar, said in August 2018 the population of the Gaza Strip is being “starved to death, poisoned, and children are kidnapped and murdered for their organs.”

In November 2015, the Palestinian ambassador to the United Nations said Israel harvested the organs of the Palestinians it killed.

In a letter to the UN secretary general, Riyad Mansour said the bodies of Palestinians killed by Israeli security forces “were returned with missing corneas and other organs, further confirming past reports about organ harvesting by the occupying power.”

The New York Times also said in an August 2014 report that transplant brokers in Israel had pocketed enormous sums of money.

Based on the newspaper's analysis of major organ trafficking cases since 2000, Israelis had played a “disproportionate role” in organ trafficking.

The issue of organ theft by Israel was first brought to the fore in a report published by Sweden's most highly-circulated daily Aftonbladet in 2009.

Back in 2000, Dr. Yehuda Hiss, the former head of Israel's forensic institute, divulged that Israeli pathologists at the institute would harvest skin, corneas, heart valves, and bones from the bodies of Palestinians and others often without permission from relatives.

The interview was, however, released no later than 2009 by Nancy Scheper-Hughes, a professor of anthropology at the University of California-Berkeley, who had conducted it as part of her investigation into the institute, in response to a row created between Israel and Sweden over Aftonbladet's report.

■ Israel evicts Palestinian family from house in al-Quds

Moreover, Israeli forces have forcibly evicted a Palestinian family from their home in the Old City of the Israeli-occupied al-Quds (Jerusalem), where they had lived for several generations.

Citing sources, the Palestinian Ma'an news agency reported that the Israeli forces raided Hatem Abu Assab's family house in the Aqabat al-Khalidiya quarter of the Old City near the al-Aqsa Mosque on Sunday.

Witnesses said that the troops also physically assaulted the family's members after they encircled and broke into the building.

Hatem's wife, Rania, said that the Israeli forces took away his husband and son to an undisclosed location and the house was given to Israeli settlers.

The family, which currently comprises nine people, has been living in this house for more than 56 years and made several appeals to the Palestinian residents of al-Quds (Jerusalem) and different institutions to help it stand against the Israeli decision to expel it from the house.

The Abu Assab's family came to the Old City after it was forcibly displaced from al-Baqa'a neighborhood in western al-Quds (Jerusalem) in 1948 following the Deir Yassin massacre.

■ UN: Israeli settler violence has risen against Palestinians

Separately, the United Nations says acts of violence and vandalism committed by Israeli settlers against Palestin-

ians and their property have risen since the beginning of the year 2019.

Palestine's official Wafa news agency, citing a report by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), announced the news on Saturday.

OCHA's biweekly report, which covered the period from January 29 to February 11 this year, showed a weekly average of seven attacks resulting in injuries or property damage compared to an average of five in the same period in 2018 and three in 2017.

Two Palestinian teenagers, 14 and 17 years old, were killed on February 8 by the live fire of Israeli troopers during the “Great March of Return” protest rallies in the besieged Gaza Strip, the report said, adding that in the same day, another two Palestinians also succumbed to the injuries they had received in similar protests in the previous reporting period.

OCHA said the four fatalities brought the Palestinian death toll during the Gaza protests since March 2018 to 263, including 49 minors.

“About 425 trees and 14 vehicles were vandalized, and one Palestinian was injured, in attacks by Israeli settlers during the recording period,” the UN agency also said.

The injured Palestinian was a 20-year-old man, who was physically assaulted by Israeli settlers near the Jibiya village in the central West Bank district of Ramallah, it explained.

The report said the 425 Palestinian-owned trees had been vandalized by Israeli settlers in three separate incidents in al-Khalil (Hebron) in the southern West Bank and in Jalud Village in Nablus, located in the northern West Bank.

Separately, Israeli settlers punctured the tires of 14 Palestinian-owned vehicles, spray-painted racist graffiti in al-Lubban al-Sharqiya and Huwwara villages, south of Nablus, and in al-Khalayleh, near the al-Quds (Jerusalem) district, the OCHA's report further said, adding that the Israeli settlers also attempted to torch a local mosque in Deir Dibwan Village in Ramallah during the period.

“Israeli army's uprooting of trees and destruction of property occurred mainly in the northern Jordan Valley where approximately 500 trees were uprooted, four dunams of cultivated land leveled and an irrigation network damaged on February 6th in Bardala village that affected the livelihood of seven families,” the report said.

During the previous reporting period, on January 22, the Israeli military authorities uprooted 1,250 Palestinian-owned trees in Safa Village near al-Khalil, OCHA added.

The UN agency also said that during the reporting period, 15 Palestinian structures were demolished or seized in East al-Quds (Jerusalem) and Area C of the occupied West Bank, under the pretext of lacking a building permit, displacing 39 Palestinians and affecting the livelihoods of some 70 others.

Back in October, Israeli settlers stoned a Palestinian woman to death near a West Bank checkpoint south of Nablus.

The incident came two days after a group of Israeli settlers from the Yitzhar settlement broke into a high school in Urif Village, located in southern Nablus and began throwing stones at horrified students inside their classrooms.

Dozens of students were injured during the assault, which also led to the disruption of classes and material damage.

About 600,000 Israelis live in over 230 illegal settlements built since the 1967 Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and East al-Quds (Jerusalem).

Palestinians want the West Bank as part of a future independent Palestinian state with East al-Quds (Jerusalem) as its capital.

Israel's continued settlement expansion on Palestinian territories has been a major sticking point in Israeli-Palestinian talks, which have stalled since 2014.

Tensions have risen across the Palestinian territories since a move by the United States in late 2017 to recognize the holy city of al-Quds (Jerusalem) in the West Bank as Israel's “capital.”

(Source: Press TV)

Erdogan: NATO gives arms to ‘terrorists’ but not to Turkey

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has accused NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) allies of supporting “terrorists” with thousands of truckloads of weapons while ignoring Turkey's request to buy their arms.

“What kind of NATO alliance is this?” Erdogan said on Monday during an election campaign rally in southwestern Turkey's Burdur region.

“You give terrorists around 23,000 truckloads of weapons and tools through Iraq, but when we asked, you won't even sell them to us,” he added.

“We have a 911-kilometre border [with Syria]. We're under threat at any moment.”

Erdogan did not specify which nations were allegedly supplying arms through Iraq.

Turkey also expects Syria's Manbij region to be rid of “terrorists” and left to locals as soon as possible, said the Turkish leader.

Manbij has been held by the United States-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a militia spearheaded by the Kurdish People's Protection Unit (People's Defense Units/Yekineyen Parastina Gel/YPG), since 2016.

This has angered neighboring Turkey, which views the influence wielded by the YPG in northern Syria as a national security threat.

Ankara considers the YPG a “terrorist group” with ties to the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK/Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê) in Turkey. PKK has waged a decades-long armed conflict in the country, killing an estimated 40,000 people.

Ankara has threatened to target Manbij in a military operation to wipe out the YPG.

But the Kurdish militia has been Washington's main ally in the ground war against Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) in Syria for several years. The United States has warned Turkey against attacking the YPG.

Tensions have risen in Syria since the U.S. President Donald Trump's surprise announcement of the withdrawal of about 2,000 American troops from the country who operate alongside Kurdish forces in Syria's northeast.

The SDF commander-in-chief, Mazloun Kobani, called on Monday for about 1,000 to 1,500 international forces to remain in northern Syria to help fight ISIL. He expressed hope the U.S., in particular, would halt plans for a total pullout.

“We would like to have air cover, air support, and a force on the ground to coordinate with us,” Kobani told a small group of reporters after talks with senior U.S. generals in Syria.

Kobani thanked Trump for publicly stating his intent to protect the SDF but said: “I want him to live up to his word.”

The U.S. Army General Joseph Votel, head of Central Command, said after talks with Kobani he was still carrying out Trump's order for a complete withdrawal of the U.S. forces.

“We certainly understand what they would like us to do, but of course that's not the path we're on at this particular point,” Votel told reporters.

Asked about any discussions on a continuing U.S. presence in Syria, Votel said: “So the discussion really isn't about U.S. forces staying here. We've looked at potentially what coalition [forces] might be able to do here.”

Turkey has for years criticized the U.S. for supplying weapons and training to the YPG - one of the most potent ground forces in the fight to defeat ISIL.

Days after Trump's December pullout announcement, Erdogan pledged Turkey will take over the fight against the remnants of ISIL in Syria, and announced the operation against the YPG was on hold for now.

Since then, the discussion has included the establishment of a “safe zone” in northern Syria, but Turkey has insisted the area must be free of the YPG and under its control.

The Kurdish fighters say any such zone must have “international guarantees ... that would prevent foreign intervention”.

(Source: agencies)

Middle East represented over half of U.S. foreign military sales in 2018

The Middle East accounted for more than half of all the United States arms sales last year, a senior Pentagon official has revealed, saying Washington seeks to increase the figure in the coming years.

Lieutenant General Charles Hooper, the Director of the U.S. Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), said on Monday that Middle Eastern countries purchased more than \$30 billion worth of weapons and other U.S. military products in the 2018 fiscal year out of the Pentagon's total \$55 billion in foreign sales.

“Our products and services are the best in the world and we are not only hopeful, but will take every step and do everything possible, to ensure we remain a partner of choice in the UAE (United Arab Emirates) and wider Middle East,” Hooper told the International Defense Exhibition and Conference (IDEX) in the Emirati city of Abu Dhabi on Monday.

The DSCA operates under the U.S. Department of Defense and is charged with brokering military deals with the U.S. allies around the world. It also facilitates the transfer of military products, financial and technical assistance, and training and services to those countries.

Hooper said his agency was undergoing major strategic changes to cut costs and accelerate military contracts.

“We are razor-focused on improving the time frame for countries to receive much-needed material,” he said. To reach that goal, he said, the DSCA was planning to train 20,000 of its personnel around the world under a special program next year.

“Our priority is to strengthen existing partnerships and attract new ones, while helping partners train up their workforce and modernize their military equipment,” Hooper said.

Saudi, UAE among largest purchasers of U.S. weapons

When it comes to foreign weapons purchases in the Middle East, no country comes close to Saudi Arabia.

Riyadh has been frantically signing military deals with the U.S., Britain and many other European countries since March 2015, when it began the ongoing war against Yemen.

In 2017, when the U.S. President Donald Trump chose Riyadh for his debut state visit, Saudi regime leaders cemented mutual ties by signing a \$110 billion arms deal with Washington.

The extravagant spending has put a strain on Saudi Arabia's economy by driving up its military spending to beyond \$80 billion a year, much higher than what Russia and Britain are spending.

Earlier, the UAE, which is Saudi Arabia's main partner in a Riyadh-led coalition invading Yemen, announced two military deals worth around \$2 billion with the U.S. arms giant Raytheon for the purchase of Patriot missile systems.

(Source: agencies)

Abuse, ‘survival sex’ a stark reality for child migrants: report

Unaccompanied child migrants face dangerous journeys during transit, including abuse and detention, rights organizations have warned, highlighting significant failings in safeguarding unaccompanied minors.

A recent report by UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) revealed that nearly 140,000 people arrived in Greece, Italy and Spain in search of safety in 2018. Almost 11,000 of the new arrivals were unaccompanied children.

Additionally, according to the Red Cross, more than 300,000 unaccompanied child migrants are currently at high risk of sexual and gender-based violence during transit.

The perilous journey undertaken by these young migrants without an accompanying adult makes them vulnerable to

being assaulted, sexually abused, raped, trafficked into sexual exploitation or forced into “survival sex”, according to an International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) report Alone and Unsafe, which shows that the number of unaccompanied child migrants has grown five-fold in five years.

Europe accounted for more than half of unaccompanied minor arrivals in 2017, with more than 158,000 reaching the continent in the first three quarters of the year.

Currently, almost 30 percent of all asylum seekers across that continent are children, half of whom are from just three countries: Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan.

“The stark reality is that it is now standard practice that children moving through

the Mediterranean are abused, trafficked, beaten and discriminated against,” said Afshan Khan, UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund) Regional Director and Special Coordinator for the Refugee and Migrant Crisis in Europe.

A joint UNICEF-IOM report also revealed that children from sub-Saharan Africa are targeted more than any other group, highlighting discrimination and racism along transit routes.

The reason for their departure ranges from abuse at home and peer pressure to violence, says IFRC President Francesco Rocca, who called on UN member countries to address the root causes.

“In Cox's Bazar, for example, we saw many children with their neighbors because their

parents were killed,” Rocca told Al Jazeera.

“In Niger, we see young girls from Nigeria who sold themselves for sex for as low as \$3. In Central America, there's violence that drives them out. It creates a very, very difficult environment for them to live in.”

More than 40 percent of all child asylum seekers are girls. A poll by UNICEF late last year revealed that almost half of nearly 4,000 refugees and migrants aged 14 to 24 were forced to leave their countries, 44 percent of them left alone.

Some 38 percent said they did not receive any help from anyone, including family, friends or relatives, while almost half the respondents reported that they had been unable to see a doctor when needed.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Indonesia submits formal bid to host the 2032 Olympics

Indonesia has submitted a bid to host the 2032 Olympics, officials said Tuesday, after the Southeast Asian nation’s widely lauded handling of the Asian Games last summer.

Muliaman Hadad, Indonesia’s ambassador to Switzerland, submitted a formal bid letter from President Joko Widodo to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in Lausanne last week, the foreign ministry confirmed Tuesday.

“This is the right moment to show Indonesia’s capability as a big country,” Hadad said in a statement made public this week.

Widodo publicly expressed Indonesia’s interest in hosting the 2032 event in the capital, Jakarta, during last year’s Asian Games -- the world’s second biggest multi-sport event behind the Olympics.

India has also expressed an interest in hosting the 2032 games while North and South Korea have said they might enter a joint bid.

The IOC will announce the 2032 host by 2025. If successful, Indonesia would be the fourth Asian Olympics host after Japan, South Korea and China.

The next Olympics will be in 2020 in Tokyo, while Paris will host it in 2024 and Los Angeles in 2028.

(Source: AFP)

Biles and Djokovic win Laureus awards



Gymnast Simone Biles and tennis player Novak Djokovic won the top prizes at the 2019 Laureus World Sports Awards.

American Biles, 21, was named Sportswoman of the Year after winning four gold medals, one silver and one bronze at the 2018 World Championships.

Serb Djokovic, 31, won the Sportsman of the Year award after claiming victory at both the US Open and Wimbledon.

Golfer Tiger Woods won the Comeback award, while tennis player Naomi Osaka won Breakthrough of the Year.

America’s 14-time major winner Woods won the season-ending Tour Championship by two shots to record his first win in five years following spinal fusion surgery.

Japan’s Osaka won her first Grand Slam title at the US Open last year, then won the Australian Open last month.

Elsewhere, Slovakian skier Henrieta Farkasova and guide Natalia Subrtova won the Sportsperson of the Year with a Disability award after winning four gold medals at the 2018 Winter Paralympics.

Football World Cup winners France won Team of the Year, and Kenyan athlete Eliud Kipchoge took the Exceptional Achievement Award after taking 78 seconds off the world marathon record with his victory in Berlin.

American snowboarder Chloe Kim was given the Action Sportsperson of the Year Award, former Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger received the Lifetime Achievement Award, and American skier Lindsey Vonn won the Spirit of Sport Award.

(Source: BBC)

Semenya says gender rules ‘do not empower anyone’

Double Olympic 800 metres champion Caster Semenya said Tuesday that proposed rules that would oblige her to lower her testosterone levels “do not empower anyone”.

The South African appeared Monday at the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne at the start of a landmark hearing to challenge the rules proposed by the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF).

The controversial measures would force so-called “hyperandrogenic” athletes or those with “differences of sexual development” (DSD) to seek treatment to lower their testosterone levels below a prescribed amount if they wish to continue competing as women.

A statement issued by Semenya’s legal team said she believes “she and other women affected by the regulations should be permitted to compete in the female category without discrimination” and that they should be “celebrated for their natural talents as are all other athletes with genetic variations”.

The statement continued: “The IAAF’s regulations do not empower anyone. Rather, they represent yet another flawed and hurtful attempt to police the sex of female athletes.”

The IAAF says it is introducing the rules to create a “level playing field” for other female runners.

The track and field body says: “If a DSD athlete has testes and male levels of testosterone, they get the same increases in bone and muscle size and strength and increases in haemoglobin that a male gets when they go through puberty, which is what gives men such a performance advantage over women.”

On Monday, Semenya accused the IAAF of breaching confidentiality rules after it published the names of five expert witnesses who will appear to testify on its behalf.

Semenya published her own list of expert witnesses who will speak in support of her this week, including Professor Veronica Gomez-Lobo, professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Georgetown University in the United States.

(Source: AFP)

‘It’s like a final’ - Atletico meet Juve in a clash of high stakes

Massimiliano Allegri told Juventus not to be afraid of Atletico Madrid but for one of these teams their worst fears in this season’s Champions League are about to become a reality.

Crashing out in the last 16 would be unthinkable for two clubs that were among the favourites when the draw for the knock-out stages was made in December.

“Those that have ambition are not afraid,” Allegri said, after his side were drawn to play Atletico, with the first leg on Wednesday at the Wanda Metropolitano.

“It’s like a final, we cannot put a foot wrong,” Atletico boss Diego Simeone said.

Juventus and Atletico Madrid have reached 12 European Cup finals between them, with last season’s game in Kiev the first in five years in which neither had featured.

Atletico went on to win the Europa League instead, proving themselves too strong for Europe’s second-tier competition, while Juventus were dumped out by eventual winners Real Madrid, undone by a controversial Cristiano Ronaldo penalty in the 98th minute.

It was Ronaldo’s 10th goal in seven games against Juventus, having scored twice in the first leg and twice in the final in 2017 too.

Juve beat Real in the semi-finals two years earlier but even then, Ronaldo managed a goal in each leg.

There was understandable relief, as well as joy, when the Portugese switched sides last



summer and now, there is belief. Ronaldo has not finished in single figures for goals in the Champions league since 2011.

As Lionel Messi said: “They already had a good team and now they have Cristiano Ronaldo.”

■ Juve’s two decade wait

But with anticipation comes pressure. Juventus are on course to win an eighth consecutive Scudetto but this is the one trophy they crave.

Miss out again and it will be 23 years since they last lifted Europe’s premier prize, this

time with its most prolific player ever among their ranks.

“We have to be wary of Atletico,” Allegri said.

“And we have to find the right moment to score. It’s crucial that we get a goal there, otherwise qualification will be very difficult,” he added.

Atletico’s own record signing last summer, Thomas Lemar, was not even born when Gianluca Vialli hoisted the trophy in 1996 for the Italians but expectation weighs heavy on them too.

Spanish Super Cup set to move abroad in new final four format



The Spanish Super Cup will be expanded to four teams, with two semi finals and a final all to be played outside the country under a transformation proposed by Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) President Luis Rubiales on Tuesday.

The revamped Super Cup is set to start in August of this year, with the winners and runners up of both La Liga and the Copa del Rey qualifying under the new format, Rubiales, who became RFEF president in May 2018, said.

In the event that a team qualifies both through the league and the Copa del Rey, the vacant place would be taken by the team with the best historical record in the Copa del Rey that had not already qualified for the Super Cup. “We see an opportunity to promote the brand of Spain without attacking sporting principles,” Rubiales told a news conference, without giving details of where the games in the “final four” format event would take place.

The plans must first be approved by the federation’s assembly at a meeting in April, he said, adding that the RFEF plans to open a global centre of excellence for referees in Madrid and create a committee to fight homophobia in football.

Rubiales broke with tradition last year by turning the traditional season clash between the La Liga champions and the Copa del Rey winners from a two-legged tie into a

single game played in Tangier, Morocco, where Barcelona beat Sevilla 2-1.

■ MIAMI BLUES

Rubiales opposes La Liga’s plans to play Spanish top flight games abroad and his organisation blocked a proposal to move a game between Girona and Barcelona last month to Miami.

Barcelona withdrew from the proposed Miami game, citing a lack of consensus, although their president Josep Maria Bartomeu said he would like to see three La Liga games a season abroad.

Rubiales said he saw no contradiction between moving the Super Cup abroad and “the basic principle that a home team should always play at their ground”.

“FIFA was very clear about opposing the Miami game. If they change their criteria we will have to do what they say but we still believe you break with the essence of sport if you prevent a team playing at home for financial motives.”

Although Atletico Madrid, Barcelona and Real Madrid take part in the International Champions Cup, pre-season friendlies against Europe’s top sides played in the United States and Asia, Rubiales said having a trophy at stake was important for fans.

“Neutral tournaments played in summer do not produce the same excitement among supporters,” he added.

(Source: Reuters)

James Harden: Rockets needed consistent scoring reflected in streak



James Harden cites necessity as the root of his historic scoring streak, stressing that the Houston Rockets have needed him to go on the run that has him chasing Wilt Chamberlain.

Harden has scored at least 30 points in 31 consecutive games, tying Chamberlain for the second-longest such streak in NBA history behind the Hall of Fame center’s 65-game run. The Rockets are 21-10 during Harden’s streak despite Houston’s other stars -- guard Chris Paul and center Clint Capela -- missing extended time because of injuries.

“The scoring streak is obviously amazing, but it’s something that I just had to do because of our situation,” Harden said in a sit-down interview with ESPN’s Rachel Nichols. “We had all the injuries and guys in and out of the lineup and things like that. So I think the streak just started happening, and now it’s like something to talk about.

“But it’s not something that I’m really honestly focused on. That’s something I have to do in order to give us a chance to win the game.”

Harden is averaging 41.5 points on 27.3 field goal attempts during his streak. His burden in the Rockets’ offense became bigger than ever with the 33-year-old Paul missing 18 games because of a strained hamstring and chipping off rust in eight games since returning, Capela, the primary beneficiary of Harden’s passing wizardry, has missed

Atleti have the chance to play a final at home this year, at the Wanda Metropolitano, and not only snatch the cup away from rivals Real but do it in the city they both call their own.

“Of course we are inspired by playing a final in our own stadium, in our own city, in front of our own fans,” Simeone said.

“But it is pointless only to imagine it. The reality will be what we deserve,” he added.

Simeone extended his contract as Atleti coach until 2022 last week and while few can question the remarkable progress made during his tenure, there are some that believe a ceiling has been reached.

They are out of the Copa del Rey and seven points behind Barcelona in La Liga, where back-to-back defeats earlier this month failed to capitalise on a rare Catalan dip.

Summer signings are yet to fully fire and there is scepticism about the January arrival of Alvaro Morata, not just because of his links to Real. When results waver, questions about Simeone’s style also invariably follow.

“It is a style I like, it makes us win,” Antoine Griezmann told UEFA on Monday.

Winning a trophy on their own patch would be even better.

“It’s an extra motivation for us and for the fans. The road to get there will be tough but we’ll give it our all,” World Cup winner Griezmann added.

(Source: AFP)

Peace at last between ‘Special One’ and Wenger

Arsene Wenger received the Laureus Lifetime Achievement award on Monday but it was the glowing tribute from the unlikeliest of sources Jose Mourinho that caught the eye.

The 69-year-old Wenger won the award on the back of his revolutionising English football especially in the first part of his over two decades in charge of Arsenal.

The veteran former Gunners boss and Mourinho clashed often on and off the touchline.

However, Mourinho -- sacked by Manchester United in December, paid handsome tribute to Wenger via a video.

The volatile Portuguese, who had two spells at Chelsea and then the turbulent one at United, acknowledged there had been moments when they had been at odds with each other.

It boiled over when Wenger pushed Mourinho on the touchline during the latter’s second period in charge of Chelsea and Mourinho made some barbed remarks about the studious Frenchman, commenting he was a “voyeur” and a “specialist in failure”.

“There were some episodes along the road,” said Mourinho. “I can only speak by myself. I really enjoyed the competition. But the real respect is always there.

“He (Wenger) made lots of history in that football club. “One of the best football managers in the history of football.” Wenger, who was virtually unknown but proved an inspi-



ration choice by then Arsenal vice-chairman David Dein when he was hired in 1996, accrued among other trophies three Premier League titles and lifted the FA Cup seven times.

However, perhaps his greatest achievement was the title winning side of the 2003/04 campaign who went through the league season unbeaten.

“The nickname is there -- the Invincibles,” said Mourinho. “Amazing. A coaching philosophy, the almost perfect team.”

■ ‘We want our Mars bars’

Wenger, who has been linked with several jobs since leaving Arsenal at the end of last season including the di-

rector of football post at Paris Saint-Germain, admitted he had been taken aback when he watched the video at the awards ceremony.

“That is a very good question,” he replied as to what was the biggest surprise the award or Mourinho praising him.

“It was a surprise yes. We had some good fights at times.”

Wenger said what was even more unexpected was that the man on the touchline won an award.

“An even bigger surprise is usually the lifetime achievement award goes to a Pele, a Maradona or a Beckenbauer.

“Tonight it is a player from a little village but it is good that coaches are rewarded in our game.”

One of Wenger’s recipes of success involved tearing up the book on the players diet when he arrived at Arsenal and introduced healthy eating habits.

He concedes that was not universally accepted.

“I forbid them eating Mars bars,” said the man who still has the “virus” of football in his blood and wakes up every morning wondering what match is on that night.

“So at first I was greeted on the team coach with chants of “we want our Mars bars”. They did not get them.

“Today it shows how much football has changed you would never hear footballers demanding Mars bars.”

Laureus is a global movement that aims to use the power of sport to tackle social challenges in the world.

(Source: AFP)

Iran's women's learn fate at FIBA 3x3 World Cup

The 40 participating teams (20 men's and 20 women's) were divided into 8 pools of 5 - none more difficult than Men's Pool A featuring last year's 2 finalists Serbia and the Netherlands besides USA - following the automatic seeding of the 6th edition of the FIBA 3x3 World Cup, which will take place in Amsterdam in exactly 4 months, on June 18-23, 2019.

For the second year in a row, Serbia and the Netherlands will meet as soon as the pool phase. The two 3x3 powerhouses (also both finalists at the World Cup 2017) are in for an early clash with the United States, not to mention South Korea and Turkey.

Only the first 2 teams in each pool advance to the quarter finals meaning one of the main contenders in the men's category will be eliminated in the pool phase.

The other reigning champions - Italy's women - got a very similar outcome in Pool D. They will meet 2017 world champions Russia and 2016 silver medalists Ukraine, not to mention Indonesia and the team which will finish third at the FIBA 3x3 World Cup Qualifier, which will be staged in San Juan, Puerto Rico on May 4-5.

The seeding is conducted automatically according to the FIBA 3x3 Federation Ranking of each national federation at



the February 1, 2019 cut-off date. As per FIBA 3x3 regulations (Book 6), teams are seeded as follows:

Russia and Ukraine will also meet in the pools in the men's category. The 2017 Asian champions Mongolia, Estonia and the team ranked 1st at the World Cup Qualifier will complete a loaded Pool B.

Pool C will feature 2014 World champions Qatar and 2016 European champions Slovenia, besides China,

Lithuania and the team ranked 2nd at the World Cup Qualifier.

The 2017 European champions Latvia and last year's World Cup semi-finalists Poland will highlight Pool D, which will also star Brazil, Japan and the team ranked 3rd at the World Cup Qualifier.

In the women's category, the Dutch hosts - who won silver at the Europe Cup last year - will get serious company with 2016 European champions Hungary and last year's World Cup semi-finalists

China. Latvia and Turkmenistan will be the other two teams to beat in Pool A.

The defending European champions France will be the heavy favorites in Pool B, which will also feature Andorra, Japan, Switzerland and the team ranked 1st at the World Cup Qualifier.

In Pool C, the 2016 World champions Czech Republic will have to deal with 2016 European runners-up Romania, on top of Iran, Mongolia and the team ranked 2nd at the World Cup Qualifier.

Fans can find more information about the event on the official competition website and react to the seeding on social media with the hashtag #3x3WC.

Exciting, urban and innovative, 3x3 is inspired by several forms of streetball played worldwide and is considered the world's number one urban team sport. Steered by FIBA, games see two teams of three players face off on a basketball half-court.

It was played successfully for the first time in international competition at the 2010 Youth Olympic Games in Singapore and since then has benefited from the launch of a yearly city-based FIBA 3x3 World Tour and national-team FIBA 3x3 World & Continental Cups. On June 9, 2017, 3x3 was added to the Olympic Program, starting from the Tokyo 2020 Games.

(Source: Fiba.basketball)



Iran's Zob Ahan come from back to beat Al Gharafa of Qatar

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Zob Ahan football club of Iran came from two goals down to score a stunning 3-2 win over Qatar's Al Gharafa in a 2019 AFC Champions League play-off tie on Tuesday.

Ahmed Al Aeldin and Mehdi Taremi scored for the host in the first half but Zob Ahan returned to the match with three goals in the second half.

Ighodaro Christian Osaguona pulled a goal back for the visiting team just two minutes into the second half and Amir Arsalan Motahari equalized the match in the 63rd minute.

Mohammad Nejad Mehdi scored the winner in the

79th minute and silenced the fans at the Thani bin Jassim Stadium in Doha.

Zob Ahan have been drawn in Group A along with Al-Wasl of the UAE, Iraqi Al-Zawraa and Al-Nassr of Saudi Arabia.

Also, Saipa suffered a late 3-1 defeat to Al Rayyan at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium in Doha, Qatar.

Arman Ramezani scored an early goal for the Iranian club but Gelmin Rivas leveled the match in the 27th minute.

Sebastián Soria and Rivas were on targets in the last minutes of the match to seal a 3-1 win for the Qatari club.

Tottenham to play in Singapore, Shanghai in pre-season tour



Kuala Lumpur: English Premier League club Tottenham Hotspur, headlined by Korea Republic sensation Son Heung-min, will play in Singapore in July as part of preparations for the 2019/20 season, the club announced on Tuesday.

"We are delighted to announce that the First Team squad will travel to Singapore and Shanghai as part of our pre-season tour in July in preparation for the 2019/20 season," Spurs announced on their website.

The 2019 pre-season tour will see Tottenham feature in Singapore for the

first time since they played the Singapore Lions in 1995 and they will also be making their maiden visit to Shanghai.

Other Spurs stars expected to feature prominently are France's FIFA World Cup-winning skipper and goalkeeper Hugo Lloris and England midfielder Dele Alli.

Spurs, who are third in the EPL standings, said: "The visit also affords the Club the opportunity to engage with our millions of fans across Asia including Official Supporters Clubs in both countries in which we will be playing fixtures."

(Source: AFP)

Korea Republic to face Bolivia, Colombia football teams



Korea Republic will play Bolivia and Carlos Queiroz-led Colombia in international friendly matches next month.

It will be the East Asians first matches since being eliminated in the quarter-finals of the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019 as head coach Paulo Bento looks ahead to the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qualifiers.

The Korea Football Association (KFA) said the Taeguk Warriors will take on Bolivia at Munsu Football Stadium in Ulsan on March 22 and play Colombia at the Seoul World Cup Stadium in the capital city four days later.

Korea Republic were scheduled to play a friendly match against Vietnam in Hanoi on March 26. The match, however, has been postponed indefinitely due to Vietnam's scheduling conflict with their under-23 team that is also coached by Park.

Korea Republic, ranked 38th in the FIFA rankings, have faced No 60 Bolivia twice in the past, with both encounters ending in 0-0 draws. Their last meeting was in June 2018 ahead of the FIFA World Cup in Russia.

(Source: Yonhap)

Park targets more history with Vietnam

Head coach Park Hang-seo is determined to lead Vietnam to more glory and history after a year of highs for the Southeast Asian nation.

After an amazing 2018 and a brilliant start to 2019, Korea Republic's Park has already identified his next target - qualifying for the 2020 AFC U23 Championship Thailand and the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

Park kicked off his Vietnamese adventure by guiding the Young Golden Dragons to a runners-up finish in the 2018 AFC U23 Championship and followed that up by a semi-final appearance in the 2018 Asian Games Indonesia.

The senior side then brushed aside all challengers to lift the 2018 AFF Cup and continued their run by qualifying for the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019 quarter-finals and Vietnam fans are, understandably, expecting more highs.

It starts, coincidentally, with the AFC U23 Championship again and Park, 60, said he is looking forward to the challenge of taking Vietnam into the Finals.

"To prepare for the qualification tournament that starts on March 22, we'll start training from March 6," Park said. "There are no easy opponents. We first have to qualify for the AFC U23 championship."

Vietnam are in Group K of the Qualifiers with Brunei,



India and regional rivals Thailand.

Vietnam's chances of winning the group - which will confirm qualification for the Final - is boosted by the fact that Thailand have already qualified by virtue of being the host.

Park, however, said Vietnam can't take their opponents for granted and will approach the Qualifiers with focus and determination.

Qualifying for the 2020 AFC U23 Championship Finals will take Vietnam a step closer to qualifying for the Olympics, a feat they have never achieved and getting to Tokyo won't be easy as the Continent's best will all be challenging for places.

With Japan already having qualified as host, three places will be at stake in the 2020 AFC U23 Championship Thailand and Park is determined that Vietnam get a spot.

There is, however, a decision he has to make as Park admitted that managing the senior and U23 teams has taken a toll on him.

"I want to select and focus on coaching one team this year," he said.

The main challenge for the senior side will be the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qualifiers which kick off later this year while the U23 squad will have the 2019 SEA Games in November before the 2020 AFC U23 Championship Thailand.

Vietnam have not won the Sea Games gold since unification and the only triumph prior to that was in 1959 with South Vietnam emerging champions.

Steering Vietnam to the regional gold medal and to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics may well see Park deciding to focus on the U23 squad and create more history for Vietnam football.

(Source: the-afc)

Iran's para shooter Javanmardi wins gold at Al Ain 2019

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Saraeh Javanmardi from Iran picked up a gold medal at the Al Ain 2019 World Shooting Para Sport World Cup on Tuesday.

Javanmaedi, who is the first ever female gold medalist from Iran to win in the shooting category of the Paralympics Games, finished on 232.6 points at the P2 - Women's 10m Air Pistol SH1 for the gold medal.

The silver medal went to Ukrainian Iryna Liakhu (229.4) and Nadia Fario claimed the bronze with 209.7 points.

Earlier on the day, Roghaye Shojaei had snatched a bronze medal at the R2 - Women's 10m Air Rifle Standing SH1 after accumulating 225.6 points.

Turkey's Cagla Atakal won the gold medal with 247.6 points and the silver medal went to Chinese para shooter Cuijing Zhang who scored 247.4.



Zob Ahan crowned Iran women's super league champions

In-form Esfahan Zob Ahan proved to be the best among all challengers in the Iran Women's Super League to represent Iran at a highly-competitive 2019 Asian Women's Club Volleyball Championship in China.

A total of six teams tested their mettle in the Super League, but only Zob Ahan and Tehran Paykan were traditional clubs, with the former picking up silver and the latter sealing their first title in the previous season.

At the season-ending campaign, Zob Ahan, beating Namino in their final match, and Paykan had the similar performances with 27 points from 9 wins against one loss. However, Zob Ahan fared better regarding ratio and average to reign supreme.

The final standing of the Iran Women's Super League saw Esfahan Zob Ahan emerge as the champions, with Tehran in second place overall. Esfahan Namino, Babolsar Toopka, Caspian Mabna Tejarat and Semnan Sbabrdari finished 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th places respectively.

Zob Ahan will represent Iran in the 2019 Asian Women's Club Volleyball Championship, which will be held in Tianjin, China from April 27 to May 5. There, Zob Ahan will challenge other 10 strong teams from hosts China, Hong Kong China, Japan, Kazakhstan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkmenistan, Chinese Taipei and Vietnam.

Last year, Iran's Paykan Tehran finished 6th in the Asian Women's Club Championship in Ust-Kamenogorsk, Kazakhstan. Thailand's Supreme Chonburi won back-to-back Asian Club titles.

Iranian cross-country skiers to compete at FIS Nordic WSC

IRNA — Iran's cross-country skiing team is in Austria to participate in the FIS Nordic World Ski Championships that will kick off this Wednesday.

Eight Iranian skiers, comprised equally of four men and four women, will travel to the Austrian city of Seefeld in Tirol, the event's venue.

The four Iranian female skiers will start their competition at 12:30 hours local time on Wednesday, February 20, in the Qualifying Ladies 5km C, according to the competition's schedule published on its website.

Later at 14:00 hours local time, Iranian male skiers will compete at the cross-country Qualifying Men 10km C.

Both competitions will be held at Cross-Country Arena Seefeld before the opening ceremony that will be held at 18:00 hours on Wednesday.

Asia Pacific Deaf Futsal Championships: Iran beat Japan

Tasnim — Iran earned their second win at the 3rd Asia Pacific Deaf Futsal Championships.

The Iranian team, who had humiliated China 12-1 in the opening match, defeated Japan 4-0 on Tuesday.

Iran will face Singapore on Thursday in its third match.

The 3rd Asia Pacific Deaf Futsal Championships started on 15 February and will run until 24 February in Bangkok, Thailand. Kish to host the largest International Sports Exhibition

The International Sports, Health and Affiliated Industries exhibition, identified as IRAN SPORTEX 2019 as well as the 3rd Sport For All international conference are due to be held during February 25-28, in Kish Island.

As reported, The Ministry of Sport and Youth of Iran, Development and Maintenance of Sports Facilities of Iran company, The Supreme Council of Iran's Free Trade, Industrial & Special Economic Zones, Kish Free Zone Organization, ECO Cultural Institute (ECI), Iran Sport For All Federation, Iran Squash Federation, Iran Padel Committee and the companies such as Rotterdam Ahoy, Orange Sports Forum and Iran Silk Road will be participating in IRAN SPORTEX 2019 that runs for three days in Kish Island.

So far, the presence of more than 80 big companies active in designing, producing and equipping of sports facilities, as well as manufacturers and Importers and Exporters of sports equipment and services in this international exhibition has been finalized.

In order to maintain and expand the international business relations of the participating companies, the ambassadors of 36 European countries, ECO member states, Qatar and Oman are special guests of the exhibition.

IRAN SPORTEX 2019 will end with the competition of 1000 runners from 30 countries in the international Persian Gulf Marathon which will be held in three sections of 42, 21, and 10 kilometers. The 70-year-old American runner Brent Weigner who has set a new world record by running the most marathons (339) in the most countries (177) will be one of the Persian Gulf Marathon' participants.

INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com

■ Managing Director: Ali Asgari
■ Editor-in-Chief: Mohammad Ghaderi

» Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895
editor@tehrantimes.com

» Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000

» Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051450

» Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807

» Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603

» www.eshterak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co.
Tel: 88911433

» Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com

» Printed at: Hamshahri No. 3 - ISSN: 1017-94

Tehrantimes79

Tehrantimesdaily

No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran
P.O. Box: 14155-4843
Zip Code: 1599814713

GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Patience is a fitting cover and wisdom is a sharp sword. So cover your ugly conduct with patience and kill carnal desires with wisdom.

Imam Ali (AS)

“Lunch Time” director Alireza Qasemi to attend Cannes Cinéfondation Résidence

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** – The Cannes Film Festival has selected Iranian filmmaker Alireza Qasemi along with five other filmmakers from across the world to attend the 38th session of the Résidence, which is organized in the Cinéfondation section. The 70th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in 2017 screened Qasemi’s acclaimed short film “Lunch Time”. The film has won several awards at Iranian and international events, including the 5th FRAPA Porto Alegre Screenwriting Festival in Brazil, the 6th Pachuca Film Fest in Mexico and the 6th Snake Alley Festival of Film in the U.S. Abuzar Amini from Afghanistan, Diego Céspedes and Vinko Tomicic, both from Chile, Alvaro Aponte-Centeno from Puerto Rico and Dmytro Sukholytkyy-Sobchuk from Ukraine are the other filmmakers chosen to participate in the Résidence, which will be held from March 1 to July 15 in Paris. Created in 2000 by Gilles Jacob, the Résidence aims at helping young foreign directors who work on their first or second fictional feature film projects by a personalized program accompanying the writing of their scripts, and a collective program of forums with film industry professionals.

Iran’s Intl. 100-Second Film Festival unveils official lineup

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** – Thirty-three movies from across the world will be competing in the 12th edition of the International 100-Second Film Festival in Tehran, the organizers announced on Tuesday.

“Crab Story” by Filippo Rivetti from Australia will compete in 12th International 100-Second Film Festival in Tehran.

The lineup includes “Crab Story” by Filippo Rivetti from Australia, “The Big Escape” and “One Day in July” by Hermes Mangialardo and “Sushido” by Michele Boldoni, both from Italy, “Cycle” by Alex Ishida from Japan, “My Superhero” by Jose Bibian from the Netherlands and “I Am Life” by Jose Alirio Rojas from Venezuela. Films from England, the U.S., Spain, Turkey, Sweden, Portugal, Singapore, India, Czech, China, Bulgaria and Belgium will also be screened in the official competition. The movies have been selected from among 2278 submissions. The Art Bureau of the Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization is the organizer of the festival, which will take place at the Azadi Cineplex from February 27 to March 1.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Intl. theater experts to hold workshops in Iran

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** – International theater scholars Dominique DuPont and Pinar Alev will hold workshops in the Iranian cities of Kashan and Kerman during March, the organizers announced on Tuesday. DuPont’s workshop entitled “Finding the Inner Clown” in Kashan from February 24 to March 3, while Turkish theater expert Pinar Alev will hold her workshop on pantomime in Kerman from March 2 to 6. The workshops have been organized by the 22nd Iran International University Theater Festival, which will take place in Tehran from April 25 to May 4.

Gunther Uecker’s “Tribute to Hafez” to travel to Isfahan

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** – After two showings in Tehran and Shiraz, German sculptor and op artist Gunther Uecker’s exhibition “Tribute to Hafez” will move to the Isfahan Museum of Contemporary Art for a showcase, which will open on Thursday. Several more works have also been added to the collection inspired by ghazals of Persian poet Hafez, curator Afshin Derambakhsh said in a press release published on Tuesday. Uecker has created a series of 42 graphical works in which the ghazals are transformed into colors and the sound of the poems into written images. This method to translate spoken language into pictorial expressions has characterized the artist’s oeuvre since the 1970s. In 2016, Uecker first displayed his collection in Shiraz, where the Mausoleum of Hafez lies, and later took his collection to the Imam Ali (AS) Religious Arts Museum in Tehran. The 88-year-old Uecker is a member of the ZERO movement, best known for his signature use of nails arranged into tactile, sculptural paintings. Uecker’s oeuvre includes paintings, art objects and installations as well as stage designs and films. He is mainly interested in the eastern European avant-garde of the 1920s and 1930s, but he is likewise fascinated by Asian cultures and their ideas. His works can be seen in collections and at large fairs in both the West and the



German op artist Gunther Uecker delivers a speech at the Mausoleum of Hafez in Shiraz before opening his exhibit “Tribute to Hafez” on May 1, 2016. (IRNA/Reza Qaderi)

East. Uecker’s artistic creativity reached a climax in 2000 with the prayer room he designed for the rebuilt Reichstag building in Berlin. The Isfahan exhibit will be on view until April 12.

Japanese expert Yokoyama says amazed by diversity of Iranian theaters



Japanese theater expert Yoshiji Yokoyama in an undated photo.

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** – Yoshiji Yokoyama, the programmer of the Tokyo Festival, a theater and urban arts festival in the Japanese capital, has said that he is amazed by the diversity of Iranian theaters. Yokoyama, who is in Tehran to attend the National Showcase for Iranian Dramatic Arts at the 37th Fajr International Theater Festival underway in Tehran, made the remarks in an interview with the Persian service of Honaronline on Monday. “During my stay in Tehran, I have watched some Iranian plays, including Behruz Gharibpur’s opera puppet show ‘Love’, by which I learned that there

are similarities between Iranian and Japanese puppet shows,” he said. “While puppet shows are mainly for children around the world, we both make them for adults with poetic texts and enlightening messages,” he added. Yokoyama is also a dramaturge at the SPAC-Shizuoka Performing Arts Center and is in charge of international exchanges and programs of the center. “Contrary to Saudi Arabia and many other countries, I was surprised with the collaborations of the Iranian actresses on the stage. The quality and quantity of their works are amazing,” he said. The 37th Fajr International Theater Festival will be running until February 23.

French cultural festival to open in Tabriz today



A scene from “Chocolat” by Claire Denis.

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** – The northwestern Iranian city of Tabriz will be hosting a French cultural festival opening at the Alef International Institute today. Organizing an exhibition by French photographer Alain Ceccaroli under the title “Entre Errance et Éternité” (Between Wandering and Eternity) is part of the festival, the organizers announced in a press release on Tuesday. The festival is also scheduled to screen a lineup of seven French films and one by Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami in a section named “Free Children of Cinema” (Libres Enfants de Cinema). The films have been selected by Jean-Michel Frodon, former chief editor of French

film magazine Cahiers du Cinemas. The lineup includes “Zero for Conduct” (Zéro de conduite) by Jean Vigo, “Naked Childhood” (L’Enfance Nue) by Maurice Pialat, “The 400 Blows” (Les 400 Coups) by François Truffaut and “Jacquot de Nantes” by Agnès Varda. Also included are “Mouchette” by Robert Bresson, “Chocolat” by Claire Denis and “To Be or to Have” (Être et Avoir) by Nicolas Philibert “Where Is the Friend’s Home”, a 1987 film by Kiarostami, will also go on screen in this section. French cultural attaché Jamel Oubechou is expected to attend the opening ceremony of the festival, which is free to the public and will be running until February 25.

Women in Hollywood see some gains after Oscars equality plea

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) – A year after best actress winner Frances McDormand used the Oscars stage to advocate for more women in front of and behind the camera, Hollywood is celebrating some progress - but remains far from reaching parity with men. McDormand urged powerful celebrities to insist on inclusion riders: contractual provisions that require producers to interview female candidates for jobs ranging from gaffer to director. In the aftermath of McDormand’s speech, one major Hollywood studio, Warner Bros., adopted policies based on the idea, and A-list stars such as Matt Damon and Michael B. Jordan, who also work as producers, committed to pushing for inclusion riders. “It’s been remarkable,” said Kalpana Kotagal, a civil rights attorney who co-developed the inclusion rider concept, which also is being used to encourage hiring of people of color, as well as, disabled and older people. “We are actually seeing it being implemented.” Kotagal pointed to coming-of-age movie “Hala”, which debuted at the Sundance Film Festival and will be distributed by Apple Inc. Producers adopted inclusion riders and filled many off-screen jobs, including the majority of department head positions, with women. The publicity around the riders kick-started a nascent effort to pressure filmmakers into boosting female representation. A study released this month showed some gains. Forty of the top 100 films in 2018 featured a female as a lead character, the highest number since tracking began 12 years earlier, according to University of Southern California’s Annenberg Inclusion Initiative. Those movies included best picture nominees “A Star is Born,” “The Favourite”



Frances McDormand poses backstage with her Best Actress Oscar for “Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri” at the 90th Academy Awards, Hollywood, California, U.S., March 4, 2018. (Reuters/Mike Blake)

and “Roma.” And 28 percent of this year’s Oscar nominees are women, the highest percentage in history. The industry is taking other steps to promote gender diversity. The 4 Percent Challenge asks for a commitment to announcing at least one feature film with a female director in the next 18 months. Four percent refers to the pool of women-directed films among the top 1,200 movies of the past 10 years. “For decades, directors have been viewed as a male

job,” said Oscar-nominated “Vice” director Adam McKay. But he said that attitude is changing, and his production company has made five feature films with female directors. “I think you are seeing the whole town rally around the idea that there are voices that need to be heard,” he said. More than 120 actors, producers and writers, and seven studios, have signed on to the 4 Percent Challenge. Many studios also have established mentoring programs for women. Still, “the work is far from done,” Kotagal said. The industry remains far below the 50/50 parity that advocates are pushing for among on-screen talent, behind-the-scenes workers and studio executives. The number of female cinematographers is particularly low, comprising just 3 percent of last year’s 100 top-grossing films, according to data from San Diego State University. And none of the major studios aside from AT&T Inc.-owned Warner Bros. has committed to using inclusion riders across the board on productions. Actress Natalie Portman said she had encountered resistance to the idea. “I think a lot of people are making the argument that you’re hiring people for their talent, not their gender,” she told Hollywood website Deadline in December. A common refrain across the movie business is that decades of inequality make it hard to find qualified women to fill positions. Betsy West, co-director of Oscar-nominated documentary “RBG” about Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, rejected that argument. Key jobs on “RBG,” including editor, producer and cinematographer, were performed by women. “People say ‘How did you find the people?’” West said. “It wasn’t that hard. They are out there, and you just have to look.”