



IRGC Navy develops anti-laser weapon

2



'Karabakh conflict should not affect ties with Armenia, Azerbaijan'

2



Wrestlers win two gold medals at UWW Dan Kolov-Nikola Petrov

15



"You Will Return to Isfahan" published in Italian

16

Missile program is non-negotiable



See page 2

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EDITORIAL

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MBS's bloody present for Pakistan

The two neighboring states India and Pakistan, both with nuclear bombs, are at loggerheads again. The intensification of the clashes between the two sides can turn the Indian subcontinent into a military battle ground for a very long time.

The crisis between the two states seem pretty complex. The terrorist attack in Indian-administered Kashmir and the retaliation of Islamabad against Delhi triggered a new stage of the confrontation between the two nuclear-armed countries. Then India carried out an air strike in Pakistan, and in return Islamabad shot down two Indian fighter jets.

There are a few points in these conflicts to pay heed to:

First, the initial terrorist attack in Indian-controlled part of Kashmir resembled the kinds Saudis intelligence services would normally execute.

The ties between terrorist, and Takfiri groups in Pakistan with the House of Saud, and Wahabis is quite clear. Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman who recently travelled to Islamabad, is in dire need to cause security crisis to the Indian subcontinent. The Saudis believe under intense security climate, they can practice more political maneuvers in Pakistan.

Second, the tension steered and pushed by the Saudis in the Indian subcontinent, not only has been welcomed by the White House and the U.S. intelligence services, but has made Washington more determined to get the "chronic crisis" going in that geographical zone.

In a more comprehensive glance, MBS, under influence of the Trump administration, is executing a bloody mission that Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law, and other U.S. politicians have defined for him.

For the Saudi authorities who have been the initiator of crime, violence, and terror in the Muslim community, the life of Muslims in the subcontinent is worth nothing.

Third, the Pakistanis will have to spend billions of dollars to regain the security of their country when Islamabad accepted \$20 billion of so called "aid" from MBS.

Thus, Pakistani politicians who are aware of the foul play and role of Riyadh and Washington between New Delhi and Pakistan should take heed to neutralize the deception of the actors in the region.

→13

Abbas likely to visit Syria soon, senior Palestinian official says

A senior Palestinian predicted that Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas will visit Syria in the near future.

The PA president has not visited Syria or met Syrian President Bashar Assad since war broke out in the country in 2011.

"The visit of the President Mahmoud Abbas is possible at any time... I believe [it] will happen soon, if God wills it," Azzam al-Ahmad told al-Watan, a pro-Syrian government newspaper, at the opening of a new office for Palestine TV, the official PA channel, in Damascus.

Several Palestinian officials attended the opening of the Palestine TV office including Ahmad, a member of both the Fatah Central Committee and Palestine Liberation Organization's Executive Committee; the PA's Jenin Governor Akram Rajoub; and PLO Executive Committee member Wasel Abu Yousef.

Abu Yousef told The Times of Israel in a phone call earlier this week that he and Ahmad traveled to Damascus by car via Jordan.

In mid-December, Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir became the first Arab head of state to

visit Syria since the war broke out.

Later that month, the United Arab Emirates reopened its embassy in Damascus, some seven years after shuttering it.

In October, Assad told a little-known Kuwaiti newspaper that Syria had reached a "major understanding" with Arab states. He did not name those countries in the interview, which was his first with a Gulf paper since the war erupted, but he said Arab and Western delegations had

begun visiting Syria to prepare for the reopening of diplomatic and other missions.

the volatile province.

The U.S.-led coalition and the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which is supported by Washington, claim that they are fighting against the Daesh militants in the Arab country and that Baghouz, which is the last pocket of territory controlled by remnants of the terror group, is constantly under their fire and expected to be liberated soon.

The flashpoint town is located in the eastern Euphrates River region.

PERSPECTIVE

Heshmatollah Rahnama

Latin American expert

Humanitarian assistance or military intervention in Haiti

During eighteenth century, France created a powerful export economy based upon slavery in Haiti. In 1730, the population of the Caribbean country was about 83 thousand and in 1789 there were more than 500 thousand people, of whom 450 thousand were slaves. Due to massive mortality and low birth rates among the slaves, France saved one million slave from Africa to Haiti between 1750 and 1789 to maintain their populations. In 1789, Haiti produced three quarters of the world's sugar.

Haiti became independent after a series of devastating wars in 1804. The great powers did not recognize this Independence. In 1825, something strange happened. France recognized Haitian franchises for 150 million francs and 50 percent reduction in customs duties on French goods. The proposal was accompanied by the French and British Navy's naval blockade threat. Haiti was forced to borrow 30 million francs from France for the first payment. Eventually, the country paid off the entire loan in 1893.

Trade relations between the United States and Haiti date back to the late eighteenth century when Haiti was still the French colony. Haiti became independent in 1804. Former U.S. President Thomas Jefferson said: "The freedom of slaves in Haiti is a bad example. The U.S. government recognized Haitian government after the U.S. abolished slavery."

The U.S. occupied Haiti for the first time in 1915 which lasted for 19 years. During this period Haiti turned into a sugar factory, under the control of New York banking, which resulted in massive poverty of Haitians.

In April 2003, Aristide called for a refund of French-backed compensation from Haiti, with an estimated value of \$22 billion, but President Chirac refused to repay it. The first elected president of the popular Jean Betrand Aristide in Haiti was overthrown in 2004 with a coup supported by the international community in accordance with the interests of France and backed by America. The military coup led the country to an unprecedented economic, political and humanitarian crisis.

Saudi Arabia is said to have tortured an American citizen

A dual citizen of Saudi Arabia and the United States had been imprisoned in the Ritz Carlton in Riyadh for about a week when he heard a knock on his door.

Guards dragged Walid Fitaihi, a Harvard-trained physician, to another room, according to a friend who took down the prisoner's detailed account of his treatment. Fitaihi told the friend he was slapped, blindfolded, stripped to his underwear and bound to a chair. He

was shocked with electricity in what appears to have been a single session of torture that lasted about an hour.

His tormentors whipped his back so severely that he could not sleep on it for days, his friend said, speaking on condition of anonymity to avoid reprisals. The doctor had described the physical abuse, in general terms, to his relatives as well, a person close to them said.

Detained in November 2017 in what was billed

as a crackdown on corruption, Fitaihi, 54, remains imprisoned without any public charges or trial. About 200 prominent Saudis were detained with him, and he is one of dozens who remain in prison.

Friends and families of others detained have also described episodes of torture. At least 17 detainees were hospitalized soon after the crackdown for injuries sustained while in custody, according to a doctor at the hospital and an American official monitoring the crackdown.

→13

Normalization of ties with Israel contradicts Islamic teachings: Houthi

The leader of Yemen's Houthi Ansarullah movement has vehemently condemned attempts by a number of Arab states and Persian Gulf kingdoms to normalize diplomatic relations with the Israeli regime, stressing that such efforts are in blatant contradiction to teachings of Islam.

Delivering a televised speech broadcast live from the Yemeni capital Sana'a on Sunday afternoon, Abdul-Malik al-Houthi said, "The Israeli regime is a partner to the ongoing

military aggression against Yemen. Their hostility toward Yemen is intensely reflected in their media reports. The administration of (Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin) Netanyahu is complicit in this onslaught."

He added, "The scandalous Warsaw Conference -- an international gathering organized by Washington in the Polish capital on February 13-14 -- was, in fact, a declaration of normalization and partnership with Israel.

"There can be no normalization and relations with the Israeli enemy unless at the expense of the Palestinian cause and recognition of (Tel Aviv regime's) occupation."

The Ansarullah leader further pointed out that normalization of relations with the Tel Aviv regime will pave the way for Americans and Israelis to advance their projects in the Middle East region.

(Source: Press TV)



Scholar Morteza Farhadi (R) accepts his award during the 15th Festival of Cultural Research of the Year.

Iran's best cultural studies honored

TEHRAN — Iran has awarded the top seven cultural studies carried out by Iranian researchers over the past three years at the 15th Festival of Cultural Research of the Year.

This edition of the festival was held in Tehran on Sunday after a three-year hiatus, and winners received their awards from Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi.

→16

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Rezaee: Leader's roadmap basis for macro-policies

POLITICS TEHRAN — Mohsen Rezaee, secretary of the Expediency Council, says Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's roadmap for future will be regarded as a basis for Iran's macro-policies.

"The Leader of the Revolution's statement will be regarded as a solid foundation for determining the country's macro-policies," Rezaee said, Mehr reported on Sunday.

In a statement after the 40th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, the Leader asked the youth to take "the second great step" for the progress of the revolution. He also insisted on "justice and campaign against corruption" and pushed for promotion of science and research; economy; spirituality and ethics; independence, freedom, and national dignity; foreign relations; and lifestyle.

'Karabakh conflict should not affect ties with Armenia, Azerbaijan'

POLITICS TEHRAN — Tehran says it does not want its relations with Armenia and Azerbaijan to be affected by the Karabakh conflict, IRNA reported.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said on Sunday the conflict should be resolved based on international regulations and through dialogue.

"Iran continues to follow its principled and rational policies with this regard," he added.

Pointing to Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's visit to Tehran, Qassemi said, "As I've repeatedly said the stance of the Islamic Republic of Iran toward its neighbors is clear and transparent."

"[Our] neighbors are the top priority of Iran's foreign policy," he added.



Envoy meets Omani minister to discuss economic co-op

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Iranian Ambassador to Muscat, Mohammadreza Nouri-Shahroodi, has held a meeting with Omani Finance Minister Darwish bin Ismail bin Ali Al Balushi to discuss ways to develop economic cooperation and increase the volume of trade ties between Tehran and Muscat, ISNA reported on Sunday.

According to ISNA, the volume of trade between Iran and Oman in the first ten months of the current Iranian fiscal year exceeded \$1 billion, experiencing a 60-percent growth compared to the same period last year.



Three border guards killed in flash floods in Mirjaveh

POLITICS TEHRAN — Three Iranian border guards have been killed after flash floods hit the city of Mirjaveh in Iran's southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan, Tasnim reported on Sunday.

The guards, Sergeant Mohammad Nouri, Private Ali Khalvaki, Private Mojtaba Yazdan Panah, were killed after they got trapped in floodwaters while performing patrol duty, deputy provincial governor Mohammad Hadi Marashi said.

Marashi said the first soldier found himself trapped in floodwaters while was on his post duties.

"Another soldier who witnessed the incident entered the water to save the first one, but could not make it himself either," he continued. "Unfortunately, the same happened for the third soldier."



Assad's Tehran visit shows Iranian status: envoy

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Syrian Ambassador to Beirut, Ali Abdel Karim Ali, said on Sunday the recent visit of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to Tehran sent a message to the world that Iran is a top priority for Syria and will play an important role in the country's future.

The message of Assad's visit to Iran was quite clear, he said, IRNA reported.

The most important message of the visit was to highlight the deep and strong bonds of friendship and brotherhood between the two countries and also to show the nation's gratitude to Iran for assisting Syria in the fight against terrorism until overcoming the crisis.



'U.S. not to triumph in its economic war on Iran'

POLITICS TEHRAN — Deputy Chair of U.S.-China Partnership Foundation believes Washington could never win its economic war against Tehran as Iran enjoys huge potential to fight the war.

In an interview with IRNA published on Sunday, John Milligan-Whyte said the U.S. measures against other countries such as China and Iran, which comes in the form of economic pressure on them, are wrong.

Such moves cannot be interpreted as peaceful, he said.

The U.S. pressure on Iran cannot be expected to last long and succeed since Iran is a very powerful country with a civilization much older than the U.S., he stated.

POLITICS

MARCH 4, 2019

IRGC Navy develops anti-laser weapon



He added the IRGC Navy will build a 65-meter-long watercraft equipped with missiles and torpedoes and capable of carrying helicopters.

POLITICS TEHRAN — Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy chief Alireza Tangsiri has said his forces have developed a weapon that is able to beat the United States' anti-drone laser system.

In an interview with Tasnim published on Sunday, Rear Admiral Tangsiri said the IRGC Navy has successfully developed the weapon, which is now available.

He declared plans to equip the IRGC Navy with new submarines, saying the force is after producing midget submarines that would be more advanced than the Qadir submarines, and are like the Fateh or Persian Gulf submarines, which are being manufactured by the Defense Ministry.

The commander emphasized that the new submarines should be equipped with torpedoes and subsurface-to-surface cruise missiles.

The navy's industrial centers are manufacturing patrol and missile-launching vessels, as well as heavy military ships, the admiral remarked.

Zarif highlights necessity of joining FATF



February to complete an action plan of reforms that would bring it in line with global norms, or face consequences.

The FATF concluded at its February 22 meeting that "there are still items not completed" and said in a statement

Tangsiri also said his forces may receive anti-ship ballistic missiles, like the Persian Gulf missile, from the IRGC Air Force, and are planning to use a more advanced version of those missiles.

In remarks in January, Tangsiri announced plans to produce submarines and unveil its technological achievements in this respect "in the future".

"[Progress] in the area of submarines is one of our needs which we should pursue," he stated.

Asked about the navy's preparedness, he said, "We are fully prepared and observe all the moves by our extra-regional enemies."

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has urged the Armed Forces to upgrade their military capabilities and preparedness.

"Enhance your abilities and preparations so much as you can so that the enemies of Iran do not even dare to threaten this great nation," Ayatollah Khamenei said during a meeting with a group of navy commanders and officials in November.

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Sunday that it is essential to approve the bills to join the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

Mehrdad Lahouti, the spokesman of the Majlis Independent Velayee faction, said that during a meeting of the faction with the foreign minister, Zarif expressed hope that the Expediency Council would approve bill to join the FATF.

Zarif said on February 24 that the Expediency Council should decide on the FATF based on the "realities".

"Our friends should decide based on realities. So far, they have said that nothing will happen but they are now seeing the situation," Zarif remarked.

The Paris-based FATF watchdog announced on February 22 that Iran has until June to fix its anti-money laundering and terrorism financing rules or face increased international scrutiny of its banks.

In October 2018, the global watchdog had given Iran until

it "expects Iran to proceed swiftly in the reform path", according to Reuters.

One of the actions Iran is required to take to appear the FATF is joining the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), which is also called the Palermo Convention, a 2000 United Nations-sponsored multilateral treaty against transnational organized crime.

The other action is to ratify the CFT (the convention combatting financing of terrorism).

On October 7, 2018, the Majlis (parliament) voted in favor of the CFT. However, the oversight Guardian Council rejected the bill by finding 22 faults with it.

To become a law, the Guardian Council should vet the bill for compliance with the Constitution.

In cases when the parliament and the Guardian Council disagree on a bill, the issue is referred to the Expediency Council for final arbitration. The bill is now under study by the Expediency Council.

Diplomat: Backing anti-Iran sanctions will harm Islamic world solidarity

ber states spared no effort to distract the organization's attention from the rights of the Palestinian people to other irrelevant issues.

He also said that terrorism and extremism have been defeated in many cases, noting that Iran was proud of its role in achieving this goal.

However, he warned, the anti-human Takfiri ideology is still alive and is busy poisoning youths' minds all over the Islamic world.

Dehqani also regretted that some member states are using the OIC as an instrument to serve their own foreign policy, rather than treating it as an independent international body.

Such acts will result in undermining the OIC's credibility, Dehqani underlined.



Iran reiterates missile program is non-negotiable

POLITICS TEHRAN — Addressing the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers in Abu Dhabi, a senior Iranian diplomat said supporting the United States' anti-Iran sanctions breaches solidarity among Muslims, IRNA reported on Sunday.

Gholam-Hossein Dehqani, deputy foreign minister for legal and international affairs, said the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) was initially established to promote solidarity among Islamic countries.

The entire world have denounced Donald Trump's sanctions against Iran. Only the two Muslim states of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates along with Israel have backed the U.S. withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal and reimposition

of sanctions against Iran.

The Iranian diplomat also stressed the central role of the Palestinian issue, saying it should be a priority of the OIC.

Dehqani said the organization should not let any new development distract the attention of the Islamic world from its most important and enduring issue which is Palestine.

According to ISNA, Dehqani also described the relocation of U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to al-Quds as part of U.S. conspiracy under the title of "Deal of the Century".

On December 6, 2017, U.S. President Donald Trump ordered relocation of the U.S. diplomatic mission from Tel Aviv to al-Quds.

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OIC's credibility, Dehqani underlined.

Shamkhanis warns of uprising by 'humiliated citizens'

Elsewhere in his remarks, Shamkhanis said U.S. allies in the Middle East risk an uprising by their "humiliated citizens" if they continue to rely on Washington.

"Trump and even his underlings ridicule and humili-

ate Saudi Arabia and the (United Arab) Emirates day and

night, saying that you're nothing without us and cannot

last a day without America's support," Shamkhanis noted.

Back in October, Trump said Saudi Arabia and its 83-year-old King Salman "might not be there for two weeks" without U.S. military support. The comments were mostly shrugged off by Riyadh.

"Our prediction about America's allies in the region is that if they continue the policy of relying on Islam's enemies, they will face the uprising of their humiliated citizens," said Shamkhanis.

Iran's relations with its Persian Gulf neighbors have soured in recent years and tensions escalated last month when the Islamic Republic accused Riyadh and Abu Dhabi of being complicit in a suicide bombing that killed 27 Iranian troops.

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps blasted the "traitorous governments of Saudi Arabia and (the) Emirates" and said Iran will no longer tolerate their "hidden support for anti-Islam thugs and Takfiri groups."

The February 13 bombing targeted a busload of Guards in the volatile southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan and was claimed by Jaish al-Adl, a Pakistan-based terrorist group.

Bushehr nuclear power plant being overhauled

He specified that the plant will resume supplying electricity to the national grid in late April or early May.

The official noted that a third of the plant's fuel packs will be replaced during the outage period and the periodic repair and maintenance operations and safety measures will be carried out.

Ghaffari had announced in January that the Bushehr nuclear plant had supplied around 5.5 billion kilowatt-hours (kWh) of electricity to the national grid over the

previous eight months.

He said the plant generated a record amount of 7.4 billion kWh of electricity in

the previous Iranian year (March 2017-March 2018), more than 90 percent of which was supplied to the national grid.

In September 2013, Iran took temporary control of the Russian made nuclear power plant.

Russia has agreed to provide the power plant's fuel for 10 years, with the supply deal committing Tehran to returning the spent fuel.

The Bushehr plant became officially operational and was connected to national grid in September 2011.

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Moscow encourages Ankara to fulfill memorandum on Idlib: Lavrov

Russia is calling on Turkey to meet its commitments under a joint memorandum on de-escalation in Syria's Idlib, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said in an interview with the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Sunday.

"Certain hotbeds of terrorist presence remain in the country. First of all, this concerns the Idlib de-escalation zone, where most territory is controlled by militants from the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham group (one of names of Jabhat al-Nusra terrorist organization outlawed in Russia) carrying out provocative raids against civilians, Russian and Syrian military," Lavrov recalled. "Against this background, it is necessary to continue efficiently fighting against terrorism. We encourage our Turkish partners to meet their commitments under the September 17, 2018 memorandum on stabilizing the situation in Idlib."

Russia's top diplomat underlined the importance to prevent a further growth in



terrorist presence under the pretext of observing the ceasefire reached with Turkey. "So far, the document's provisions envisag-

ing the creation of a demilitarized zone and the withdrawal of all radicals and military hardware from it have not been fully imple-

mented," he noted.

In general, after a number of successful operations by the government forces with the support of Russian Aerospace Defense Forces the situation in Syria on the ground has significantly stabilized, Lavrov said.

The ISIL (terror group, outlawed in Russia) as an organization pretending to be a quasi state has been destroyed, but a lot needs to be done to neutralize sleeper cells of radical armed groups, he noted.

On September 17, 2018 in Sochi Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan agreed on by October 15 to create a 15-20 km deep demilitarized zone in Idlib along the contact line between the Syrian government forces and the armed opposition. However, Ankara asked to give it extra time and delay the start of joint patrolling in Idlib due to its inability to guarantee security.

(Source: TASS)

UK likely to be forced into Brexit delay if May's deal rejected

Britain is likely to be forced into delaying its March 29 exit from the European Union if parliament rejects Prime Minister Theresa May's deal later this month, junior justice minister Rory Stewart told Sky News on Sunday.

May has promised to bring a revised deal back to parliament by March 12, and if legislators reject it they will be given an opportunity to vote to leave without a deal or to extend the Article 50 negotiating period.

"I think we would have to be forced into an extension of Article 50," Stewart said when asked which option he would choose if May's deal is rejected. "There doesn't seem to be parliamentary majority for 'no deal'."

Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar also told Cabinet colleagues that a delay of Britain's exit date from the EU is "very likely", Ireland's Sunday Independent quoted an unnamed minister as saying.

"The Taoiseach (prime minister) has privately said to us that it is very likely there will be an extension until June," the minister was quoted as saying.

However, any extension to the article 50 negotiating period will have to be requested by the UK and can only be implemented with the unanimous agreement of the 28 European members.

French president Emmanuel Macron has insisted it will only accept a delay with a good reason for it.

"The withdrawal agreement cannot be renegotiated," Macron said after talks with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Paris, last week.

"If the British need more time, we could consider an extension request only if it is justified by a new choice of the British, but we would in no way accept an extension without a clear perspective on the objective being pursued," he added.

Divorce package

With just 26 days until Britain is due to leave the 28-member EU, May is making last-ditch efforts to win concessions from the bloc on the divorce package, brokered after months of arduous negotiations between London and Brussels.

The EU has ruled out reopening the withdrawal agreement, though both sides are looking at a possible legal addendum to reassure MPs who worry the controversial Irish border backstop clause could keep Britain trapped in the EU's orbit for years to come.

The mechanism would guarantee no re-establishment of a hard border on the island of Ireland in the event that post-Brexit trade negotiations between the UK and the EU prove unsuccessful.

European Council President Donald Tusk said last week on Monday the EU was open to Britain postponing its exit from the bloc beyond March 29, adding he had discussed the "legal and procedural context of a potential extension"



when he met Sunday with May on the sidelines of an EU-Arab summit in Egypt.

"I believe in the situation we are in, an extension would be a rational solution but Prime Minister May still believes she's able to avoid this scenario," Tusk told a closing summit press conference.

May has repeatedly ruled out delaying Brexit, arguing it would not solve the ongoing impasse shrouding British politics.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Pakistan continues partial opening of airspace amid India crisis

Pakistan has continued a limited opening of its airspace for commercial flights, after closing it earlier this week at the height of tensions with neighboring India that saw both countries carry out air raids inside each other's territories for the first time since the 1971 war.

Pakistan's civil aviation authority said on Sunday it was allowing restricted operations at the Allama Iqbal international airport in the eastern city of Lahore.

This comes after partial operations at Karachi, Quetta, Peshawar and the capital, Islamabad, resumed on Friday.

Other airports in Gilgit Baltistan, Punjab province and the interior Sindh region remained closed on Sunday.

The travel restrictions are expected to be lifted on Monday at 1pm local time (08:00 GMT), according to the country's civil aviation authority.

International and domestic air travel in the region has been widely disrupted, with several airports in Pakistan and India shut, flights rerouted and suspended, amid fears of a major military escalation between the South Asian nations.

On February 14, a suicide attack killed at least 40 Indian paramilitary troops in the Indian-administered Kashmir town of Pulwama, triggering the current standoff between the two nuclear powers.

Indian warplanes carried out air raids



on Tuesday inside northeast Pakistan's Balakot on what New Delhi called camps belonging to Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM/ The Army of Muhammad), the armed terrorist group which claimed the Pulwama suicide bombing. Islamabad denied any such camps existed.

AlJazeera visited the site of the Indian raids and found that bombs hit a forest and a field in a remote area in northern Pakistan's town of Jaba, about 100km away from Islamabad.

Pakistan retaliated to the Indian air attacks by shooting down a MiG-21 fighter jet

on Wednesday and detained its pilot, Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman, who was returned to India on Friday night in a "peace gesture".

Hours after Abhinandan's release, firing resumed on Saturday, with at least seven people, including five civilians and two soldiers, killed on either side of the disputed Kashmir border.

Two siblings and their mother died after a shell fired by Pakistani soldiers hit their home in Poonch region near the Line of Control (LoC) that divides the Himalayan territory

of Kashmir between India and Pakistan, police said.

The children's father was critically wounded and has been admitted to hospital.

In Pakistan-administered Kashmir, a man and a boy were killed by Indian shelling in Nakiyal, said Nasrullah Khan, a hospital official. Khan said a man was also wounded in the Tatta Pani area.

The Pakistani army said in a statement that two of its soldiers were killed in Nakiyal in an "exchange of fire while targeting Indian posts undertaking firing on civilian population".

Separately, a police official in Rawalakot, speaking to Al Jazeera on condition of anonymity, said that a man had been wounded and three homes destroyed in the Indian shelling overnight.

Also in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, government official Umar Azam said the Indian troops with heavy weapons "indiscriminately targeted border villagers" along the LoC.

Rebel groups have been fighting Indian rule since 1989 and demand that Kashmir be united either under Pakistani rule or as an independent country.

Anti-India sentiment runs deep in the region, and most people support the rebels' cause against the Indian rule while also participating in civilian street protests against Indian control.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

U.S. House panel launches probe into possible obstruction by Trump

The head of the U.S. House Judiciary Committee said on Sunday the panel would seek documents from more than 60 people and entities as part of a probe into possible obstruction of justice and abuse of power by President Donald Trump.

Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler told ABC's "This Week" the panel wanted to get documents from the Department of Justice, the president's son Donald Trump Jr. and Trump Organization chief financial officer Allen Weisselberg, among others.

"We are going to initiate investigations into abuses of power, into corruption ... and into obstruction of justice,"

Nadler said. "It's our job to protect the rule of law."

"It's very clear that the president obstructed justice," Nadler said. He said it was too soon to consider whether impeachment should be pursued, however.

"Before you impeach somebody, you have to persuade the American public that it ought to happen," he said.

As evidence of obstruction, Nadler cited Trump's firing of former FBI Director James Comey, who at the time was leading an investigation into Russia's alleged interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election and possible collusion between Trump's campaign and Moscow.

That investigation was subsequently taken over by Special Counsel Robert Mueller, who is expected to deliver his findings to the U.S. attorney general within weeks.

Nadler also cited what he called Trump's attempts to intimidate witnesses in the investigation.

The White House, the Justice Department and the Trump Organization did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Nadler said the committee on Monday would release the list of people and organizations it would be requesting documents from.

(Source: Reuters)

In call with Pakistan's Khan, UK's May urges action on terrorist groups

British Prime Minister Theresa May emphasized the importance of Pakistan taking action against all terrorist groups in a call with Prime Minister Imran Khan Sunday, May's office said.

India and Pakistan came to the brink of war this week as tensions escalated following

a suicide car bombing that killed at least 40 Indian paramilitary police in Indian-controlled Kashmir. India accusing Pakistan of harbouring the Jaish-e-Mohammad group behind the attack, which Islamabad denied.

"She welcomed his commitment to reducing tensions with India," May's office said of

the call with Khan.

"The leaders discussed the need to address the causes of this conflict. The prime minister emphasized the importance of Pakistan taking action against all terrorist groups, in support of global efforts to combat terrorism."

(Source: Daily Star)



S. Korea, U.S. end springtime military drills to back diplomacy

South Korea and the U.S. are eliminating their massive springtime military drills and replacing them with smaller exercises in what they call an effort to support diplomacy aimed at resolving the North Korean nuclear crisis.

The decision announced by both countries Sunday came after President Donald Trump complained about the cost of joint drills even as his high-stakes second summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Vietnam collapsed last week.

The drills' cancellation is an olive branch to North Korea, which has viewed them as an invasion rehearsal. But it will likely raise worries about how the allies will maintain their readiness in the event that military tensions erupt again in the wake of the failed nuclear summit.

The Pentagon said in a release the U.S. and South Korean defense chiefs decided to conclude the Key Resolve and Foal Eagle series of exercises. It said the allies agreed to maintain firm military readiness through newly designed command post exercises and revised field training programs.

Acting U.S. Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan and South Korean Defense Minister Jeong Kyeong-doo "made clear that the alliance decision to adapt our training program reflected our desire to reduce tension and support our diplomatic efforts to achieve complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a final, fully verified manner," the statement said.

South Korea's Defense Ministry released a similar statement.

Jeong expressed his regrets at the lack of agreement at the Trump-Kim summit but still hopes that Washington and Pyongyang would continue negotiations, the South Korean statement said.

The new training, dubbed "Dong Maeng," which means "alliance" in English, starts Monday through March 12. It will focus on "strategic operational and tactical aspects of general military operations on the Korean Peninsula," South Korea's military and the U.S.-South Korean combined forces command said in a joint statement. According to U.S. officials, the new training will be done in smaller drills, tabletop exercises and simulations, and it will involve smaller units, such as battalions and companies rather than massive formations involving thousands of troops, as they had in the past.

Officials said the Pentagon will focus on smaller exercises and mission essential tasks, which include the ability to integrate airstrikes and the use of other weapons systems, drones, surveillance assets, logistics and communications.

Last November, a month before he resigned as defense secretary, Jim Mattis disclosed that the U.S. and South Korea would scale back and tone down the spring exercises. He said the aim was to avoid setting back diplomacy over North Korea's nuclear weapons. He described it as a reorganization of the exercises, not an end to maneuvers on the peninsula.

Trump has long complained about the cost of military drills with South Korea.

After his second summit with Kim ended without any agreement in Hanoi on Thursday, Trump spoke again about the cost of annual military drills. "It's a very, very expensive thing and we do have to think about that, too," Trump told reporters.

Following his first summit Kim in Singapore last June, Trump caught many in the U.S. and South Korea by surprise by suspending the allies' summertime military drills. He called joint drills "very provocative" and "massively expensive."

The U.S. and South Korea also have since suspended a few other smaller joint drills. Trump has also pushed South Korea to increase its financial contribution for the cost of the 28,500 U.S. troops stationed in the country as deterrence against North Korea. He previously threatened to withdraw troops from South Korea and Japan if they refused to pay more.

(Source: AP)

Record Australian heat brings fire to a scorched land

Firefighters battled 25 blazes across the Australian state of Victoria on Sunday as a record-breaking heatwave delivered the hottest start to March on record for the southern third of the country.

The continent is prone to deadly blazes thanks to its combination of remote terrain, high summer temperatures and flammable eucalyptus bush.

A severe four-day heatwave has brought fire weather across the southern parts of Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania over the weekend.

The south-eastern state of Victoria was the worst hit, with more than 2,000 firefighters, water-bombing aircraft and volunteers battling blazes on Sunday.

A cool change was forecast for late on Sunday but an associated wind change would bring danger for firefighters.

"It's a dangerous time, putting it bluntly," Victoria's Emergency Management Commissioner Andrew Crisp said in a televised emergency briefing on Sunday.

"Not just for communities but for firefighters."

In 2009, the worst bushfires on record destroyed thousands of homes in Victoria, killing 173 people and injuring 414 on a day the media dubbed "Black Saturday".

The largest fire in Bunyip State Park was sparked by multiple lightning strikes on Friday.

Rural townships were evacuated with no reported injuries or deaths, but three homes and several properties had been destroyed by noon on Sunday.

Australia's Bureau of Meteorology said the heatwave, defined as three consecutive days and nights of above-average temperatures, had broken more than a century of records.

"It's broken heat records for March in four states along the southern coastline," meteorologist Dean Narramore told Reuters by telephone on Sunday.

Temperatures in Tasmania, Australia's southernmost state, reached 39.1 degrees Celsius (102°F) on Saturday, the hottest in 131 years of records, Narramore said.

Australia's hottest summer on record is causing several industries to wilt, including the \$4.4 billion wine industry with grape yields set to drop to the lowest in years.

Drought has also damaged the winter wheat crop and is expected to drag the wool clip to a record low.

The Pacific nation had its third warmest year on record in 2018, a year marked by severe drought in parts of the country and a prolonged bushfire season.

Australia continued the trend into 2019 with its hottest January on record.

(Source: Reuters)

STOCK MARKET

| | |
|--------|----------|
| TEDPIX | 164443.1 |
| IFX | 2081.98 |

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

| | |
|-----|--------------|
| USD | 42,000 rials |
| EUR | 47,765 rials |
| GBP | 54,427 rials |
| AED | 11,437 rials |

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

| | |
|-------------|---------------|
| Brent | \$65.07/b |
| WTI | \$55.80/b |
| OPEC Basket | \$65.28/b |
| Gold | \$1,294.45/oz |
| Silver | \$15.27/oz |
| Platinum | \$836.25 oz |

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



Copper cathode production up 13% in 11 months

ECONOMY TEHRAN— Production of copper cathode in Iran during the eleven months from March 21, 2018 to February 19, 2019 rose 13 percent compared to the same period of time in the previous year, IRNA reported citing a report released by Iranian Mines and Mining Industry Development and Renovation Company (IMIDRO).

As IMIDRO reported, 223,000 tons of copper cathode were produced during the mentioned eleven-month period of this year.

Also, as previously reported by the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade, production of copper cathode in Iran during the first half of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 22, 2018) rose 70 percent compared to the first half of the past year, IRIB reported.

Hitting the production amount of 115,000 tons, copper cathode stood among the products with the highest increase of production during the six-month period of this year.

Iran, Switzerland ink MOU to enhance agricultural co-op

Speaking in the signing ceremony, Khavazi mentioned Switzerland's advanced technology and knowledge in agricultural science, saying "Switzerland is one of the leading countries in the field of agricultural sciences and has great experience in conservation and improvement of plant species, and we plan to use their experience in this fields."

"The Swiss side is also keen to benefit from Iranian research and scientific institutes experiences in some areas." He added.



Head of Iran's Agricultural Research, Education and Extension Organization (AREEO) Kazem Khavazi (2nd R) and Swiss Director of the Federal Office for Agriculture (FOAG) Bernhard Lehmann exchanging signed agreement documents in Tehran on Sunday

According to the official, Iranian agriculture sector has a great network of research institutions in which many scholars in various fields of agriculture science and biotechnology are conducting research and developing new methods.

"This knowledge can be provided to developed countries in order to exchange experience." Khavazi said.

In the past forty years, Iran has witnessed a remarkable improvement in the agriculture industry and billions of dollars' worth of development, research and educational projects have been implemented across the country.

The country has inked several agreements with European countries for cooperation in the agricultural sector among which Germany, Finland, Serbia, the Netherlands, Turkey, Latvia and Croatia can be mentioned.

March is going to be a huge month for the world economy

March is shaping up as pivotal for the world economy. The coming weeks are set to offer clarity on a U.S.-China trade deal, Britain's fate within the EU and any signs that China's economy is turning around. At the same time, U.S. President Donald Trump is mulling a report that may lead him to place tariffs on European and Japanese cars, while the Federal Reserve, European Central Bank and Bank of Japan will decide policy.

The U.S. is eyeing a summit as soon as mid-March between Trump and his Chinese counterpart, President Xi Jinping, with White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow hailing a potentially "historic deal." If an agreement is reached, the relief may be short-lived if Britain crashes out of the EU on March 29 without a divorce deal, compounding a broader slowdown across the region.

March is also the month for China's annual National People's Congress, when the rubber-stamp parliament will sign off on the government's economic plan for the year. The centerpiece announcement will be the annual growth target. Some economists expect China to set a lower growth target of either about 6 percent, or from 6 to 6.5 percent -- down from around 6.5 percent for the past two years.

(Source: Bloomberg)

'2600 industrial, service and tourism units operating in Iranian free zones'

ECONOMY **d e s k** TEHRAN — Some 2600 industrial, service and tourism units are operational in Iran's free trade zones, ILNA reported quoting Secretary of Iran's Free Zones High Council Morteza Bank.

Making the remarks in a summit on strategies for developing services, products and exports held in Tehran, the official said 1.3 quadrillion rials (over \$30.95 billion) of investment have been made in Iran's free zones over the past five years.

Emphasizing the strategic and geographic advantages of the country's free trade zones, Bank said that the most important factor in decreasing investment risk is the ease of access to raw materials since this could significantly reduce the cost of production.

He further noted that half a million jobs have been created in the country's free zones and \$6 billion foreign investment has been attracted in various areas.

Free zones play some significant role in development of the country, Bank noted. In early May, the official announced



that customs offices will be established in all seven free trade zones of the country by the end of current Iranian calendar

year (March 20, 2019).

He said, "Through good cooperation of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs

Administration (IRICA), customs offices were set up in three free trade zones over the past months."

Establishment of free trade zones in Iran dates back to Iranian calendar year 1368 (March 1989- March 1990) following the fall in the country's oil income in the preceding year which prompted the government to promote the non-oil exports.

The first two free trade zones of Iran were established in the south of the country. The first one was Kish Free Trade Zone established in 1368 on Kish Island in the Persian Gulf and the second one was Qeshm Free Trade Zone established the year after on Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz.

Some five other free trade zones have been also established in the country since then, including Chabahar in southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan Province, Arvand in southwestern Khouzestan Province, Anzali in northern Gilan Province, Aras in East-Azerbaijan Province and Maku in West-Azerbaijan Province, both in the northwest of the country.

Local chambers of commerce board members elected

ECONOMY **d e s k** TEHRAN — In the ninth election of Iran's 34 chambers of commerce, which was held on Saturday, the board members of the chambers were elected.

The elections were held at the headquarters of local chambers of commerce across the country except for Tehran Chamber of Commerce, whose election was held at Laleh Hotel in the Iranian capital.

As reported by the portal of Iran Chamber of

Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA), businessmen who are members of the local chambers of commerce and who received their business cards more than 18 months ago elected through electronic vote 535 individuals out of 1547 candidates.

There were 657 candidates from the commercial sector, that is 42.4% of all candidates, 461 people from the industrial sector, 268 business people from agriculture as well as 161 individuals from the mining sector.

The elections for Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) was the most important of all as there were more candidates for this chamber, that is 159 people vying for 40 seats up for grabs. There are 60 seats at the chamber, 20 of which are not elected as they are proposed by the government.

The election at ICCIMA, which is called the private sector parliament in Iran, is set to be held in three months.



Armenia able to transfer Iran gas to Europe

Armenia is capable of becoming a bridge for transferring Iran gas to other countries, including Europe.

According to Armenian Media 'Panorama', an expert in energy and international security field Armen Manvelyan said "Iranian gas supplies to Georgia via Armenia is highly possible, especially when such an attempt was made during the tenure of former PM Hovik Abrahamyan, when a small amount of Iranian gas was exported to Georgia through Armenia by a private company".

"Technically such a deal is also possible since the maximum capacity of the Iran-Armenia gas pipeline stands at 2.3 billion cubic meters a year, but it uses only 15 percent of its capacity," he added.



"Transiting gas through several territories requires long-term negotiations; even if a political decision is

made, it is a very difficult issue to handle in economic terms. Therefore, it is unlikely to transfer large volumes of gas to the European Union through Armenia," he noted.

Armenian premier Nikol Pashinyan arrived in the Iranian capital on Wednesday (February 27).

In Tehran, he met and conferred with Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and President Hassan Rouhani on various bilateral issues.

Earlier, Pashinyan underlined the importance of energy for Yerevan, saying Armenia is ready to play its role in transiting gas.

(Source: IRNA)

Platforms 13B, 13D operational at South Pars phase 13

Two platforms at Phase 13 of the giant South Pars gas field have become ready for operation within four days, the manager of SP13 development project has said.

Payam Motamed said the two platforms became ready for production immediately after hook-up and startup.

"This is a new record in Iran's offshore industry," he said.

After the inauguration of ten SP phases since President Hassan Rouhani took office in 2013, the second round of SP development trend has started for developing the remaining phases.

Mohammad Meshkinfam, CEO of Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC), has put the South Pars rich gas production capacity at 600 mcm/d.

"Except for SP11, the border blocks of this field shared [with neighboring Qatar] are operational," he said, adding that the sour gas production capacity in developing phases of this field (SP13, SP14, SP22-24) would increase by next March.

Motamed said the two platforms started work thanks to efforts made by the contractors including SADRA and Tesco.

"The flares of the two platforms were switched on after the end of construction and installation operations, the activation of all F&G safety systems and the opening of the first wells," he added.

Motamed said delivery of gas to the onshore refinery will start when an offshore pipeline becomes ready to transmit gas.

The simultaneous startup of two major gas platforms in the Persian Gulf by Iranian contractors is unprecedented in Iran's offshore industry. Until recently, Iranian contractors were not able to carry out such sophisticated operations without foreign help. However, they are now skilled enough to install and launch such facilities without having to hire foreign experts.

Motamed said the startup of 13B and 13D platforms would lead to the production of 1 bcf/d (28 mcm/d) of rich gas from SP13.

Platforms 13B and 13D were loaded out from Bushehr Yard of Iran Offshore Industrial Park and were installed under suitable weather conditions.

According to Motamed, the operation of the two platforms ahead of schedule indicates the seriousness of the Oil Ministry and National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) in operating SP gas projects and boosting



production from this supergiant reservoir. The SP13 output has increased in the shortest possible time with the assistance of Iranian contractors and technicians throughout the stages of manufacturing, installation and startup of oil and gas projects.

In the offshore sector of SP13 located in the northwestern part of the gas field, 38 offshore wells have been drilled.

By sending the sour gas obtained from the two platforms of SP13 to the onshore refinery via a 32-inch pipe for processing, a variety of products including sweet gas, ethane, propane, butane, gas condensate and sulfur products would be produced.

Furthermore, in coincidence with the startup of the fourth train of gas sweetening and injection into national grid, the SP13 treatment facility has become ready to sweeten gas in four processing units at a nominal capacity of 2 bcf/d.

Achieving full gas sweetening capacity at SP13 treatment facility has materialized after the startup of the fourth, which is also the last, train of sweetening at this phase. At this sweetening train, 6 mcm/d of rich gas is being processed before being fed into the national network.

Motamed said each of the four processing units would sweeten 500 mcf/d of gas for injection into national trunkline.

The four trains are currently operational by receiving sour gas from SP6 to SP8. Half of these processing units, including the first and the second trains, are expected to receive 1 bcf/d offshore gas of SP13 to be processed for injection into gas grid.

Production and injection of sweet gas from the fourth sweetening train of SP13 treatment facility is taking place at a time the first train of sulfur recovery unit of this phase has become operational by supplying 6 tons per hour of acid gas to the reaction furnace.

(Source: Shana)

China's currency becomes key issue in U.S. trade talks

U.S. officials have said any trade deal with China will include a provision to prevent manipulation of the exchange rate to help exporters but Beijing's currency regime reflects a complex reality.

U.S. President Donald Trump, who has accused the Asian giant of artificially undervaluing its currency for competitive purposes, last week said "we have a deal" with China on the currency.

And White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow on Thursday (Feb. 28) said the draft documents would prohibit currency manipulation and oblige authorities in Beijing "to report any interventions in the market."

But at the center of the issue is a paradox: China does not necessarily want a weak currency, and the downward pressure on the yuan is in large part caused by US economic conditions, like rising interest rates.

Is the Yuan undervalued?

The yuan or renminbi (RMB) is not freely convertible and the government limits its movement against the U.S. dollar to a two percent range on either side of a central parity rate which the People's Bank of China sets each day to reflect market trends.

That managed float system limits volatility: the currency has remained confined in the last five years between 6.2 and 6.8 yuan to the dollar, a historically high level, compared to 8.28 fixed rate in the 2000s.

While the RMB strengthened 6.3 percent in 2017, it depreciated by 5.7 percent last year, falling to its lowest level in a decade, which was enough to spur speculation Beijing was putting its foot on the currency scale again.

But the International Monetary Fund has said the RMB is not undervalued, and in a July report said it was "broadly stable against the basket of currencies ... and broadly in line with fundamentals."

Even the U.S. Treasury has regularly acknowledged in a semi-annual report, most recently in October, that Beijing is not manipulating its currency.

Beijing, however, shook the markets in August 2015 with a one-time devaluation that weakened the yuan by about five percent in a week.

The decision led to massive capital flight out of China, which exacerbated the currency's decline. Outflows amounted to

Can Beijing control the currency?

The PBOC actively intervened in currency markets in 2015-2016 to counteract this depreciation, using its massive foreign reserves to buy yuan. Capital flight slowed as the RMB stabilized.

Analysts say more recent weakening of RMB is not due to manipulation but is the result of China's economic slowdown, the trade war, and rising US interest rates that push up the value of the dollar against all currencies as investors search for higher yields.

Oil market loosing hope for a price rally in 2019

According to a Reuters survey, analysts and traders have grown more pessimistic over the prospects for a significant price rally this year, global fuel consumption is expected to dip this year in the face of a broad economic slowdown.

Considering the reasons for ups and downs of the oil prices last week could testify to the fact that the prices don't seem to be able to reach to levels higher than their current \$65 ceiling.

Oil market experienced a high volatility level this week, starting with a steep fall early in the week to posting a new high later on and then once again a three percent fall in the weekend.

Earlier last week, President Trump tweeted: "Oil prices getting too high. OPEC, please relax and take it easy. World cannot take a price hike - fragile!"

Brent crude dropped 2.5 percent immediately after Trump's tweet, and was on course to close near \$65 a barrel by the afternoon.

Although major oil producers didn't seem to be much threatened by what the president was tweeting, the market, however, clearly concluded that Trump was serious about his wish for prices to moderate.

In response to Trump's tweet, Saudi Energy Minister Khalid Al-Falih said on Wednesday



that OPEC and its partners were "taking it easy".

He asserted that current analysis indicated OPEC and its allies, known as OPEC+, may need to extend their agreement to curb output until the end of 2019.

OPEC pumped 30.68 million barrels per day (bpd) in February, down 300,000 bpd from January and the lowest OPEC total since 2015.

Despite negative factors like Trump's com-

ments and the lack of new developments in U.S.-China trade relations and increased U.S. production, Saudi energy minister's remarks along with the drops in OPEC output once again helped the prices to partially gain their momentum.

However, on Friday the U.S. ISM manufacturing activity index in February sank to the lowest since November 2016, and was below

expectations.

The data sent a strong message to a market that has been looking for direction, said Phil Flynn, an analyst at Price Futures Group in Chicago.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude (WTI) futures fell \$1.42, or 2.5 percent, to settle at \$55.80 per barrel while global benchmark Brent crude futures for May settled \$1.24, or 1.9 percent, lower at \$65.07 a barrel.

On the other hand, as reported by Reuters, China's February factory activity fell for a third month as the world's second-largest economy continued to struggle with weak export orders, a private survey showed on Friday.

The weakness is also being felt across the wider region. South Korea's exports contracted at their steepest pace in nearly three years in February as demand from China cooled further," Reuters reported.

The weak economic data for the world's top two economies compounded worries that demand is falling globally and despite all the efforts done by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, and the cuts due to the U.S. sanctions on Iran and Venezuela, oil traders doesn't seem to be feeling much enthusiastic about the months to come.

(Source: staff & agencies)

UK 2018 oil output at 1.09 mil bpd, up 9%, due to newly producing fields



UK oil output last year rose by 9 percent, or 90,000 bpd, to 1.09 million bpd, as North Sea fields recently brought on stream helped spur the recovery of recent years, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy said Thursday.

BEIS said OPEC cuts had again boosted UK oil exports, by 16 percent year on year to 36.94 million mt, as production from newly producing fields was mainly exported, and UK refiners' use of indigenous crude hit a low of 5.3 million mt (110,000 bpd).

UK crude production was up 11 percent at 984,000 bpd, and production of natural gas liquids was down 4% at 105,000 bpd.

New production sources included Catcher, operated by Premier Oil, and the

Barra and Harris fields, which feed the Western Isles Floating Production Storage and Offloading vessel and are operated by South Korea's Dana Petroleum.

The production increase was especially pronounced in the last quarter as a leak in the Forties pipeline a year earlier shut down production for several weeks.

UK oil production stands at just over a third of its 1999 peak, BEIS said.

Part of the production increase reflected investments approved before the oil price collapse of 2014, but also tax cuts implemented by the government in the wake of the collapse, as well as a regulatory overhaul.

(Source: Financial Times)

Oil slump catches funds off guard in longest bull run since 2012



Oil's sudden slump seems to have caught optimists by surprise. Hedge funds increased wagers on rising Brent crude prices for an eighth straight week, the longest streak since 2012, according to ICE Futures Europe data for the seven days through Feb. 26.

But the enthusiasm has proved to be misplaced, at least for now. The international benchmark posted a weekly loss for the first time since early February as President Donald Trump warned OPEC to "take it easy" in cutting supplies and U.S. economic data fell short of expectations. Brent lost 3.1 percent for the week, after rising 25 percent to start the year.

Crude has rallied this year as Russia and the Organization of Petroleum Exporting

Countries curbed output to offset a global supply glut, while U.S. sanctions isolated major suppliers Iran and Venezuela. Yet an uneven economic outlook, record-smashing American production and worries about the U.S.-China trade war have cast a shadow over sentiment.

"It's sort of really push-pull in the short term between some fairly constructive bullish set-up on the supply side but really overshadowed by questions on the demand side," said Tamar Essner, director for energy and utilities at Nasdaq Corporate Solutions in New York. "At the same time, you also have Trump doing everything to push for lower oil prices."

(Source: Bloomberg)

BP: renewables to become largest source of power by 2040

Renewable energy will be the fastest-growing source of energy in the world through 2040, penetrating the energy system "more quickly than any fuel in history" to become the largest source of power by 2040, oil and gas supermajor BP said in its annual BP Energy Outlook on Thursday.

Renewables are expected to account for some two-thirds of the rise in power generation globally, and their share in the global power sector will grow to around 30 percent by 2040, up from around 10 percent now. The European Union (EU) will continue to lead among the regions in terms of renewables penetration. The share of

renewables in the EU power market is set to jump to more than 50 percent by 2040, according to BP.

The global share of coal, on the other hand, will drop significantly and will be surpassed by renewables as the primary source of energy in the power sector by 2040, BP said.

Oil demand will rise during the first half of the outlook to 2040, but at a much slower pace than in the past, "before plateauing in the 2030s," the oil and gas major said.

Global demand for liquid fuels—including crude oil and condensates, natural gas liquids (NGLs), and other liquids—is expected to increase

by 10 million bpd, plateauing around 108 million bpd in the 2030s.

Despite the forecast that peak oil demand could come in the 2030s, BP noted that under all scenarios oil will continue to play a significant role in the global energy system by 2040. Moreover, "significant levels of investment are required for there to be sufficient supplies of oil to meet demand in 2040," BP said, adding that "In all scenarios, trillions of dollars of investment in oil is needed."

Compared to last year's outlook, BP's largest revisions were in renewable energy and in China's

energy consumption. BP revised up its renewable energy estimated by 9 percent, while it revised down by 7 percent the expected Chinese energy consumption, "reflecting the pace at which China is adjusting to a more sustainable pattern of economic growth."

"Renewables and natural gas together account for the great majority of the growth in primary energy. In our evolving transition scenario, 85% of new energy is lower carbon," Spencer Dale, BP group chief economist, said, commenting on the outlook to 2040.

(Source: oilprice.com)

The world's next great LNG project



an agreement concerning Arctic LNG 2 where the French company will take a working interest of 10 percent in the project. Furthermore, Total also has an overall stake of 19 percent in Novatek itself.

Originally, Arctic LNG 2 was planned to be based around the Utrennaya gas field. However, Novatek recently discovered a significant deposit of gas in the near vicinity of the facility called the North Obskoye gas field which was the largest discovery in the world in 2018. The original deposit contains two billion cubic meters of natural gas and 100 million tons of natural gas liquids while the most recent discovery adds the equivalent of another 960 million barrels of oil. The North

Obskoye gas field would improve the project's profitability as more gas can be exported over a more extended period.

Recently, the consortium has been awarding preliminary contracts worth billion to subcontractors for the construction of the facility. Among these companies are Saipem and Renaissance Heavy Industries who have signed a \$2.5 billion agreement to supply the engineering, materials, construction, towing, and installation of several platforms. According to Alexander Fridman, a senior member of Novatek's board, "Arctic LNG 2 will utilize new technological solutions and employ domestic manufacturers. The supply contract envisages new prospects for localizing the compressor equipment fabrication for the LNG industry, which is consistent with our strategic aim of creating and developing an LNG Centre of Excellence in Russia."

Also, Siemens has joined the ranks of potential suppliers. The German engineering firm was also involved during the Yamal project. The contract includes three feed gas compressors and six boil-off gas compressors. The equipment will be manufactured locally to create domestic knowhow to support an independent Russian LNG sector.

Although the FID has not been made yet, the ever-increasing ecosystem of subcontractors increases the likelihood of an announcement. Also, interest from global investors such as Korean KOGAS and Saudi Aramco's intention to buy 30 percent of the multi-billion facility boosts the likeliness that the project will materialize.

(Source: oilprice.com)

If oil breaks this level, it's a straight shot back to the December lows

Oil prices could fall to the low \$40s if they can't hold above the critical \$52 level, and several factors are raising the risk of that occurring, John Kilduff told CNBC on Thursday.

From slowing global growth, especially in Asia, to Saudi Arabia's push for deeper production cuts, to rising tensions between India and Pakistan, various global triggers are putting pressure on crude oil prices, the Again Capital founding partner said on "Futures Now."

Despite these triggers, oil is currently having its best start to a year ever since commodity watchers began recording its price data in 1983. The commodity, which slipped by over 2 percent Friday, fell as low as \$42.36 amid a marketwide sell-off in December 2018.

"The real critical center for crude oil is Asia and Asian demand, and the economic data out of Asia has been quite poor," Kilduff said. "And I'm not certain that even striking a trade deal with China is going to improve that country's fortunes."

As for India and Pakistan's nuclear conflict, Kilduff said that "any kind of conflagration in Asia, whether it be limited to India and Pakistan or spread to any degree to the region, would harm the economic activity there and that would only hasten the demand crisis that you could see here for oil prices in the near future."

Kilduff, whose firm specializes in alternative investments such as energy derivatives, added that Saudi Arabia's "tough stance" on decreasing its output could "unravel" the bullish thesis for crude. His bull case for the commodity states that if U.S. West Texas Intermediate, or WTI, crude oil futures can break above \$58 a barrel, they could run to the mid-\$60s.

But all of these global factors are eroding the rally's durability, and if the world's top oil producers don't work together to offset the United States' record crude production, it could spell trouble for prices, the market-watcher warned.

U.S. dollar strength can also weigh on crude prices, but the Federal Reserve's pledge to be patient with its interest rate hikes has made that less of a risk, said Kilduff, who is a CNBC contributor.

"The United States is going to remain an island of prosperity here," he explained. "We're going to have the only central bank that is just maybe doing nothing, as opposed to some of the other ones that are going to have to be more aggressive. Again, look at the Chinese central bank. I don't know if they're in full panic mode or not, but they are doing everything in their power to stimulate their economy including record loan issuances, which don't always work out well in the longer term. So I think the dollar is going to actually remain attractive, which should help me out a bit, but, again, we're in a tough spot here."

Oil prices fell Friday despite a Reuters survey showing that OPEC lowered its production output in the first two months of 2019. Brent crude futures, the international benchmark, traded in the \$65 to \$67 range, and WTI crude futures hovered around the \$55 and \$56 levels.

(Source: CNBC)

Iraq's total oil exports average 3.620m bpd in February -Oil Ministry

Iraq's oil exports averaged 3,620 million barrels per day (bpd) in February, down slightly from the previous month, the oil ministry said in a statement on Friday.

Iraq exported 3,649 million bpd of crude oil in January.

Exports from Iraq's southern Basra ports stood at 3,54 million bpd, the ministry said, down from 3,556 million bpd in January.

Shipments from Iraq's northern Kirkuk oilfields to the Turkish port of Ceyhan fell to 63,000 bpd, from 75,000 bpd in January, the statement said.

The average sale price in February was \$60.834 per barrel, generating around \$6,167,815,000 in revenue, the ministry said.

Iraq is producing below its maximum capacity of nearly 5 million bpd in line with an agreement between OPEC and other exporters such as Russia to curtail global supply in order to support prices.

(Source: Reuters)

Kazakhstan plans to cut oil exports by 2% in 2019

Kazakhstan plans to cut its oil exports by around 2 percent this year to 71 million tons, its energy ministry told Reuters, mainly at the expense of China, amid a production decline.

This is down from 72.5 million tons Kazakhstan exported overseas in 2018.



Kazakhstan plans to reduce its own output to 89.5 million tons in 2019 from 90.3 million tons last year, due in part to planned maintenance shutdowns at its three largest oil fields.

Its key exporting route is the Caspian Pipeline from western Kazakhstan to the Black Sea port of Novorossiysk. Supplies via that route are set to remain broadly unchanged this year.

Kazakhstan will slash its exports to China via the Atasu-Alashankou pipeline to 0.5 million tons from 1.38 million tons in 2018, the energy ministry said.

It will also completely halt supplying Russia's Orenburg refinery. Last year oil supplies there from Kazakhstan stood at almost 0.5 million tons.

(Source: Reuters)

Delaying Brexit: time to take part in the EU elections

For two long years, Theresa May always insisted that Britain will leave the European Union on 29 March. So determined has she been to deliver Brexit by this self-imposed deadline that she has even had the date written into law. This week, she made an uncharacteristic bow to political reality and accepted that it may not happen after all. This was a pivotal concession and a watershed moment in Britain's argument about Brexit.

May's statement on Tuesday should be read with care. It was hedged with conditions. She continues to pursue her original timetable. Her own deal – possibly slightly tweaked from the version that MPs threw out in January – would have to be defeated on 12 March for any delay to Brexit to be triggered. Parliament would also have to vote – again – against leaving the EU with no deal. If both these things happen, and both currently appear likely, the government will then put forward a motion to MPs for "a short limited extension" to the article 50 process. May made it clear that she will oppose any extension beyond the end of June 2019.

The prime minister's willingness to allow an extension is a welcome development. It had to be forced out of her by some equally welcome tough action by a group of cabinet ministers. But the terms in which she might approach any extension of article 50 remain unrealistic. She needs to be much clearer – with herself and the country – what she would use the extension for.

Based on what she said this week, she appears to hope she can use an extension to get yet another variant of her existing deal over the line. But there is very little negotiating space for that. The EU is not willing to change the withdrawal agreement. Her

Theresa May envisages only a short delay. But any extension of article 50 raises big issues that would take months to sort out.

hardline leavers are not willing to bend the knee and accept it. If she sticks to the strategy of making meaningless tweaks to her deal to make it acceptable to hardline leavers, we could arrive at the end of June in exactly the same mess as now. May therefore needs to recognize another truth. A delay will not mean

business as usual. It will mean a rethink. This is why the agriculture minister, George Eustice, resigned over the issue on Thursday.

Such a rethink could take several different forms. She could try for a softer Brexit deal, perhaps involving customs and single market alignment along European Free Trade Association terms. She could commit to lock Britain into a customs union.

She could offer an early general election in return for votes for a changed deal; or accept a second referendum in exchange for support for her deal in the way that Labour appears to be contemplating. She could embark on a deliberative democratic exercise to seek out public consensus.

Any of these, or any combination, would involve reaching out to different interests and large changes of approach. That process necessitates new thinking. May is not a natural new thinker. But there is no alternative to trying. Her existing Brexit policy has failed. It will have to be replaced by a better policy that commands wider support. This will need time. Not unlimited time. But probably more than three months, especially if the outcome is ultimately to be put to the voters in an election or another referendum. All this suggests an extension of at least six months, and maybe more. The lesson of the current impasse is precisely that we cannot again let the clock prevent Britain from sorting Brexit out.

May told MPs this week that no extension can go beyond June because that would mean the UK taking part in the European parliament elections in late May. That would be a problem if the Brexit outcome was settled. But it isn't – that's the whole point. May should get her priorities straight. The elections are awkwardly timed but it is silly not to take part. The priority of getting this national emergency resolved properly is worth the price of having British MEPs in place while it is being sorted.

Election campaigning may even be useful at a dark time. Britain is in the midst of a deep national argument about future relations with Europe. Why not open that argument to the people? For once, the European elections might actually be about Europe. Britain should certainly make clear that, if Brexit is agreed, our MEPs would withdraw. In the meantime, Britain loses nothing by taking part. Let's vote.

(Source: *The Guardian*)

EU-Turkey trade compact could benefit Syrian refugees

By Jessica Brandt & Kemal Kirisci

The UN's Global Compact on Refugees, adopted late last year, floats the possibility of trade arrangements that incentivize local businesses to hire refugee labor. A trade deal between the EU and Turkey that grants access to European markets for agricultural goods produced in Turkey with a threshold level of Syrian labor could prove beneficial for both parties – and for millions of displaced Syrians.

Eight years into the Syria crisis, the conflict shows no sign of ending. More than 3.5 million people have sought safety in Turkey, which now hosts more refugees than any other country in the world. The likelihood that they will be able to return home in the near future is low.

Turkey already has a customs union with Europe, but it covers only manufactured goods. Expanding the arrangement to cover agricultural products could open up new opportunities for refugees to join the workforce. Agreements between the EU and two other refugee-hosting countries, Jordan and Lebanon, could prove useful (if imperfect) models for how to engage the private sector in such an endeavor.

How Turkey fares at integrating newcomers will bear significantly on the wellbeing of millions of people and the trajectory of consequential migration flows.

(Source: *axios.com*)

Jared and the Saudi Crown Prince go nuclear?

There are too many unanswered questions about the White House's role in advancing Saudi ambitions

By Nicholas Kristof

Jared Kushner slipped quietly into Saudi Arabia this week for a meeting with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, so the question I'm trying to get the White House to answer is this: Did they discuss American help for a Saudi nuclear program?

Of all the harebrained and unscrupulous dealings of the Trump administration in the last two years, one of the most shocking is a Trump plan to sell nuclear reactors to Saudi Arabia that could be used to make nuclear weapons.

Even as President Trump is trying to de-nuclearize North Korea and Iran, he may be helping to nuclearize Saudi Arabia. This is an abominable policy tainted by a gargantuan conflict of interest involving Kushner.

Kushner's family real estate business had been teetering because of a disastrously overpriced acquisition he made of a particular Manhattan property called 666 Fifth Avenue, but last August a company called Brookfield Asset Management rescued the Kushners by taking a 99-year lease of the troubled property – and paying the whole sum of about \$1.1 billion up front.

Alarm bells should go off: Brookfield also owns Westinghouse Electric, the nuclear services business trying to sell reactors to Saudi Arabia.

Saudi swamp, meet American swamp.

It may be conflicts like these, along with even murkier ones, that led American intelligence officials to refuse a top-secret security clearance for Kushner. The Times reported Thursday that Trump overruled them to grant Kushner the clearance.

This nuclear reactor mess began around the time of Trump's election, when a group of retired U.S. national security officials put together a plan to enrich themselves by selling nuclear power plants to Saudi Arabia. The



As Representative Brad Sherman, a California Democrat, has noted, "A country that can't be trusted with a bone saw shouldn't be trusted with nuclear weapons."

officials included Michael Flynn, Trump's national security adviser, and they initially developed a "plan for 40 nuclear power plants" in Saudi Arabia, according to a report from the House Oversight and Reform Committee. The plan is now to start with just a couple of plants.

As recently as Feb. 12, Trump met in the White House with backers of the project and was supportive, Reuters reported.

These are civilian nuclear power plants, and Saudi Arabia claims it wants them for electricity. But the Saudis insist on producing their own nuclear fuel, rather than buying it more cheaply abroad. Producing fuel is a standard way for rogue countries to divert fuel for secret nuclear weapons programs, and the Saudi resistance to safeguards against proliferation bolsters suspicions that the real goal is warheads.

Trump may be vigilant (destructively so) about Iran's nuclear plants, but in the Saudi case his response seems to be: There's money to be made! When Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu raised objections to the transfer last year, Axios reported, "Trump and his advisers told Netanyahu that, if the U.S. does not sell the Saudis nuclear reactors, other countries like Russia or France will."

Trump seems to believe that the Saudis

have us over a barrel: If we don't help them with nuclear technology, someone else will. That misunderstands the U.S.-Saudi relationship. The Saudis depend on us for their security, and the blunt truth is that we hold all the cards in this relationship, not them.

Why on earth would America put Prince Mohammed on a path to acquiring nuclear weapons? He is already arguably the most destabilizing leader in an unstable region, for he has invaded Yemen, kidnapped Lebanon's prime minister, started a feud with Qatar, and, according to American intelligence officials, ordered the murder of the Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi.

The prince has also imprisoned and brutally tortured women's rights activists, including one who I'm hoping will win the Nobel Peace Prize, Loujain al-Hathloul. As Representative Brad Sherman, a California Democrat, has noted, "A country that can't be trusted with a bone saw shouldn't be trusted with nuclear weapons."

The White House won't clarify whether Kushner discussed the nuclear issue when he met Prince Mohammed a few days ago, but Senator Jeff Merkley, an Oregon Democrat, told me, "I'd be surprised if it didn't come up." Along with Senators Ed Markey, a Massachusetts Democrat, and Rand Paul, a Kentucky Republican, Merkley has introduced a resolution to oppose the transfer of nuclear technology that would allow Saudi Arabia to create nuclear weapons.

There's another element of Trump's Saudi policy that is simply repulsive: the fawning courtship of a foreign prince who has created in Yemen the world's worst humanitarian crisis, murdered a journalist and tortured women's rights activists. The White House genuflections are such that Prince Mohammed had a point when, according to The Intercept, he bragged that he had Kushner in his "pocket."

(Source: *NYT*)

Iraqis divided over continued presence of American forces

By Hamdi Malik

As the Islamic State (ISIS) terrorist group appears to be losing its last stronghold in Syria, but ISIS cells are cropping up in Iraq, controversy is growing about Iraq's need for foreign forces, especially U.S. ones. One politician even accused the United States of plotting to foster an ISIS revival.

Some 50 Iraqi parliament members submitted a request to the parliament speaker Feb. 19 to discuss and review the 2008 Strategic Framework Agreement between Iraq and the United States, which allows the presence of U.S. forces in Iraq. Iraqi parties have escalated their rhetoric against the U.S. presence since U.S. President Donald Trump's statements Feb. 3 on the role his forces play in watching Iran's moves in the region.

Joey Hood, charge d'affaires of the U.S. mission in Iraq, told the media Feb. 19 that the U.S. military presence in Iraq involves only around 5,200 advisers and trainers, and no actual combat troops.

But some Iraqis claim there are more U.S. military personnel in the country than that. Jaafar al-Husseini, a spokesman for the Iraqi paramilitary group Kata'ib Hezbollah, told Lebanon's Al-Mayadeen news Feb. 18 that the group "is active in the border areas with Syria to follow up on the Americans' movements." He said, "There are 31 U.S. bases" and 34,000 U.S. service members in Iraq. Kata'ib Hezbollah is among the Shiite groups most opposed to the U.S. presence in Iraq and has close ties to Lebanon's Hezbollah.

Hood denied the presence of any American bases in Iraq, stressing that U.S. forces returned to the country in 2014 at the request of Iraq's federal government after the ISIS took over part of the nation; he said the U.S. military will leave immediately upon the Iraqi government's request. He also said video footage that was used to back up claims that large numbers of U.S. troops had been coming to Iraq was more than a decade old.

However, a BBC Persian correspondent reported Feb. 13 that the headquarters of U.S.-Iraqi joint forces in the Iraqi border town of Qaim was only flying the U.S. flag, whereas it had only flown the Iraqi flag before. She reported that no Iraqi troops were in sight.

Despite some Iraqis' opposition to a U.S. military presence, the United States is trying to strengthen military relations with the country's leaders. High-level U.S. delegations have traveled to Baghdad to discuss the role of U.S. forces in Iraq.

Gen. Joseph Votel, commander of the U.S. Central Command, arrived Feb. 17 in Iraq and met with senior Iraqi military



Despite some Iraqis' opposition to a U.S. military presence, the United States is trying to strengthen military relations with the country's leaders.

figures, including Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi, who also is the commander in chief of the Iraqi armed forces.

The prime minister's office issued a statement the same day saying both sides discussed "cooperation in the war against the terrorist ISIS, and [military] training," which indicates the United States is determined to keep its military presence in the country.

Earlier, acting U.S. Defense Secretary Patrick Michael Shanahan visited Baghdad on Feb. 12 and met with Abdul Mahdi to discuss military cooperation.

The United States seems to have no intention of leaving Iraq in the near future. According to press reports, U.S. forces have recently expanded their presence in some areas of Iraq, including in Anbar province bordering Syria, such as in Qaim.

The United States is well aware of the extent of differences among Iraqi authorities about the U.S. future in Iraq, which gives U.S. forces the leeway to plan to stay in the country. Recently, former Interior Minister Baqir al-Zubeidi, who belongs to the Islamic Supreme Council political party, and the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service have been airing their disagreements in the media.

On Feb. 19, the security agency responded to Zubeidi's statement from the day before that there is "an American plan to produce a new generation of ISIS." In an interview with NAS Press News Agency, Counter Terrorism Service spokesman Sabah al-Naaman Sabah al-Naaman said Zubeidi's statements are "mere speculation."

"U.S. forces in the Ain Assad Air Base [in Anbar] have [only] this] mission: to support and train Iraqi security services, and aid intelligence [services] in monitoring ISIS movement. Their withdrawal from the country will happen by a decision from the Iraqi government when it deems it right," Naaman added.

Hussein Allawi, a national security professor at Nahrain University, told Al-Monitor he agrees with Naaman.

"The U.S. advisory presence is now needed during the stabilization and peace phase. Our forces need to build capacity, increase combat capabilities and improve security and intelligence partnerships," he said.

Military experts aren't the only ones calling for a U.S. presence at this phase. Some political parties think Iraq should benefit from U.S. forces' services.

Saleh al-Mutlaq, head of the Iraqi National Dialogue Front, a Sunni political party, said in a Feb. 19 interview on Al-Hurra TV that as a result of the presence of militias and the fragile security situation, the exit of U.S. forces is not a priority for the Iraqi state.

All the calls demanding a U.S. withdrawal are coming from political blocs, he said, adding, "It is in their interests to keep the status quo so they [can] continue to loot the wealth of the country."

In a serious development, some parties have stepped up their rhetoric against those who don't support a U.S. withdrawal.

In a clear threat, parliament member Talib Salim of Al-Sadiq Bloc of the League of the Righteous on Feb. 16 criticized those calling for the U.S. to remain in Iraq, calling them "traitors and slaves for the dollar."

Meanwhile, Muqtada al-Sadr, the leader of the Sairoon coalition — which won the most seats in the last parliamentary elections — complicated matters further when he called for a new law to schedule the simultaneous withdrawal of Turkish and American forces from Iraq.

This proposal, however, seems to be a long shot, given the deep differences in the Iraqi parliament. Many Sunnis and Kurdish members, and even some Shiites, don't support a U.S. withdrawal.

(Source: *Al Monitor*)

Coalition continues to take a "horrific toll" on children

Henrietta Ford, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), said that Yemen's brutal war by coalition continues to take a "horrific toll" on children.

In Yemen, children can no longer safely do the things that all children love to do like go to school or spend time with their friends outside. The war can reach them wherever they are, even in their own homes.

Two days ago, five children playing at home were killed in an attack on the Tahita district, south of Hudaydah.

"Each day, eight children are killed or injured across 31 active conflict zones in the country."

The war's horrific toll on children continues despite the agreement reached by parties to this war late last year in Stockholm and despite the humanitarian funding commitments made this past week at the pledging conference in Geneva.

Talks and conferences have so far done little to change the reality for children on the ground. Only a comprehensive peace agreement can give Yemeni children the reprieve from violence and war that they need and deserve.

Last Monday, Geert Cappelaere, UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, said that the "mind-boggling violence" in Yemen "has not spared a single child." His comments

came the day before a high-level pledging event for Yemen, held in Geneva, which raised \$26 billion to support Yemenis facing a crisis described by UN chief António Guterres as an "overwhelming humanitarian calamity."

Mr. Cappelaere also noted that generosity and aid will not, on their own, bring an end to children's suffering in Yemen, and called on warring parties to "put an end to violence in potshots and across all of Yemen, protect civilians, keep children out of harm's way and allow humanitarian deliveries to children and their families wherever they are in the country."

(Source: *Yemen Press*)



Davidson: Trump goes denial, delay mode about MBS involvement in Khashoggi's murder

TEHRAN (FNA) — Lawrence Davidson, Professor of History, says to have the Saudi Crown prince "personally be a murderer caught red handed killing an American resident is really inconvenient" for the U.S. president.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with FNA, Lawrence Davidson said, "When Trump took office he said that human rights would no longer be a guiding principle of policy."

Commenting on the U.S. foreign policy, the American professor said "above the U.S.'s claim to be supportive of human rights is largely for public consumption", and "the U.S. has a more profound record of destroying other nations' governments and economies for the sake of the private profit of U.S. corporations."

Lawrence Davidson is a retired professor of history from West Chester University in Pennsylvania. In his academic researches, he has focused on American foreign relations with the Middle East.

Below is the full text of the interview:

■ Ankara has shared the audio recording of Khashoggi's last moments with Washington, indicating the involvement of Saudi Crown Prince's top aide and CIA saying that MBS has issued the order for Khashoggi's murder. Why does Trump insist MBS was not involved in Khashoggi's murder?

A: Trump has a good personal relationship with Mohammed Bin Salman. The Saudi prince is the kind of personality that appeals to Trump — a guy who supposedly gets things done, even if he is ruthless in doing so. Other friends of Trump along these lines are the "presidents" of Egypt and the Philippines.

On the other hand, the Saudis have trillions of dollars invested in the U.S. that are



foundational when it comes to the defense industries and some of the banks. That gives the Saudis leverage over the U.S. economy and the president.

Therefore, the short answer is we have a very important ally of longstanding, with leverage over the U.S. economy in areas of defense and security, the leader of whom president Trump personally likes. To have the guy personally be a murderer caught red handed killing an American resident is really inconvenient. So President Trump goes into denial and delay mode.

■ Unlike majority of the heads of the states, Trump says he stands by Mohammed Bin Salman. Does that lay bare Trump disregard for U.S. values?

A: The truth is that the values you speak of have always been more important in theory

(part of U.S. mythology) rather than practice when it comes to foreign policy. The U.S. has a more profound record of destroying other nations' governments and economies for the sake of the private profit of U.S. corporations than in the support of democracy and the human rights of other people. Iran has been a victim of this fact. So, those who bemoan that Trump is not representative of American values simply mistake their countries mythology (we are out there supporting democracy and development) for its history.

■ U.S. Senators have passed a resolution blaming Mohammed Bin Salman for Khashoggi's murder, saying he was complicit in the killing. Do you believe this move can change Trump's administration's policy toward Saudi Arabia?

A: The U.S. Senate's outrage over MBS's

complicity in Khashoggi's murder has to do with the facts that Khashoggi was a U.S. resident working for a well-known U.S. newspaper. Also the murder was executed in an amazingly brutal and sloppy way. Furthermore, the whole affair quickly became public knowledge. Echoing the disbelief and horror of their constituents was done by most of the Senators, who, remember, don't know much U.S. foreign policy history, but do know the mythology that says we are the good guys. If the affair had been handled quietly and with discretion you might not have gotten this reaction in the Senate. However, as it stands, the Senate has no real power over Trump's behavior toward the Saudis and I doubt their outrage will make any difference.

■ The investigation into the murder of Jamal Khashoggi is reportedly being taken to the United Nations. In case the U.S. vetoes any binding resolution against Saudi Arabia, what message Will Trump send to other nations? Do you believe if Washington can play the role of a watchdog for sanctity of human rights any longer?

A: When Trump took office he said that human rights would no longer be a guiding principle of policy. And it has not been. In any case, as suggested above the U.S.'s claim to be supportive of human rights is largely for public consumption and not very real in practice. This has been the case for a very long time prior to Trump. This being the case, the U.S. hardly qualifies as a "watchdog" of other people's rights. Thus, the veto will be used to protect the Saudis just as it has been used to protect Israel. The U.S. lobbies representing both of these foreign powers of infinitely are stronger than those representing human rights.

Humanitarian assistance or military intervention in Haiti

1 → Subsequently, high political instability, a massive institutional fragility (mainly caused by foreign intervention through humanitarian assistance), and the structural crisis of poverty (affecting 80% of the population) continued, while the humanitarian assistance and aid were delivered to intervene in the country's affairs. The passage of time indicates that the U.S. imperialist government has taken advantage of the situation of the affluent nations of the Caribbean to expand its military occupation spectrum. The strategies applied by U.S. forces to control and occupy the Port-au-Prince airport were through holding the entry of food, water and medical services.

The late Hugo Chavez in Anzan emphasized that imperialism shamelessly lies on the bodies of the Haitian who are under the rubble of earthquakes and are crying. They took control of the airport (Puerto Princesa) and will arrive at the Presidentialidential Palace."

In turn, Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega emphasized that "The United States has deployed the nation's plight and deployed its military forces to control the military command of the Puerto Princesa airport, alarming." Similarly, Uruguayan defense minister Luis Rosadilla called the situation in Haiti "deeply disturbing" and said, "This Latin American country does not need weapons, but needs medical equipment, food and water."

This peaceful peacekeeping mission since 2004 has sponsored more than 7,000 peacekeepers, 2,000 policemen and 1,000 civilian personnel to prevent a civil war. 16,000 U.S. soldiers and military ships are currently stationed in the country to prevent mass exodus. The deployment of troops in the name of humanitarian assistance to this country is an example of an attack and intervention in this country, and before it imposed dictatorship, the Maquilas plunderous policy, commercial agreements and Haitian militias placed Haiti among the poorest countries.

A report from Haiti by Simon Bruno's independent correspondent at that time read, "There are currently no government in Haiti, the decision maker is the United States through the United Nations ... I believe that Haiti's biggest problem is the United Nations." Several reports from Oxfam stated that restructuring is very slow in the country.

The United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti reported a huge social gap between millions of poor people and said small, domestic and foreign minorities benefit from Haiti.

Two years after the devastating earthquake of 2010, 519,000 Haitians lived in 758 camps and tents in the Puerto Principe countryside and worse than that was the outbreak of cholera, which is believed to infect citizens through polluted water which came from one of the United Nations Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). Water pollution killed thousands of people in Haiti.

About 10,000 people were killed that year, and more than 18 percent of the victims died in the 2015 cholera outbreak.

According to the Associated Press, for every dollar, the U.S. benefited 33 cents of the initial disaster assistance, amounted to \$379 million that it provided for Haiti.

Out of anger, citizens have taken to the streets to voice an objection to the U.S. and they demand a change in the government. However, Trump supports the incumbent government and urges the citizens to keep calm.

EU feels emotional hatred toward Trump: Russian analyst

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — A political commentator based in Moscow highlighted reasons behind some differences of opinion between the European Union and U.S. President Donald Trump's administration, saying EU leaders feel "an emotional hatred" toward the president personally.

"There is an emotional hatred, disdain of the EU and other liberal globalists towards Trump personally," Dmitry Babich said in an interview with the Tasnim News Agency.

"The moves of the EU aimed at 'protecting' European companies, that deal with Iran, from American sanctions — these moves are not serious, they did not have any effect and they won't have it," he added.

Dmitry Babich, born in Moscow, has been an active journalist for over 25 years, focusing on Russian politics. Graduating from Moscow State University, Babich has had a successful career in Russian journalism. He has previously been a senior correspondent at the Komsomolskaya Pravda daily, RIA Novosti, and Russia Profile magazine. Between 1999 and 2003, Babich was a foreign editor at The Moscow News before returning to Russia Profile in 2009 as acting editor-in-chief. His core areas of focus include Russia's modern political history, international relations. Babich is currently working as a political analyst at Sputnik International and is a frequent guest on BBC, Al Jazeera, CNN commenting on international affairs and history.

The following is the full text of the interview:

■ Tensions have grown in recent months between the U.S. and its closest allies in the EU over various issues, including Iran, which was underlined at a recent U.S.-backed conference on the Middle East in Poland that was largely sidestepped by many European governments. What do you think about U.S. President Donald Trump's foreign policy that has strained the transatlantic relations?



A: I don't believe in a "conflict" between the U.S. and the EU over the policy towards Iran. There is an emotional hatred, disdain of the EU and other liberal globalists towards Trump personally. The reasons for that hatred are emotional. The liberal-globalist establishment in the Democratic Party of the U.S. and in the European capitals was 99 percent sure that Hillary would win in 2016, and they can't forgive Trump for their deceived expectations.

So, on Iran, when Trump makes moves against Iran, this establishment does not really object. The moves of the EU aimed at "protecting" European companies, that deal with Iran, from American sanctions — these moves are not serious, they did not have any effect and they won't have it. The EU strongly objects only to those actions of Trump which could really contribute to peace — such as his decision to withdraw American troops from Syria. The American and EU globalists blocked that decision. The Warsaw conference was a disgrace and it shows the real face of the liberal establishment in both the EU and the U.S.

■ The Trump administration's foreign policies are also slammed by top U.S. officials. Recently, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi described the administration's general approach toward Iran, including Washington's withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal, as "completely wrong". Do you believe other U.S. officials would cooperate with the Trump administration in implementing its policies?

A: Nancy Pelosi hates Iran no less than Trump, she just uses every opportunity to criticize him. The hatred towards Iran and Russia (is common among U.S. officials) — this is the point where the globalists (Pelosi, Obama, Clinton, etc.) agree with American nationalists (Trump and Bolton). Only the American people can change the U.S. policy towards Iran, not the American elite.

■ The White House made a massive blunder after claiming European leaders applauded when Vice President Mike Pence dropped Trump's name in a speech. Pence was speaking at the Munich Security Conference in Germany when he passed on Trump's regards to the dignitaries gathered. The 59-year-old paused for several moments, waiting for a response, but the crowd remained silent. Do not you think that it is another sign of the strained transatlantic relations? How do you predict the European countries' future reactions to the conflicting policies adopted by the Trump administration?

A: Again, don't confuse the EU's hatred towards Trump with kindness towards other countries, with peace, opposition to U.S. imperialism, etc. It is just the hatred of the globalists in the EU and the U.S. towards Trump personally, nothing more. The fact that Trump is bad does not mean that the EU and its ally Obama are good. It is one evil hating another one — for an emotional reason.

Why U.S. interests are more important than Bahraini lives

TEHRAN (FNA) — Bahrain's main opposition group, the al-Wefaq National Islamic Society, has censured the recent jail terms handed down to scores of people over taking part in a sit-in in 2017.

Al-Wefaq has condemned Manama's judiciary of convicting innocent people after a court handed down prison terms to 167 Bahrainis for holding a sit-in in protest at the regime's decision to revoke the citizenship of prominent Shia Muslim cleric Sheikh Isa Qassim almost two years ago.

The movement has called on the international community to wake up and take note of the human rights violation unfolding in Bahrain. The defendants convicted have received sentences ranging from one to 10 years behind bars. They were charged with rioting and taking part in an illegal gathering.

On May 23, 2017, the Al Khalifah regime forces raided the village of Diraz, which had been under a military siege for almost a year, and stormed into the home of Sheikh Isa Qassim, putting the cleric under house arrest. The ailing cleric has since left the country to receive medical treatment. During the crackdown, regime forces killed at least five demonstrators, wounded dozens and arrested over 280 people.

What's sad in all this is that the regime's justice system instead of trying those who killed innocent protesters, unarmed citizens and shot them with live rounds alive in cold blood has done the opposite. It has imprisoned many protesters, stripped the cleric of his citizenship, and later dissolved the



Islamic Enlightenment Institution founded by Sheikh Qassim as well as the opposition al-Risala Islamic Association.

Into the argument, the anti-regime protesters never took up arms. They are peacefully demanding that the un-elected Al Khalifah regime relinquish power and allow a just and elected system representing all Bahrainis to be established.

This is yet to be the case, as Al Khalifah regime receives diplomatic impunity from the United States and its European allies. They even allow the kingdom to use wealth to whitewash its legacy of abuses, human rights violations, and silences those who try to draw attention to this pattern.

As is, in Bahrain there are no consequences and accountability for killing and imprisoning the dissent. The regime has been emboldened thanks to President Donald Trump, who has made it clear to Bahrain that "there won't be strain with this administration." The United States is in a position to help end these human rights violations, but instead it chooses to stay silent, to keep its Fifth Fleet naval base, and to sell its weapons.

Washington also always sends its Secretary of State Michael Pompeo to Bahrain to praise the "strategic partnership between the two countries". He never bothers to make any mention of unjust court cases and verdicts for protesters or raise the issue of

human rights. The United States has the means to use its leverage, since Bahrain is a close ally and host of the Fifth Fleet, but it never bothers to take a stance. Britain, similarly and shamefully, avoids offering support for peaceful protesters and those behind bars.

If Bahrain has learned anything from all this injustice, it is that the regime can arrest, torture and repress its own people and countries like the United States and Britain will continue to look the other way. It can flout international human rights law and get away with anything too.

Using mentality of exceptionalism as a free-floating abstraction from reality, as well, the United States and Britain consider their own interests more important than the lives of Bahraini protesters. These tricksters are abandoning human rights at a time when things are worsening in Bahrain and will only continue to deteriorate.

Trump officials claim the U.S. is a "moral beacon." For that, they need to define themselves in deeds not only by what they are for but by what they are against in Bahrain. In the present instance, what they are against in Bahrain is its long-suffering citizens.

Let's get real: It's a fantasy to think American officials would ever find themselves criticizing the Al Khalifah regime over murder, torture, and cruel treatment of its people, much less hold them to account. The U.S. government, which has enthusiastically supported the regime's war crimes over the years, will never allow it to happen.

Elsewhere, the Iranian journalist underlined that the enemies' plot to highlight the gap between Iran and its ideal point is a trick to disappoint the nation and said the Islamic Republic has already made significant progress compared with the pre-Revolution era but it should continue its efforts to bridge further the gap.

He also called on Iranian revolutionary youths to remain vigilant against the enemies' plots to portray them as a minority group in the Iranian society.

■ **Islamic view remains influential in region**

Shariatiadari then underlined that today, Islamic views are alive in Syria as Jaish al-Watani, in Iraq as Hashd al-Shaabi, in Palestine as Hamas and in Yemen in Ansarullah.

The journalist also referred to the anti-Iran Warsaw conference held recently and added the conference was held with the aim of creating a psychological war against the Islamic Republic but "after its closure, the enemies declared that the conference was focused on the Middle East. This was a big lie by the arrogant powers."

Elsewhere, he said Niki Haley, the former US envoy to the United Nations once announced after her resignation that she had been tasked with portraying Trump as a crazy man to coerce Iran and other US enemies in the world into accepting Washington's hegemony.

■ **Revolution's second phase to overcome challenges**

Shariatiadari then referred to the domestic challenges that the Islamic Republic is facing and said leader of the Islamic Revolution has already offered some clues to remove all the domestic problems.

"The roadmap set forth by the wise leader Ayatollah Khamenei is now available and we should follow it not to get misled," he noted.

The journalist underlined that the Iranian nation will never fall victim to the nasty deceptions of the enemies.

"Over the past forty years, Iranians have managed to free themselves of the enemies' domination and choose their own fate," he said. He cited Islam as a religion with anti-oppression inclinations and said Iran by relying on Islamic teachings is challenging the international domination.

Shariatiadari said today's domestic problems are deeply rooted in the penetration of American and liberalist teachings into the Iranian society.

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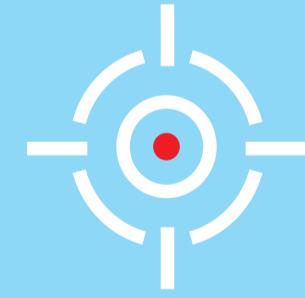
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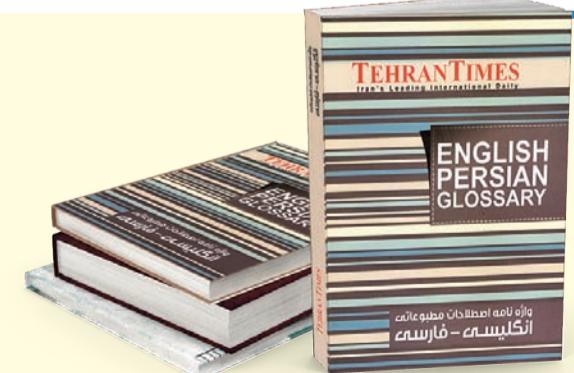
The Tehran Times new pocket-sized glossary is now available on the market. The reader-friendly is a rich source of the most common journalistic terminology collected by the daily's retired staff.

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.

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How music therapy affects the brain in autism

New research suggests that music therapy improves social communication in ASD

By Katherine K.M. Stavropoulos, Ph.D.

I recently read a fascinating research paper about music therapy for children with ASD. There have been a few papers about the effects of music intervention in ASD, and most report positive changes in emotional engagement and social communication. However, this recent paper is the first to report how the brain might be affected by music intervention.

How the study was designed

Sharda and colleagues compared a music intervention to a non-music control intervention in school-aged (6-12) children with ASD. 26 children participated in the music intervention, and 25 different children participated in the non-music intervention.

Both interventions met weekly for 45 minutes, and were conducted for 8-12 weeks. Before and after both interventions, researchers measured behaviors (such as social communication, verbal communication, and family quality of life/parental stress), and brain activity using rsfMRI. fMRI allows researchers to measure levels of brain activity in various parts of the brain. In this study, researchers measured the connection and communication between different areas of the brain. The "rs" in rsfMRI stands for "resting state", and means that brain activity was measured while children laid in the scanner passively (e.g. while "resting").

Why the interest in communication/connection between brain areas? Because there is a long history of neuroscience findings to suggest that differences in connections between areas of the brain is a hallmark of ASD. Some findings suggest that brain areas are "overly" connected in ASD, while others suggest that the connection between different brain areas "aren't strong enough" in ASD. These differences in connectivity are thought to be partially responsible for difficulties in verbal and social communication observed in ASD, and may also play a role in sensory sensitivity.

The results

Behaviorally, improvements were seen in communication,



social responsiveness, and family quality of life for children in the music intervention vs. the control intervention. Neuroscience results were equally promising. For children in the music intervention, there were increased connections between brain areas responsible for auditory processing and subcortical motor areas. For children in the music intervention, there were also decreased connections between auditory and visual processing areas.

Brain and behavior

The most exciting part of the neuroscience findings is that differences in brain activity were related to improvements in behavioral measures. For example, strength of the connection between auditory and motor areas after was significantly related to improvements in social communication. That is, children who had the biggest increases in brain connection between auditory and motor areas also had the biggest behavioral improvements in response intervention. Similarly, children who had decreased connections between auditory and visual brain areas showed more improvements in social communication.

What does this mean?

What is the takeaway from this study? I think there are a few important messages here:

Music interventions can improve social communication in school age children with ASD. Music interventions and music therapy have long been seen as an "alternative" therapy, and have not been readily accepted by the scientific community.

This research supports music intervention as a promising way to improve social communication in ASD. Hopefully this type of work leads to increased availability of music intervention providers, insurance coverage, and more research funding for this topic so more research can be conducted.

Music intervention doesn't only improve behavior—it also affects the strength of connections between brain areas, and those connection changes are related to behavioral improvements in social communication.

This is exciting, because it points to why music intervention might be working. For example: decreases in connections between auditory and visual brain areas might be helping with sensory sensitivity in ASD, which may lead to improvements in social skills. It is possible that sensory sensitivity gets in the way of social communication in ASD. Imagine that you are trying to speak to someone, but their voice is incredibly loud, high pitched, and grating. On top of that, the lights in the room are hurting your eyes, and there is a constant ambulance-type wailing outside. How strong would your social communication skills be in that situation? My guess is that your social communication skills would decrease due to all the sensory over-stimulation. This might be the case in ASD. It is possible that if we can help with sensory symptoms, social skills will improve.

I am enthusiastic about music intervention as a new avenue to help children with ASD, and I look forward to reading more about it and contributing to future research efforts!

(Source: Psychology Today)

Clues to brain differences between males and females

How male sex steroids play a key role in understanding behavioral development

Researchers at the University of Maryland School of Medicine have discovered a mechanism for how androgens -- male sex steroids -- sculpt brain development. The research, conducted by Margaret M. McCarthy, Ph.D., who Chairs the Department of Pharmacology, could ultimately help researchers understand behavioral development differences between males and females.

The research, published in Neuron, discovered a mechanism for how androgens, male sex steroids, sculpt the brains of male rats to produce behavioral differences, such as more aggression and rougher play behavior. "We already knew that the brains of males and females are different and that testosterone produced during the second trimester in humans and late gestation in rodents contributes to the differences but we did not know how testosterone has these effects" said Dr. McCarthy.

Jonathan Van Ryzin, PhD, a Postdoctoral Fellow, was lead author on this research conducted in Dr. McCarthy's lab.

A key contributor to the differences in play behavior between males and females is a sex-based difference in the number of newborn cells in the part of the brain called the amygdala, which controls emotions and social behaviors. The research showed that males have fewer of these newborn cells, because they are actively eliminated by immune cells.

In females, the newborn cells differentiated into a type of glial cell, the most abundant type of cell in the central nervous system. In males however, testosterone increased signaling at receptors in the brain which bind endocannabinoids, causing immune cells to be activated. The endocannabinoids prompted the immune cells to effectively eliminate the newborn cells in males. Females rats in the study were unaffected, suggesting that the activation of the immune cells by the increased endocannabinoids in males was necessary for cell elimination. In this respect, this research shows that cannabis use, which stimulates endocannabinoids in the brain and nervous system, could impact brain development of the fetus and this impact could differ between male and female fetuses.

This study provides a mechanism for sex-based differences in social behaviors and suggests that differences in androgen and endocannabinoid signaling may contribute to individual differences in brain development and thus behavioral differences among people.

"These discoveries into brain development are critical as we work to tackle brain disorders as early in life as possible, even in pregnancy," said UMSOM Dean E. Albert Reece, MD, PhD, MBA, who is also the Executive Vice President for Medical Affairs, University of Maryland, and the John Z. and Akiko K. Bowers Distinguished Professor.

(Source: Science Daily)

Has fast food become worse for our health in the past 30 years?

Filled with empty calories and ultra-processed, fast food may increase the risk of obesity and cancer. While fast-food chains have ostensibly been trying to offer more healthful options, a new study finds that the health impact of their menus has not improved — to the contrary, in fact.

Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicate that, between 2013 and 2016, 36.6 percent of adults in the United States ate fast food on any given day.

Moreover, according to a study conducted by University of Connecticut researchers in 2018, around 74 percent of parents purchase unhealthy foods for their children in fast-food restaurants.

This, the investigators noted, is despite the fact that, from 2013 onward, some of the most popular fast-food chains committed to offering more healthful options in their children's menus.

Now, a new study suggests that most fast-food restaurant menus have not, in fact,

become more healthful overall, despite the addition of some arguably more wholesome choices.

The researchers analyzed the variety, portion size, and nutrition of entrées, sides, and desserts offered by 10 of the most popular fast-food chains in the U.S. over a period of roughly 3 decades, based on the menus they made available at three points in time: in 1986, 1991, and 2016.

The team analyzed menus from: Arby's, Burger King, Carl's Jr., Dairy Queen, Hardee's,

Jack in the Box, KFC, Long John Silver's, McDonald's, and Wendy's.

In the study paper — which appears in the Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics — the investigators explain their focus, noting that, "These restaurants were chosen because the nutritional information on the key nutritional variables of portion size, energy, and sodium were available for each of the 3 years being analyzed."

(Source: Medical News Today)

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Oil money destroys innovation: VP

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN — Universities which are provided desks with government budget and oil money cannot be innovative, the vice president for science and technology Sorena Sattari said, IRNA reported on Saturday.

Due to oil economy, we prefer import to production and this economic favoritism destroys all cultural and intellectual infrastructures, he said.

Governments which rely on underground resources are mostly based on bureaucratic systems, which have more managers than personnel and that makes them inefficient, he lamented.

He pointed to state-run research centers which do not have any significant achievements, saying "Today Iran produces 97 percent of medicine for domestic market which is mostly met by knowledge-based

companies," he said.

Over 40 percent of knowledge-based companies in Iran are active in the field of health, he announced.

Actually knowledge-based ecosystem is very important, in which all the members should pursue one goal, he said.

He said that the government should support startups and knowledge-based companies created by young entrepreneurs more than state-run centers.

During past two years, 80 knowledge-based companies are formed in the field of stem cells, he said.

Sattari named supply chain management in health services as another important issue which knowledge-based companies should focus on in coming years in Iran.

Digital healthcare is another field which should be promoted and the first accelerator centers are already established, he said.

Tehran museum celebrating periodic table of chemical elements year

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN — The Iranian National Museum of Science and Technology is celebrating the International Year of the Periodic Table of Chemical Elements (IYPT2019) by holding an educational event from March 2 to 7.



Entitled "Jadvali", the name of the event is inspired from the Persian word 'Jadval' which means 'table' in rhyme with 'Mendeleev'.

The event is organized in nine different stations for visitors of the museum including basic elements of the universe, elements in the earth's crust, chemical elements of the human body, scales, molecular model toys and games, bingo game, element games, pantomime and periodic table of chemical elements.

The Periodic Table of Chemical Elements is one of the most significant achievements in science, capturing the essence not only of chemistry, but also of physics and biology.

The year 1869 is considered as the year of discovery of the Periodic System by Dmitri Mendeleev. The year 2019 will be the 150th anniversary of the Periodic Table of Chemical Elements and has therefore been proclaimed the "International Year of the Periodic Table of Chemical Elements (IYPT2019)" by the United Nations General Assembly and UNESCO.

Infrared drones spot koalas better than people

Although aerial drones have already been used to count wild animals such as seals, doing so isn't that difficult, as the creatures typically lie right out in the open. Now, however, Australian scientists have successfully used the aircraft to count koalas that are hidden in amongst the leaves and branches of eucalyptus trees.

Led by Dr. Grant Hamilton, a team from the Queensland University of Technology started by equipping drones with infrared cameras.

Each of those drones was then flown in a "lawnmower" pattern, going in successive back-and-forth rows over an area of forest in which GPS-tagged koalas were present. The flights were conducted in the early morning during colder months, when the temperature difference between the koalas' bodies and the surrounding environment would be the highest.

After each flight, a custom algorithm was used to analyze the drone's video footage, identifying the number and location of koala-specific heat signatures. The accuracy of the system was subsequently assessed by cross-referencing the animals' GPS coordinates with the locations identified by the drone. It turned out to be significantly better than what is typically managed by ground-based surveys.

"On average, an expert koala spotter is going to get about 70 percent of koalas in a particular area," says Hamilton. "We, on average, get around 86 percent. That's a substantial increase in accuracy that we need to help protect threatened species."

What's more, utilizing drones is reportedly much quicker and thus cheaper than using traditional spotters. According to Hamilton, in two hours, a single koala-spotting drone can survey an area that would take a person all day to cover. That said, he believes that using a combination of drones and people on the ground, as dictated by the situation, will be the best way to proceed.

The scientists are now planning on covering larger areas with the drones, and on adapting the algorithm to identify the heat signatures of other species that they wish to track, such as invasive deer.

(Source: newatlas.com)

White hat hackers to gather at Tehran cybersecurity conference

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN — White hat hackers will participate in a conference which will be held on March 7 in Tehran on recent achievements in cybersecurity, IRNA reported on Saturday.

A white hat hacker is a computer security specialist who use their skills to improve security by exposing vulnerabilities before malicious hackers, known as black hat hackers, can detect and exploit them.

The event will be held by an Iranian independent research company which studies the web/binary analysis, exploit development, steganography/crypt analysis, forensics and SE.

There is no roadmap for those who want to be active in different fields of cybersecurity in Iran, the company's director Amir Rasouli said.

Hence, the idea of holding conference was formed in order to gather cybersecurity activists to share their knowledge and experience with each other, he explained.

Cyber intrusion and cyber security are considered as a kind of science, which one should learn about, he explained.

The conference aims to provide an appropriate space for sharing the latest achievement and technological research on cybersecurity in different fields of artificial intelligence, internet of thing, smart city, and technological infrastructure, he explained.

He pointed to credit cards as one of



The conference provides an opportunity for sharing the latest achievement on cybersecurity in different fields of artificial intelligence, internet of thing, smart city, and technological infrastructure.

the issues, which have some weakness in their algorithm and encryption.

White hats, the ethical hackers

The term "ethical hacking" when it was introduced in 1995 by former IBM Vice President John Patrick. He used

individuals working and programming in FORTRAN.

In 1998, Dan Farmer developed one of the first, if not the first, vulnerability scanners. Named COPS (Computer Oracle and Password System), it was designed to scan for security vulnerabilities in one part of a Unix operating system.

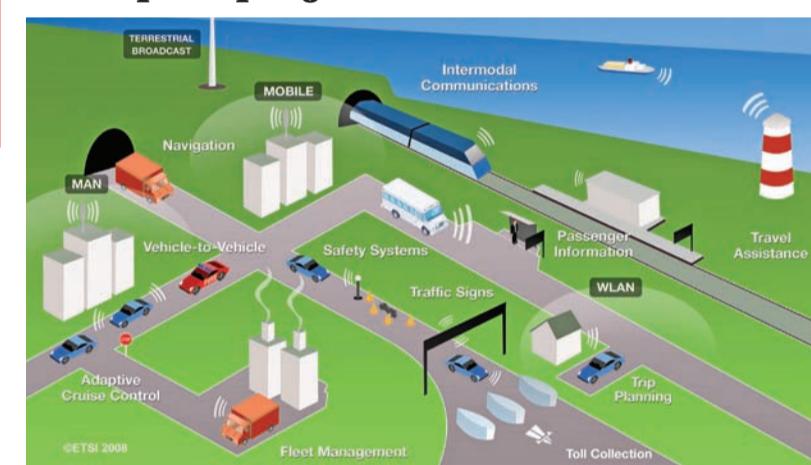
After that, with ideas to enforce ethical hacking and its tactics in assessing system security, Farmer and Wietse Venema developed another security scanner SATAN (Security Administrator Tool for Analyzing Networks).

They gathered up all the tools they had used to collect information during their work, packaged them in a single, easy-to-use application, and gave it away to anyone who chose to download it. This application has caused many, especially law enforcement specialists, to believe that hackers will use it maliciously to break into computers.

Despite the bad word of mouth that has followed hackers since their early days, many companies, and even governments, have placed increasing importance on the many advantages and benefits of investing in someone highly skilled in penetrating systems and finding weaknesses, providing them with valuable insights.

Today, companies are actively engaged in finding individuals who can perform ethical hacking of their systems in order to upgrade overall security.

Smart system for multimodal transport projected



TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN — The secretariat of the Iranian Aviation Technology Development Headquarters plans to provide a smart system for multimodal transportation in the near future, the secretary of the headquarters Manouchehr Manteqi said on Saturday, Mehr reported.

This would be possible through transport integration through air, land and water, he explained.

Manteqi called the rail transport as the most economic, safe and secure among different modes of transportation.

"Development of transportation is now based on technology worldwide and we try our best to use these facilities in Iran's transportation system in the near future," he said.

He said that Iran would benefit from international experience and capabilities for development of transportation with the support of young experts and entrepreneurs.

According to a report released by the Europe Industry News in early March 2019, smart transportation market will flourish and reach \$236.06 billion by 2024.

Govt. providing infrastructure for industrialization of robotic science



TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN — The government is providing infrastructure for robotic science in order to use it in the industry sector, deputy information and communication technology (ICT) minister for innovation said.

Nasrollah Jahangard made the remarks during the opening ceremony of Amirkabir International Robotic and Artificial Intelligence Contest (AUTCUP 2019), IRNA reported on Saturday.

Jahangard said that robotic science is very beneficial in mining industry, water and traffic management, and

during natural disasters like earthquakes.

The robotics is a combination of mechanics, software, electronics, telecommunication, chemistry and biology, he said.

AUTCUP 2019 is being held from March 2 to 4 at Tehran's Amirkabir University of Technology.

A total of 542 teams from Russia, Australia, Taiwan, China, Germany, South Korea, Brazil, Mexico, Italy, Canada, Indonesia, Turkey, Afghanistan, Lithuania and Iran are competing at the event.

Iran to provide network between knowledge-based companies, startups

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN — The vice presidency for science and technology plans for networking between knowledge-based companies and startups, the deputy director for innovation and commercialization announced, IRNA reported on Sunday.

Payman Salehi said that the societies established at the vice presidency's office for knowledge, industry and market cooperation are facilitating the networking.

The societies, which are active in their specialized fields, should connect startups, knowledge-based companies active in their fields and connect them to big industries, he said.

In this way, they can increase efficiency and solve technological challenges by boosting cooperation,



he added.

The demands of industry is the priority for the vice presidency to establish the societies and they run by the private sector, he explained.

Due to agreements signed between the vice presidency and the Institute of Standards and Industrial Research of Iran, the societies can issue certificate of conformity for the products as well, he said.

Salehi announced that the societies can introduce the knowledge-based companies for participation at the international events by the vice presidency as well.

The societies at the office for knowledge, industry and market cooperation are active in different fields of laboratory equipment, precious stone and jewelry, hand-woven carpet and aromatic plants.

A robotic hand that gives sixth sense back to users

A next-generation bionic hand that allows amputees to regain their proprioception is the culmination of ten years of robotics research.

We know all now about the five senses, but our ability to move through the world is highly dependent on an often overlooked sixth sense. It's called proprioception, and it's our brain's ability to know where our limbs are in space without visual cues.

It's hard to account for just how vital proprioception is to the techniques we've evolved to interact with the world. Moving our limbs into position to block a ball about to hit our face requires fast reaction times. If we had to locate our hand in space using visual cues to estimate the proper trajectory, we'd be left with a bloody nose.

Not surprisingly, one of the biggest challenges for amputees is losing proprioceptive ability. No matter how sophisticated prostheses are, without the underlying ability to know where they are in space they'll always seem kludgy.

Researchers at Swiss university EPFL appear to have solved the problem with a bionic hand that gives amputees a "very subtle, close-to-natural sense of touch" and reproduces the feeling of proprioception. Presented in an article in the journal *Science Robotics*, the device stimulates nerves in the amputee's stump in order to provide sensory feedback in real time. This enables patients to determine an item's shape, size, and consistency just by feeling it.

It's a huge improvement on current myoelectric devices, which translate muscle function in the patient's stump to electro-mechanical movement in a bionic device. While myoelectric devices are revolutionary in the dexterity and control they afford amputees, the lines of communication only work in one direction, from the human to the device. The EPFL device adds a crucial sensory component to the circuit.

The findings presented in the article are a result of more than a decade of research led by Professor Silvestro Micera of NCCR, a robotics research consortium in Switzerland, and Paolo Maria Rossini, director of neuroscience at the A. Gemelli University Polyclinic in Rome.

"Our study shows that sensory substitution based on intraneuronal stimulation can deliver both position feedback and tactile feedback simultaneously and in real time," explains Micera. "The brain has no problem combining this information, and patients can process both types in real time with excellent results."

The device takes some training to use. Patients gradually learn how to translate electrical pulses transmitted from the hand to electrodes in the stump. But the brain is a wonderfully adaptive instrument, and with exposure it learns to automatically translate the sensations into familiar sensory input.

The result is highly accurate sensing. In the published results, two patients were able to determine size and shapes of objects using touch with higher than 75 percent accuracy.

(Source: zdnet.com)

World wildlife day 2019: The 15 biggest threats to the world's oceans

For the first time, the UN's World Wildlife Day is highlighting threats to marine life. The theme of World Wildlife Day 2019 on March 3, is 'Life below water: for people and planet'. The title is a nod to the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 14 – Life below water, which focuses on protecting marine species.

"Oceans regulate our climate, produce half the oxygen we breathe, provide nourishment for (more than) 3 billion people, and absorb 30 percent of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere and fully 90 percent of the heat from climate change," said Abdoulaye Mar Dieye, UN Assistant Secretary-General, in November when the theme was announced.

UN World Wildlife Day was established in 2013, with the first event taking place in 2015. Its mission is to "celebrate and raise awareness of the world's wild fauna and flora." Activities, film screenings and art contests are taking place across the world to draw attention to this year's theme, including an event at UN Headquarters in New York.

Oceans cover 71 percent of the Earth's surface and make up more than 99 percent of the planet's livable habitat, but scientists say they're in serious trouble. The first systematic analysis of marine wilderness, published in the journal Current Biology in 2018, found that the ocean has been extensively altered due to human activity, with only 13 percent left undisturbed.

■ World's oceans

The news followed the revelation that over half the world's oceans are being industrially fished. A 2018 study, published in the journal Science, found that commercial



fishing covered a bigger area than global agriculture.

This massive disruption to ocean ecosystems can be caused by such diverse threats as overfishing, agricultural chemical offspill and global warming driving up sea temperatures. While threats to rainforests and other

land environments have long been known, public awareness about the precarious state of the ocean are a more recent revelation, thanks in part to cultural phenomena like the BBC's Blue Planet series.

The ocean has absorbed 80 percent of human-produced carbon dioxide. These

warmer waters impact almost every aspect of ocean welfare, from coral bleaching to fish migration patterns and even alter oceanic currents.

■ Carbon footprint

What you can do: While minding your carbon footprint can help, big changes need to happen on a government level for this huge issue to change. Support local politicians who advocate for laws that protect the environment. The Sustainable Politician Project helps explain the eco-friendly credentials (or lack thereof) of each state representative.

Greenpeace estimates that 12.7 million tons of plastic ends up in the sea every year. Plastic garbage, like bottles and bags, is often mistaken for food by sea creatures and eaten. This can block the airways of the animal or even strangle them. Plastic is toxic for these animals, clogging their stomachs so they can't ingest real food. And it's not just coastal areas that are affected — even in the 6.8-mile-deep Mariana Trench, a recent study found all marine life had plastic in their guts.

What you can do: It's not easy to cut unnecessary plastic from our lives — but it's by no means impossible. Supermarkets are big sinners when it comes to excess plastic waste, so try and only buy vegetables and fruit which are sold loose, and bring your own reusable bag. Invest in a canteen so you don't have to waste plastic (and money) on bottled water. Try and spend a week noticing what unnecessary plastic you consume without thinking, like drinking straws and disposable razors.

(Source: Newsweek)

The ocean has absorbed 80 percent of human-produced carbon dioxide. These warmer waters impact almost every aspect of ocean welfare, from coral bleaching to fish migration patterns and even alter oceanic currents.

Scientists discover how surfaces may have helped early life on Earth begin

On early Earth, a series of spontaneous events needed to happen in order for life as we know it to begin. One of those phenomena is the formation of compartments enclosed by lipid membranes. New research by Irep Gözen, Elif Koksal, and colleagues at the University of Oslo reveals, for the first time, how these vesicles can self-assemble on surfaces without external input.

The team discovered the most straight-forward and plausible explanation so far with the simplest assumptions.

"We were actually trying to do another experiment and this came as a discovery," said Gözen. The "formation of lipid tubes and the emergence of thousands of vesicles was happening spontaneously when we left lipids on a silicon dioxide surface."

The lipids in their experiment were similar to those in bacteria membranes and have water-loving heads and water-avoiding tails. Because of these water-preferring properties, they spontaneously organize with their tails facing inward and their heads facing out.

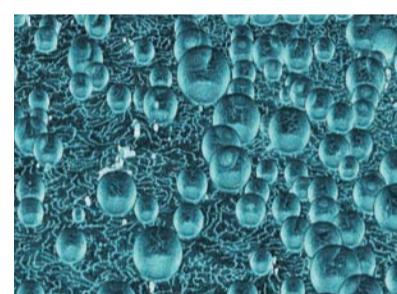
On the silicon dioxide surface, the lipids became sheets, with layers of these organized lipids. Due to the stickiness of the surface, at some points the two layers separate, and the top layer bulges out, creating tubes and then round balls as they gain more lipids. The entire process is fully autonomous.

■ The surface creating protocells

A gentle flow from the movement of liquid can then cause these vesicles to detach from the surface creating protocells, like those believed to be a stepping-stone to the origin of life.

It is conceivable that something similar happened on early Earth. Silicone dioxide, or silica, is one of the most abundant minerals on the earth's surface.

(Source: phys.org)



Fatty molecules could have easily existed in the prebiological era, as confirmed by the results of their successful synthesis performed in possible primitive Earth conditions, together with their traces found in fossils and meteorites. Intriguingly, silicon dioxide was recently detected on Mars by the Curiosity Rover.

Another puzzle in life's beginnings is how genetic material got inside of protocells. It is not known whether the compartments formed around the already-existing lengthy genetic chains such as RNA, or if the small building blocks somehow found their way inside these tiny bubbles and made the chains inside. Gözen and colleagues added a light-emitting organic molecule similar in size to nucleotides, the genetic building blocks, to the surrounding of the bubbles. Such molecules which were too big to diffuse through the wall of the bubble, could get inside without compromising the protocells. They speculate it gets through transient defects or pores in the protocell wall.

"Our research may explain, for the first time, the details of self-directed transition from weakly organized lipids on solid surfaces to protocells with secluded internal contents," Gözen said.

(Source: phys.org)

Tree rings tell climate stories that technology can't, team finds

Satellite imagery, carbon dioxide measurements, and computer models all help scientists understand how climate and carbon dynamics are changing in the world's forests. But the technology powering these high-tech data only stretches back about thirty years, limiting our picture of long-term change.

A new study in Nature Communications by scientists from the Harvard Forest, Columbia University, ETH Zürich, and elsewhere shows how information revealed by a new method of analyzing tree rings matches the story told by more high-tech equipment over the short-term. Because trees are long-lived, looking back in their rings with this new approach may add decades or even centuries to our understanding of carbon storage and climate change in forests.

To test whether tree rings are a good proxy for satellite and other data, the scientists examined ring samples from two widespread tree species -- tulip poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) and northern red oak (*Quercus rubra*) -- growing in three climatically different regions of the eastern U.S.

By analyzing the carbon and oxygen molecules (stable isotopes) stored in the rings, they could compare the trees' own picture of forest productivity to estimates derived from satellites. They found strong agreement each year, and over time.

■ The biggest changes

The tree rings also revealed that the biggest changes in annual forest growth were linked to moisture availability, regardless of climate. "Our method showed that the productivity of a forest can be estimated using information from just five trees," says Laia Andreu Hayles, an Associate Research Professor at the Tree



Ring Laboratory of Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, and co-author of the new study. The "stable isotopes measured in tree rings are highly sensitive to tracking moisture."

The team says the full power of this new method would rely on an expanded network of tree ring research. "When we put tree ring data to work in historical climate models, we find that the models are more powerful when more species are included," says Neil Pederson, a Senior Ecologist at Harvard Forest and co-author of the new study. "I suspect this might also be the case when we use models to look forward, to future forest productivity and carbon storage."

The Harvard Forest, founded in 1907 and located in Petersham, Mass., is Harvard University's outdoor laboratory and classroom for ecology and conservation, and a Long-Term Ecological Research (LTER) site funded by the National Science Foundation.

Its 4,000-acre property is one of the oldest and most intensively studied research forests in the U.S. In addition to studying New England landscapes, research scientists at the Forest study ecosystems around the U.S. and the globe.

(Source: eurekalert.org)

Hamilton said. "We, on average, get around 86 percent. That's a substantial increase in accuracy that we need to help protect threatened species."

Another advantage of animal detection by drone is that it is quicker, and cheaper, than covering the same area with human spotters.

"We cover in a couple of hours what it would take a human all day to do," Dr. Hamilton said.

■ Determining koala population

But Dr. Hamilton said the high accuracy rate of the drone detection did not mean other means of determining koala population, such as by human spotters or dogs, were no longer necessary.

"There's no point talking about it that way, because there are places that people can't go and there are places that drones can't go," he said.

Thinking about any one of these approaches as a silver bullet tends to make people complacent - they think the problem has been solved, so let's move on. Koalas are facing extinction in large areas, and so are many other species and there is no silver bullet.

Following the success of the study, Dr. Hamilton said the researchers were looking to expand the area where they had studied koala populations, and would use the drone system in other parts of Brisbane, south-east Queensland and northern New South Wales.

And the target would also be expanded, with the algorithm being adapted so the technology could be used to detect invasive species such as deer.

(Source: natureworldnews.com)

Koala-spotting drones prove a flying success, scientists suggest

The Queensland University of Technology (QUT) researchers have developed an innovative method for detecting koala populations using drones and infrared imaging that is more reliable and less invasive than traditional animal population monitoring techniques.

In the study, published in Nature journal Scientific Reports, the researchers detail the technique that involves an algorithm for locating the koalas using drones that can detect heat signatures.

The technique has great potential to improve management of koala populations and other threatened species as well as being used to detect invasive species.

Dr. Grant Hamilton, from QUT's School of Earth, Environmental and Biological Sciences, co-authored the study with Ph.D. student Evangeline Corcoran and Dr. Simon Denman from QUT, and John Hanger and Brett Wilson from Endeavour Veterinary Ecology.

Dr. Hamilton said the researchers were able to correlate the detection of koalas from the air using ground surveys of tracked radio-collared koalas in Petrie, Queensland.

■ Eucalyptus trees

The system uses infrared imaging to detect the heat signals of the koala despite the canopy coverage of the eucalyptus trees.

"Nobody else has really managed to get good results anywhere in the world in a habitat this complex and in these kinds of numbers," Dr. Hamilton said.

Other animal population detection systems by drones have been used in fairly simple scenarios such as look-



ing for seals on a beach or animals on the savannah. "This is not just somebody counting animals with a drone, we've managed to do it in a very complex environment."

To maximize the effectiveness of the technique, the researchers carried out their aerial sweeps of the area at early morning during colder months, when difference between the body heat of the koalas and the background was likely to be greatest.

Because the researchers were able to confirm the location of the koalas detected by the drones with the location of the koalas determined by their GPS tags, the researchers were able to rate the accuracy of the system.

"On average, an expert koala spotter is going to get about 70 per cent of koalas in a particular area," Dr.

Hamilton said. "We, on average, get around 86 per cent. That's a substantial increase in accuracy that we need to help protect threatened species."

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(Source: natureworldnews.com)

Astronomers detect a hiding black hole

Astronomers have detected a stealthy black hole from its effects on an interstellar gas cloud. This intermediate mass black hole is one of over 100 million quiet black holes expected to be lurking in our Galaxy.

These results provide a new method to search for other hidden black holes and help us understand the growth and evolution of black holes.

Black holes are objects with such strong gravity that everything, including light, is sucked in and cannot escape. Because black holes do not emit light, astronomers must infer their existence from the effects their gravity produces in other objects.

Black holes range in mass from about 5 times the mass of the Sun to supermassive black holes millions of times the mass of the sun.

Astronomers think that small black holes merge and gradually grow into large ones, but no one had ever found an intermediate mass black hole, hundreds or thousands of times the mass of the sun.

A research team led by Shunya Takekawa at the National Astronomical Observatory of Japan noticed HCN-o.009-0.044, a gas cloud moving strangely near the center of the Galaxy 25,000 light-years away from Earth in the constellation Sagittarius.

They used ALMA (Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array) to perform high resolution observations of the cloud and found that it is swirling around an invisible massive object.

Takekawa explains, "Detailed kinematic analyses revealed that an enormous mass, 30,000 times that of the sun, was concentrated in a region much smaller than our Solar System.

This and the lack of any observed object at that location strongly suggests an intermediate-mass black hole.

By analyzing other anomalous clouds, we hope to expose other quiet black holes."

(Source: sciencedaily.com)

SpaceX successfully launches Crew Dragon with test dummy

SpaceX has successfully launched the Crew Dragon, and it is currently on the way to the ISS. Elon Musk says that they might fly people aboard it by summer if things go according to plan.

On Saturday, the Crew Dragon capsule was launched for the first time. It lifted off from the Kennedy Space Center, sitting atop SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket. The Crew Dragon is made to carry humans, but for the test launch it only carried a sensor-equipped dummy called Ripley, named in honor of the Alien movies.

The capsule is expected to reach the International Space Station (ISS) and dock with it autonomously for the first time. It is scheduled to return back to Earth on March 8 when it will splash down off the coast of Florida.

The unmanned test flight is intended to demonstrate SpaceX's ability to safely and reliably carry astronauts to and from the ISS.

The data gathered from this test launch will determine whether it is ready to carry people aboard in July.

■ The achieved feats

In 2012, SpaceX made history when the Dragon became the first commercial spacecraft to deliver cargo to the ISS. Before then, such feats were only achieved through the efforts of two governments. That said, the Dragon was always intended to carry humans as well, and that is where the Crew Dragon comes in.

The Crew Dragon is also a fully autonomous aircraft that can be controlled both by the on-board crew as well as SpaceX's mission control in California.

Because it was designed to carry humans, it has an advanced emergency escape system that will allow the crew to safely escape should anything go wrong. It also has an Environmental Control and Life Support System that makes for a comfortable and safe ride for the crew members, and its displays will provide real time information on the state of the spacecraft.

That said, the Crew Dragon is also designed to be an enjoyable ride, which is why it also has three windows, from where the crew members can catch a glimpse of space on board.

(Source: techtimes.com)

Physicists are rethinking a fundamental quantum law to help us understand reality

Deep in the heart of physics there's a lucky guess. It was an incredibly good guess, one that remains solid in the face of time and experiment, and is now a fundamental principle in quantum mechanics.

It's called the Born rule, and while it's used for predictions, nobody truly understands how it works. But a bold new attempt to rewrite it could be the break we've been looking for

World Wildlife Day to raise awareness of world's wild animals and plants

Each year, March 3 celebrates and raises awareness of the world's wild animals and plants.

World Wildlife Day is a United Nations initiative that coincides with the anniversary of the signing of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), an international agreement between governments to regulate global trade in wild animals and plants to ensure that their survival does not become threatened by such trade.

Thousands of species are internationally traded and used by people in their daily lives for food, health care, housing, tourist souvenirs, cosmetics or fashion. With 183 contracting parties, 182 countries and the European Union, CITES is one of the world's most powerful tools for wildlife conservation through the regulation of trade.

CITES regulates international trade in over 36,000 species of plants and animals, including their products and derivatives, to ensure their survival in the wild with benefits for the livelihoods of local people and the global environment.

World Wildlife Day is celebrated under a different theme each year. This year the theme is 'Life below water: for people and planet'.

Oceans regulate our climate, produce half the oxygen we breathe, provide nourishment for 3 billion people, and absorb 30 percent of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere and 90 percent of the heat from climate change. To ensure that oceans and marine species are preserved and protected, nature-based solutions that bring together public, private and civil society partners need to be replicated and scaled-up.

Ireland ratified CITES in January 2002 and the convention entered into force here on 8 April 2002. Globally, over 36,000 plant and animal species are accorded varying degrees of protection by the CITES convention. Regulations implementing CITES in the European Union list the species relevant to this part of the world and the EU experience of illegal trading in endangered wildlife.

Irish laws follow the EU Regulations and lay out the terms and conditions for possession, use and trade in protected species that are both native to Ireland and non-native species listed under CITES.

Trade in marine species such as exotic seahorses, colourful corals and tropical seashells is monitored by customs officials and wildlife officers to ensure that the survival of these beautiful and often endangered life forms does not become threatened by tourists unwittingly buying them as souvenirs while on their holidays abroad and bringing them home.

Wildlife is best enjoyed and left in the wild where it belongs.

(Source: The Independent)

LEARN ENGLISH

Cheese Lovers

A: Hello everyone my name is Laurie and I want to welcome you to this course. We will learn all about one of the oldest yet most delicious foods on this planet: **cheese!** Let's get started! A: Cheese is usually categorized into four types: soft, semi-soft semi-hard and hard. The designation refers to the amount of **moisture** in the cheese, which directly affects its **texture**. Making cheese is an ancient practice, dating back thousands of years, and the home cheese maker can usually find recipes for cheese that falls into any of the four categories.

A: Soft cheese includes cottage cheese, cream cheese, ricotta, brie, bleu, Roquefort, mozzarella, muenster and similar cheeses. These cheeses generally **pair** well with fruit or meats, or can be used as breakfast cheeses in an omelet nor as pasta fillings. They are usually **mildly flavored** and very high in moisture.

A: American, Colby, co-jack and similar cheeses are in the semi-soft category. These are slightly stronger in flavor and cover a wide range of uses. Co-jack cheese, a blend of Colby and Monterrey jack is one of the most popular. This allows the sharper flavor of Colby to be combined with the milder jack cheese, and also **melts** better than plain Colby. Grilled cheese sandwiches often use American cheese, and Mexican cheeses such as Asadero and Queso Fresco are becoming more popular.

A: Hard cheeses include Parmesan, Romano, Asiago, Swiss, Gruyere and others. Parmesan and Romano are most familiar as the grated powder used to top spaghetti, but they are also used as accompaniments for fruit, nuts and other appetizer items. Swiss is a popular sandwich cheese and melts well, unlike some other hard cheeses.

Key vocabulary

cheese: solid product made from milk
moisture: a small quantity of water
texture: the way something feels

pair: to match something

mild: soft, not strong

flavor: the way something tastes

melt: to become liquid

Supplementary vocabulary

blue: a type of cheese

mature: fully aged

organism: a form of life



Without water,
everything
withers

Qanat, a solution to water scarcity?

By Faranak Bakhtiari

For many years, the country has been suffering from droughts and lack of water resources; wetlands, rivers, lakes and open drains have dried up gradually. While experts believe that the current water scarcity is due to poor water management policies, do qanats give us the right policy?

Over the centuries, qanats have served as the main supplier of fresh water in arid regions of Iran, as provided the opportunity for people to live in extremely dry zones (even in deserts), and thus helped harmonize the population distribution across the country.

The ancient qanat system of tapping alluvial aquifers at the heads of valleys and conducting the water along underground tunnels by gravity, often over many kilometers, first appeared in Iran, which was then spread to other Middle Eastern countries, China, India, Japan, North Africa, Spain and from there to Latin America.

Employing this ancient water supply system may reveal and highlight some benefits to contain water shortage in the country.

Throughout the arid regions of Iran, agricultural and permanent settlements are supported by subsurface water or fresh water resources withdrawal, while qanats representing the system include rest areas for workers, water reservoirs and watermills.

The traditional communal management system still in place allows equitable and sustainable water sharing and distribution, which provide exceptional testimony to cultural traditions and civilizations in desert areas with an arid climate.

According to the Ministry of Energy,



about 36,300 qanats have been identified in Iran, which have been saturated with water for over 2,000 years.

Now that water shortage is highlighted as one of the leading issues facing the country, expert believes that focusing on issues of water management in the past and questions of sustainability are paramount.

Ehsan Akhani, an expert active in qanat field, told IRNA that in the past qanats was a tool to determine the amount of agricultural lands in an area, while today lands are used for agricultural purposes despite severe water shortage in an area.

In the Iranian calendar year 1383 (March 2004-March 2005), qanats capacity have been 10 times more than Zayandeh-rud river, he said, implying that what precisely caused the ancient water supply system to gradually run down includes dried up rivers and wetlands, illegal construction of dams and wells, excessive underground water withdrawal.

He went on to highlight that at least over 70 percent of qanats can be restored to survive the country from water scarcity, however, water consumption patterns must be changed properly, which can

result in 40 percent increase in renewable water resources.

Shahram Karimi, an expert, said in a press release that although revival of qanats can be considered as one of the solutions to the current water shortage condition, one tenth of the country's total water supply have been provided by 36,000 qanats.

So, qanats can compensate for the shortages to some extents, but we need to focus on water resources management and promoting the culture of consuming an adequate amount of water, he added.

He further highlighted that in a country like Iran being haunted by recurrent droughts over a long time, considering the ancient sustainable system is significant and valuable.

Qanats can come efficient to contain water scarcity due to relatively low cost, low evaporation rates and not requiring technology knowledge, moreover, they proved sustainable being used in perpetuity without posing any damages to the environment, despite new water transfer projects, which not only puts the environment in danger but brings the country heavy economic burden.

Qanat use encourages water reuse at different sections along the linear system and can only drain water from a naturally recharged aquifer; there is no need to pump water from an aquifer or draw down the water table reducing the capacity of an aquifer to retain water.

Moreover, they do not contribute to the compaction of aquifers and resulting surface subsidence and soil compaction as many pumped technologies have done. So, the social and economic systems that have maintained qanats for many centuries are aided by the social contracts and structures required to keep qanats healthy.



IRCS's next year budget rises by \$48m

SOCIETY TEHRAN — The Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) has received a budget rise of 2 trillion rials (nearly \$48 million) within the framework of the budget bill approved for the next calendar year (starting on March 21), deputy head of the IRCS has said.

"The IRCS received a total budget of 5 trillion rials (nearly \$120 million) over the current Iranian calendar year, which will increase to 7 trillion rials (around \$166 million) for the next year," YJC quoted Roushollah

Forouzesh as saying on Sunday.

Considering the numerous incidents occurring in the country, as well as the necessity to develop and equip the Red Crescent Society fleet, the next year's budget raised by 2 trillion rials (nearly \$48 million), he stated.

"It is scheduled to promote and strengthen air emergency fleet to provide better medical services," he added.

He went on to conclude that fortunately, the budget allocated to the IRCS has been approved by the Majlis (Iranian Parliament).

\$4m budget allocated to promote non-motorized transport

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — A total budget of 170 billion rials (around \$4 million) has been allocated to promote bike lanes across the capital city of Tehran, encouraging the residents to ride bicycles.

The budget has been approved within the framework of the budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year (starting on March 21), Sakineh Ashrafi, deputy mayor of Tehran for planning, urban development and council affairs has said.

One of the main issues taken into consideration through the next year's budget bill, was development of non-motorized transportation, which focuses on active transportation and human powered transportation including walking and bicycling, she explained.

According to Tehran third development plan, biking as a green transport has been taken into consideration in order to mitigate traffic congestion and air pollution, she further



noted, ISNA reported on Sunday.

Tehran third development plan is a five-year program from the next Iranian calendar year 1398 to the year 1402 (March 2023– March 2024), through which the Municipality is supposed to develop the city's infrastructure as well as promoting the culture of using bikes rather than private cars among the citizens.

She went on to say that some 170 billion rials (about \$4 million) have been proposed in the budget bill to strengthen non-motorized transport system, 131 billion rials (nearly \$3.2 million) of which will be allocated to building and equipping bike lanes and the rest will be spent on reconstruction and renovation of passages.

To encourage the private sector and the cooperative sector to invest on establishing, equipping and developing bicycle-based transportation systems, some funds and loans will be granted to the organizations to take step toward this goal, she highlighted.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

\$3b needed to complete Tehran urban development projects'

A total of 120 trillion rials (nearly \$3 billion) is needed to complete urban development projects in Tehran, said Mohsen Hashemi, Tehran city council chairman.

Various projects are underway in the capital, which requires some 120 trillion rials (nearly \$3 trillion) to be completed, besides the subway, he stated, ISNA reported on Saturday.

تکمیل پروژه‌های عمرانی تهران نیازمند ۱۲ هزار میلیارد تومان بودجه

رئیس شورای شهر تهران عنوان کرد که برای تکمیل پروژه‌های عمرانی شهر تهران به غیر از مترو هشت تا ۱۲ هزار میلیارد تومان اعتبار لازم است. به گزارش ایسنا، محسن هاشمی اظهار داشت: پروژه‌های کوچک و بزرگی در تهران در حال اجراست که مجموعاً برای تکمیل آنها به غیر از مترو نیازمند هشت تا ۱۲ هزار میلیارد تومان اعتبار هستیم.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

"chiro-, cheiro-"

Meaning: hand

For example: Much of the day in the life of a chiropractor is spent seeing patients.

PHRASAL VERB

Move along

Meaning: if a process or situation is moving along, it continues and makes progress

For example: Construction of the bridge is moving along.

IDIOM

Take your courage in both hands

Explanation: to make yourself do something very brave

For example: When I saw the child in the burning house, I took my courage in both hands and ran inside.

U.S.-led coalition bombs Syrian town with white phosphorus munitions

1→ The U.S.-led coalition has been conducting airstrikes against what are said to be Daesh targets inside Syria since September 2014 without any authorization from the Damascus government or a UN mandate. Washington has long been providing the SDF -- a predominantly Kurdish alliance of militants -- with arms and militants, calling them a key partner in the purported fight against Daesh.

The so-called U.S. coalition has in several occasions used internationally banned white phosphorus against various positions in the Arab country, particularly in Dayr al-Zawr province, drawing condemnations from Damascus.

On November 5 last year the U.S.-led warplanes used white phosphorus bombs against Hajin, located some 110 kilometers east of the provincial capital city of Dayr al-Zawr, Sana reported.

On October 13, SANA also reported that the U.S.-led coalition had dropped internationally-banned white phosphorus bombs on Hajin. On September 8, two F-15 warplanes of the U.S. Air Force targeted the same Syrian town with white phosphorus bombs.



In June 2017, Human Rights Watch (HRW) warned that the U.S.-led coalition was deploying white phosphorus bombs in both Iraq and Syria.

On Friday, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) said

in a report that chlorine was likely used in a suspected gas attack in Syria's Douma in April 2018.

The use of chlorine by foreign-backed terrorists is a long-known fact, while nerve agents are usually attributed to the Syrian

government which surrendered its entire chemical stockpile in 2013.

The chemical weapons watchdog, however, did not assign blame for the incident on a Douma suburb last year.

The Douma attack occurred at a time when the Syrian army was about to win the battle against the foreign-backed militants there. Witnesses said at least 43 people were killed in the incident.

However, Western states were quick to blame Damascus for the attack, which the Syrian government strongly rejected.

One week after the suspected gas attack, the U.S., Britain and France launched a coordinated missile strike against sites and research facilities near Damascus and Homs.

Syria and its allies, including Russia and Iran, saw the attack as a bid to prop up terrorists, faulting the invaders for ignoring Syria's repeated requests for an international probe into the incident.

Since March 2011, the Arab country has been gripped by a militancy that has largely wound down.

(Source: Press TV)

Israel bans senior Muslim clerics from entering al-Aqsa Mosque

By staff & agencies

Israeli officials have banned two high-ranking Palestinian Muslim clerics from entering al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied East Jerusalem (Jerusalem) amid an escalation of acts of violence by Israeli forces and settlers against Palestinian people.

Firas al-Dibs, spokesperson for the Islamic Waqf (Endowment) organization, which manages the compound's affairs, said Israeli authorities delivered an order to Waqf Council chairman Sheikh Abdul-Athim Salhab on Sunday, banning him from entry to the sacred site for 40 consecutive days.

Salhab had previously been banned for an entire week, following his release from Israeli custody last week.

Dibs noted that Sheikh Najeh Bkerat, the deputy director of Muslim Endowments and al-Aqsa Affairs, was also banned from al-Aqsa Mosque for four months.

Along with other top Waqf officials, Salhab was detained by Israeli forces as a result of playing an important role in the reopening of the al-Rahma Gate (Gate of Mercy) prayer area.

Prayer area of the al-Rahma Gate was closed on February 25 upon an order by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Israel had closed the gate that leads to the prayer space in al-Aqsa Mosque since 2003 in the face of the Second Intifada (uprising) against the regime's occupation.

The Waqf council, however, decided on February 22 to re-open the prayer space at the Bab al-Rahma Gate in defiance of Israel's 16-year-old ban. Hundreds of worshippers, led by the Grand Mufti of al-Quds (Jerusalem) Sheikh Mohammad Hussein, entered the area for the first time since 2003 for Friday prayers.

Angered by the move, Tel Aviv launched an arrest campaign against Palestinians.

The arrests drew criticisms from Palestinians and Jordan, which is the custodian of the holy sites in occupied al-Quds (Jerusalem).

The Islamic Waqf organizations and Palestinian institutions have insisted on keeping the Bab al-Rahma prayer area open for Muslim worship.

Palestinians have repeatedly warned of Israeli attempts to change the status quo of the al-Aqsa compound, the third holiest site in Islam.

The occupied Palestinian territories have witnessed new tensions ever since the United States President Donald Trump announced his decision on December 6, 2017 to recognize al-Quds (Jerusalem) as Israel's capital and relocate the U.S. embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to the occupied city.

On December 21, 2017, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) overwhelmingly voted in favor of a resolution that calls on the U.S. to withdraw its controversial recognition of al-Quds (Jerusalem) as Israeli "capital."

In an attempt to prevent the passing of the resolution, Trump threatened reprisals against countries that backed the measure, which had earlier faced a U.S. veto at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

Israel, however, rejected the world body's resolution while thanking Trump for his decision to move the U.S. embassy to al-Quds (Jerusalem).

U.S. to go ahead with merger of al-Quds missions in anti-Palestine move

Meantime, the U.S. is expected to implement a decision to merge its consulate general in al-Quds (Jerusalem) with an embassy it has opened in the city, effectively stripping Palestinians of American consular services.

A U.S. State Department official, who was speaking on condition of anonymity, told AFP that the move was "expected to take place on March 4."

The merger was announced last October, when the U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo claimed that it was meant to improve "efficiency and effectiveness" and did not constitute a change in Washington's policy. Pompeo also said that a new Palestinian affairs unit would be established inside the U.S. al-Quds embassy.

The U.S. consulate in al-Quds (Jerusalem) has been acting independently as a de facto embassy to the Palestinians since the Oslo accords of the 1990s. Its closure now would mean that Palestinian affairs would come under the direction of the U.S. ambassador to Israel David Friedman inside the embassy building -- which became a major cause of Palestinian anger when it was opened in May 2018.

Earlier, in December 2017, the U.S. recognized al-Quds (Jerusalem) as the Israeli "capital," sparking global condemnation.

Following those moves, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas declared that Palestinians would no longer accept the U.S. as a mediator to resolve the conflict with Israel because Washington was "completely biased" towards Tel Aviv.

Palestinians also consider Friedman as biased in favor of the Israeli regime.

Saeb Erekat, secretary general of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), denounced the U.S. merger decision in October last year, saying it represented "the final nail in the coffin of the U.S. administration's role in the peace industry."

"The decision of the United States to end the consulate's existence... has nothing to do with efficiency, but a lot with the desire to please the ideologized American team, which is primed to dismantle the foundations of the international system and U.S. foreign policy in order to reward Israel for its violations and crimes," he said in a statement.

Under Trump, the U.S. administration has taken several hostile measures against the Palestinian people, among them a change of policy on al-Quds (Jerusalem).

Israel occupied East al-Quds (Jerusalem) during the Six-Day War in 1967 and later annexed it in a move not recognized by the international community.

Israel lays claim to the whole city, but Palestinians view its eastern sector as the capital of their future sovereign state.

Israel forces Palestinian man to demolish own house in E. al-Quds

Elsewhere, Israeli authorities have forced a Palestinian man to demolish his own house in East al-Quds (Jerusalem) as the occupying regime is continuing with its land expropriation and settlement expansion policies in the occupied Palestinian territories irrespective of international outcry.

The Palestinian Ma'an news agency reported that Hussam



al-Abbas was forced to demolish his house, a third-floor apartment in a three-story residential building in Ra's al-Amud neighborhood on Saturday morning.

It added that the demolition was carried out upon an order by the Israeli municipality of the city that claimed the building lacked a construction license, which was impossible to obtain from the Israeli regime.

Abbas told Ma'an that he had been summoned by the municipality of the city and was ordered to demolish his own house or else the municipality would fine him for demolition costs.

He further said that he had chosen to demolish his house himself in a bid to minimize damage on two other apartments and other families living in the building. He said his 70-square-meter apartment was built a year ago.

Palestinians living in occupied East Jerusalem al-Quds are regularly forced to demolish their own houses upon orders by the Israeli municipality of the city to avoid paying exorbitant demolition fees to the municipality.

Furthermore, Israeli authorities frequently demolish Palestinian buildings and structures in the so-called Area C, with Bedouin and herding communities being particularly vulnerable to that practice.

Area C, which is under full Israeli control, makes up more than 60 percent of the entire occupied West Bank. Eighty-eight percent of the area lies in the strategic Jordan Valley, which comprises a third of the West Bank.

Since 1967, the Israeli regime has been enforcing the draconian policy of demolishing the houses of Palestinians it deems to be behind fatal attacks against Israeli settlers. The practice, however, was temporarily halted from 2005 to 2014, with the exception of 2009, when scores of homes were sealed and razed in East al-Quds (Jerusalem).

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).

The UNHRC has condemned Israel's settlement activities in the occupied territories in several resolutions.

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

In Yemen, war can reach children wherever they are: UN

The United Nations' children's agency says the war in Yemen continues to take a "horror toll" on children despite a partial ceasefire between the parties to the conflict.

UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund) released a statement on Saturday, three days after violence killed five children in the Tahita District in the western province of Hudaydah, which has been subject to a ceasefire.

The body's Executive Director Henrietta Fore said, "In Yemen, children can no longer safely do the things that all children love to do, like go to school or spend time with their friends outside. The war can reach them

wherever they are, even in their own homes."

"Each day, eight children are killed or injured across 31 active conflict zones in the country," she said, adding that "talks and conferences have so far done little to change the reality for children on the ground."

"Only a comprehensive peace agreement can give Yemeni children the reprieve from violence and war that they need and deserve," she said.

An agreement on a ceasefire in Hudaydah was reached in Sweden late last year between Yemen's Saudi-backed former regime and the country's Ansarullah (Houthi) movement.

The House of Saud regime and a num-

ber of its allies have been waging a war on Yemen for the past five years to restore the former regime, which resigned and fled the country amid popular discontent.

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.

The Saudi regime-led invaders have also blockaded Yemen, causing widespread famine. On Tuesday, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said tens of thousands of children under the age of five had died of starvation ever since the warfare started.

(Source: Press TV)

Venezuela's Guaido to 'return home soon', risking arrest

Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido has said he would return home after a visit to Ecuador and called for new protests next week against President Nicolas Maduro, whose government had banned him from travelling abroad. Guaido has spent the past few days touring between Latin American countries to muster support for his campaign to form a transition government and overthrow Maduro,

whom he denounces as an illegitimate usurper. He had visited Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay after leaving Venezuela last week for Colombia to coordinate efforts there to send humanitarian aid into his country, though troops loyal to Maduro blocked a convoy of aid trucks and turned them back.

"As for the next steps for Venezuelans, I announce my return home from Ecuador," Guaido

told a news conference in the coastal town of Salinas alongside Ecuadorean President Lenin Moreno. Guaido did not say when exactly or how he would return to Venezuela. He is expected to leave Ecuador at 09:30am local time (14:30 GMT) on Sunday, according to the Ecuadorean government's schedule for his visit.

I announce my return to the country and I call for mobilizations in all the national territory," Guaido wrote on Twitter.

His return opens the possibility that Venezuelan authorities will arrest him. The Supreme Court had imposed a travel ban on him after he invoked the country's constitution on January 23 to assume an interim presidency, which most Western nations now recognize as legitimate.

(Source: agencies)

Abbas likely to visit Syria soon, senior Palestinian official says

1→ Unlike many of his Arab counterparts, Abbas has not staked out a stance on the civil war since it began, Ziad Iyad, a professor of political science at Al-Quds University in East Jerusalem, said in a phone call.

"Abbas never took a clear position on the crisis because he did not want Palestinian refugees in Syria to pay a price for his comments," Iyad said. "He did not want Syria to carry out reprisals against Palestinian refugees for something he says."

There are hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees in Syria who live in 12 refugee camps, according to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency.

In the past year, he has met with at least three Syrian officials during trips abroad.

On a trip to Latin America in May 2018, Abbas met the Syrian ambassadors to Venezuela and Cuba, Khalil Bitar and Idris Mayya, respectively.

On a trip to Russia in July 2018, he also met Syrian Ambassador to Moscow Riyad Haddad.

(Source: agencies)

MBS's bloody present for Pakistan

1→ The main prerequisite for Islamabad to realize such goal can be to break ties with Riyadh. Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan and other Pakistani officials should realize that the ongoing tension between Islamabad and New Delhi won't be the last bloody fire exchange in the region but the beginning of the end of a conflict, if they don't stand up against the House of Saud.

Therefore, there is only one way to prevent the escalation of security crisis in the Indian subcontinent i.e. to ban the name of Saudi Arabia and the U.S. in Pakistan's foreign policy and security relations.

Saudi Arabia is said to have tortured an American citizen

1→ A military officer who had been detained died with a twisted neck and other signs of abuse on his body, according to a person who saw it. Women's rights advocates jailed in Saudi Arabia have said they were also tortured, including by electrical shocks, according to their relatives and rights groups.



But Fitaihi's American citizenship means that his mistreatment, which has not been previously reported, may now pose a special threat to Saudi relations with Washington. The Trump administration is already struggling to quell a bipartisan backlash against the kingdom over the killing last fall of the Saudi dissident Jamal Khashoggi, a Virginia resident and Washington Post columnist who was executed and dismembered by a team of Saudi agents in the kingdom's consulate in Istanbul.

This past week, Jared Kushner, President Trump's son-in-law and Middle East adviser, met for the first time since the killing with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the de facto ruler of the kingdom. American intelligence agencies have concluded that the crown prince ordered Khashoggi's killing.

The Trump administration, meanwhile, has defied a congressional deadline to report about who was responsible for the killing. Instead, Trump has equivocated about whether Prince Mohammed might have authorized it, even as he has extolled the value of Saudi Arabian oil sales and defense contracts.

American friends of Fitaihi are stepping up a campaign to press Washington to take up his case. They say the Trump administration's public silence about his incarceration is at odds with Trump's repeated boasts about his successful efforts to extricate American citizens held abroad.

Trump counted 20 this past week, including at least one dual national.

Aya Hijazi, a dual citizen of the U.S. and Egypt, was invited to the White House after her release from jail in Cairo. "Not making Walid Fitaihi a priority will send a message that America isn't really first," she said.

"Financial deals and petroleum are."

Howard M. Cooper, a lawyer for Fitaihi, said in a letter to the State Department in January that he had indicated to his wife and family that "he is in fear for his life, that he cannot take his situation any longer, and that he desires all possible help." A State Department representative declined to comment on the case, citing privacy considerations.

The Saudi regime officials have denied any mistreatment of detainees. A spokesman for the Saudi Embassy in Washington said the kingdom has signed the convention against torture and prohibits its use.

"The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia takes any and all allegations of ill treatment of defendants awaiting trial or prisoners serving their sentences very seriously," the spokesman said.

Fitaihi got his American citizenship while studying and practicing medicine in the United States, where one of his sons lives. After returning to Saudi Arabia, he founded a private hospital in Jeddah and became well known as a motivational speaker.

Man City's De Bruyne set for spell out with hamstring problem

Manchester City playmaker Kevin De Bruyne faces a spell on the sidelines after picking up a hamstring injury in Saturday's 1-0 Premier League win at Bournemouth, manager Pep Guardiola said.

De Bruyne was substituted in the first half of the game with his replacement Riyad Mahrez scoring the winner to help the champions take a two-point lead over Liverpool, who are in action at Everton on Sunday.

Defender John Stones was also taken off but the England international's problem is not as serious.

"Kevin will be out for a while with a muscular problem - hamstring. John I think is more precaution. We didn't take a risk, we'll see tomorrow," Guardiola told the British media.

De Bruyne was one of the standout performers for City last season with 12 goals and 21 assists in all competitions but he has struggled with knee injuries in the current campaign, making 14 league appearances.

Guardiola suggested City's busy schedule, as they compete for trophies in four competitions, has not helped.

"I think we've played 25 games in 93 days, one every three days, so it's a physiological issue," the Spaniard added. "The body is not able to recover so sometimes the muscle says 'hello, that's enough'."

"We don't give players time to recover. We play a game, then after, when they are not recovered, we play another game. There is only a short amount of time and it is very demanding. But everybody's committed and we'll wait for Kevin to come back."

City have 71 points from 29 games in the league.

(Source: Mirror)

Beckham salutes LA Galaxy and Los Angeles as statue unveiled

David Beckham called his former team LA Galaxy his "family" and thanked Los Angeles for embracing him at the unveiling of his statue before the Major League Soccer club's season-opener on Saturday.

The statue, a first for an MLS player, honours the former England captain who was the first big European name to join the league, boosting its popularity and paving the way for other global stars to make the leap.

Beckham won back-to-back championships in 2011 and 2012 during his six years and 98 appearances with the Galaxy.

"Our city, our home," Beckham said outside the Galaxy's home stadium, the Dignity Health Sports Park in Carson, before their opener against the Chicago Fire.

"From day one when my family arrived in this city, we felt at home and for that we will be forever grateful."

"When I talk about LA Galaxy and when I talk about LA, I talk about it as family because it is a big family."

The statue unveiling came a day after Beckham helped open a soccer field for underprivileged youth in downtown Los Angeles.

"Taking care of the next generation of soccer stars in this country is really important and we did it in a community that really needed support and a safe environment for children," added 43-year-old Beckham, his parents and wife Victoria among the audience.

Former Galaxy team mate Robbie Keane paid tribute to Beckham as a loyal friend and family man.

"The David Beckham the public know is a global superstar and icon throughout the world," said Keane.

"But the one I know is even better."

Retired NBA star Kobe Bryant also gave a video-taped tribute to the former Manchester United and Real Madrid midfielder Beckham, the owner of expansion side Inter Miami CF, which is set to join the MLS in 2020.

"He was the first truly big name to come to the states and really draw attention to the sport," said the former Los Angeles Lakers forward.

(Source: Reuters)

Handball rules among those changed by Ifab for next season

Goals scored or created with the use of an accidental handball will not stand from next season onwards, the International FA Board (Ifab) have confirmed.

The changes mean that a free-kick will be awarded when a goal or clear chance occurs from a handball.

Ifab technical director David Elleray explained the changes at their AGM in Aberdeen.

"Deliberate handball remains an offence," Elleray stressed.

"In the past we've managed to improve the laws by focusing on outcome rather than intent."

"What we are looking at particularly in attacking situations is where the player gets a clear unfair advantage by gaining possession or control of the ball, as a result of it making contact with their hand or arm."

The changes mean gaining control or possession and then scoring as a consequence of handling the ball will not be allowed - neither will a goal scored directly from handling the ball, regardless of intent.

Another change to the laws of the game means that if the player's arms extend beyond a "natural silhouette", handball will be given, even if it is perceived as accidental.

Elleray says this is an effort to put an end to defenders placing their arms behind their backs in fear of giving away a free-kick.

"We've changed it to say the body has a certain silhouette," said Elleray. "If the arms are extended beyond that silhouette then the body is being made unnaturally bigger, with the purpose of it being a bigger barrier to the opponent or the ball."

"Players should be allowed to have their arms by their side because it's their natural silhouette."

In other changes approved by Ifab, substitutes will have to leave the pitch at the nearest goalline or touchline instead of walking to their technical area in a bid to stop time wasting.

(Source: BBC)

The main victims of Real Madrid's two Clasico disasters

Barcelona inflicted a second damaging El Clasico defeat in four days on arch-rival Real Madrid with a 1-0 victory in the Santiago Bernabeu stadium Saturday.

Still smarting from the 3-0 reverse Wednesday in the second leg of the Copa del Rey semifinal, Real was unable to salvage pride in the La Liga clash and to make matters worse Barca has edged ahead in the all-time list of wins for matches between the two sides.

Barca has also gone 10 points clear of Atletico Madrid, which plays Sunday, and 12 clear of Real in what is turning into a one-team title race in Spain.

Victory completed the league double for Barca over Real, with a 5-1 thumping in the earlier fixture leading to the sacking of Los Blancos boss Julen Lopetegui after a sorry start to the current campaign.

Form has improved under Santiago Solari, but the only realistic chance of silverware for Real is another successful defense of the Champions League crown, languishing a distant third in the La Liga standings.

Both sides had chances before Ivan Rakitic put the visitor ahead in the 26th minute, playing a one-two with Sergi Roberto before lifting the ball over the onrushing Thibaut Courtois for a delightful opener.

It turned out to be the only goal of the game, an effort worthy of teammate Lionel Messi and the Argentine maestro went close to adding a second, while Real's Ballon d'Or winner Luka Modric headed over from close



range.

Barcelona left the Santiago Bernabeu with a victory for the second time in a week on Saturday night, much to the frustration of Real Madrid.

The performances of the Madrid players were below-par and some of the senior members of Santiago Solari's squad have taken the blame, including the coach himself.

Kroos

The German has been far from his best in the last two matches and his lack of pace has transmuted to his team's style of play. Kroos took to social media to belittle Bernd

Schuster after the former Madrid boss criticised his compatriot's displays. His current coach has fired warning shots of his own, too, suggesting that he's considering using the youngsters in Kroos' place.

Bale

The club's record signing is enduring his worst spell at the Santiago Bernabeu. Bale came on from the bench in the Copa del Rey, before being whistled when he was substituted in the league. Since Cristiano Ronaldo's departure, the Welshman has been unable to become Madrid's star player and his poor performance on Saturday will

have done him no favours.

Solari

After two toothless displays against Barcelona, there is very little to suggest that the Argentine will remain in the dugout at Madrid next season. The defeat against Girona knocked his reputation but his team's inability to break down an average Barcelona looks to have decided his future for him.

Benzema

Despite coming into the two Clasicos in good form, Benzema provided very little in the way of an attacking threat for Los Blancos. The team's reliance on the Frenchman scoring the goals was underlined as they couldn't find a way past Marc-Andre ter Stegen.

Casemiro

Solari mentioned Marcos Llorente's name multiple times in his press conferences this week and it seems like he misses him. Casemiro's display in the Copa del Rey wasn't great and there was no improvement in the league fixture either. Luka Modric had to do far more defensive work that he is used to in order to compensate for the Brazilian's failings.

It looks like Dani Ceballos and Marcelo have fallen behind youngsters Fede Valverde and Sergio Reguilón respectively, with neither coming off the bench in either of the two games against Barcelona. As for Mariano Diaz, he was left out of Solari's squad all together on Saturday and watched from the stands as his team fell short in front of goal.

(Source: Marca)

Kyrgios beats Zverev to win Acapulco ATP crown



Australian Nick Kyrgios capped a scintillating run in Acapulco with a 6-3, 6-4 victory over world number three Alexander Zverev Saturday to claim his first ATP title in more than a year.

Kyrgios defeated three top-10 players on the way to the title, saving three match points in a second-round victory over second-ranked Rafael Nadal -- owner of 17 Grand Slam titles -- and beating No. 9 John Isner in the semis.

He also beat three-time Grand Slam winner Stan Wawrinka in the quarter-finals of a drama-filled week that saw him shake off hostile crowds, illness, injuries and moments of malaise -- not to mention a post-match scolding from Nadal.

His win over Zverev was a remarkably straightforward affair.

"I just cracked in a lot of drop shots, tried to keep him guessing, that's all you can do," said Kyrgios, a former world number 13 who has slipped to 72nd in the world.

"He's super-fit, so he's going to grind you down so I tried to keep the points short when I could," added Kyrgios, who spent

more than nine hours on court over his four prior matches but needed just an hour and a half to dispatch Zverev.

"You know, I lack on the physical side a little bit," Kyrgios admitted with a smile. "But today I served well and just played the clutch points pretty well."

Indeed it was Zverev whose nerves were frayed after Kyrgios broke him at love in the fourth game of the opening set then held for a 4-1 lead, prompting the German to smash his racquet in frustration.

Kyrgios broke again to open the second set, but double-faulted on break point in the next game.

He broke Zverev again in the fifth game and held with confidence the rest of the way to capture his first title since Brisbane in January of 2018.

While Kyrgios had come to embrace the role of tournament villain in which pro-Nadal fans had cast him, Zverev said fans should appreciate what they had seen from him. "Really, he's the one who deserves to win it," Zverev said.

(Source: AFP)

ICC assures members of robust security at World Cup



The International Cricket Council has assured its members of a tight security plan for this year's World Cup in England after the Indian cricket board sought guarantees from the governing body following a suicide-bomb attack in Kashmir last month.

The BCCI had expressed concern about security during the World Cup in a letter to the ICC after last month's attack in the disputed region that killed 40 Indian paramilitary troops. "As you would expect for a global sporting event, the ICC, in partnership with the ECB (England and Wales Cricket Board) has a robust security plan in place for the men's Cricket World Cup," ICC Chief Executive David Richardson said following board meetings in Dubai.

"We work closely with the authorities in our host countries to ensure that the safety of players, officials and fans is a priority.

"Should those authorities raise the threat level of the event based on intelligence, we will of course uplift our security commitment as appropriate. "We will continue to work with the ECB and our members throughout the build up to and during the tournament to keep everyone abreast of the situation."

The attack, the worst in the troubled area, was claimed by Pakistan-based militants and further soured relations between the bitter nuclear-armed rivals, prompting calls within India for the country to sever all sporting ties with Pakistan.

The BCCI had urged the cricket community to ostracise Pakistan in their letter to the ICC. India are scheduled to play their World Cup match against Pakistan in Manchester on June 16. The governing body was also apprised of concerns from the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) regarding the BCCI's reluctance to come under the ambit of India's national anti-doping body.

"The Board unanimously acknowledged its desire to remain WADA compliant and committed to working in partnership with the BCCI, WADA and the India NADA to resolve the outstanding issues as a matter of urgency," the ICC statement said.

Former India leg-spinner Anil Kumble was reappointed as the head of the ICC Cricket Committee while restrictions imposed on Sri Lanka for alleged government interference in its administration were lifted.

(Source: Reuters)

Federer wins 100th ATP title in Dubai with victory over Tsitsipas



You can imagine today sitting with 100 how much disbelief there is in between what happened then and now.

Federer also recalled his first visit to the Dubai event in 2002. He lost in the second round to Rainer Schuettler and was accused of tanking by the tournament director, who tried to withhold his prize money. The ATP intervened and defended Federer.

"I played frustrated the last couple of games in the match against Rainer Schuettler because I was young and crazy. I was so fed up with my game. I just started to go for big shots. Tournament director wasn't happy with what he saw," said Federer.

"Anyway, he withheld everything. But the tour said, 'No chance you can do this. Roger tried, so it's all good'. Then I came back the next year, wanted to prove a point. I ended up going for three in a row, so... That's what happens sometimes. You have to learn it the hard way."

At the very same place where he experienced all that back in 2002, Federer ended up lifting his 100th title. It's funny how things transpire sometimes.

It also shows how anyone can change their attitude if they want to.

(Source: ESPN)

A tremendous two weeks of tennis in Dubai ended with Roger Federer hitting a special milestone by capturing the 100th title of his career.

The Dubai Duty Free Tennis Stadium was buzzing before the match even started, with tickets oversold and not an empty seat in the house, all in anticipation of Federer's historic moment.

He is just the second man, behind Jimmy Connors (who has 109), to have won 100 or more titles.

Here's a look back at the men's event in Dubai and the things learned from an eventful week.

During his press conference, Federer reflected on his journey to 100 titles and went way back to the time before he captured his first trophy in Milan in 2001. In his early days on tour, Federer actually feared he would not fulfil his potential and that he would end up being the guy with "endless talent and no titles".

"I think title number one, it was a special one for me," said the 37-year-old Swiss following his 6-4, 6-4 win over Stefanos Tsitsipas in Dubai on Saturday.

"I'm not kidding if I tell you I hoped I was going to not go down as a player never to win a tournament because I lost my first two quite dramatically, 7-6 in the third against my

Iranian wrestlers win two gold medals at UWW Dan Kolov-Nikola Petrov tournament

SPORTS TEHRAN — Iranian freestylers Hassan Yazdani and Parviz Hadi claimed two gold medals at the United World Wrestling (UWW) Dan Kolov-Nikola Petrov tournament in Sofia, Bulgaria on Sunday.

Yazdani won the gold medal after defeating Belarussian Ali Shabanau 16-5 in the 86kg final contest.

The Olympics gold medal winner defeated Lebanese Domenic Michael, Akhmed Adamovitch Magamaev from Bulgaria, Kazakhstan's Azamat Dauletbekov, Russian Ruslan Abdulaev and Slovakian Boris Makovec on his way to the final.

Also, Hadi took Iran's gold medal in the

tournament, defeating Ukraine's Oleksandr Khotšanivskiy 6-4 in the 125kg final match.

Hadi defeated American Michael Joseph Kosoy, Chinese Zhiwei Deng, Nicholas Edward Gwiazdoski from the USA and Hungarian Daniel Ligeti.

Also, Reza Yazdani claimed a bronze medal by beating Russian Igor Alekseevich Ovsiannikov 8-4 in 97kg bronze medal match.

The UWW Dan Kolov-Nikola Petrov tournament, which is organized by Bulgarian Wrestling Federation, is awarding UWW Ranking Series points which in turn will determine the top four seeds at the 2019 World Championships in Kazakhstan.



Mehdi Alinejad re-elected as Iran wushu president

SPORTS TEHRAN — Mehdi Alinejad will serve a further four-year term as President of Iran's Wushu Federation, following the elections which was held at the Iran's Academy Olympic on Sunday.

Under leadership of Alinejad, Iran won the 2018 Sanda World Cup for the first ever in Hangzhou, China in October. "First of all, I would like to extend a heartfelt thank

you to everyone who trusted in me in the elections," said Alinejad.

"All eyes on the future. We want to repeat our title at the upcoming World Cup which will be held in Shanghai, China. We know that the Chinese team will come to the competition to bring title back and we will also do our best to win that for the second time," he added.

Marco Octavio names Iran team for 2019 AFC Beach Soccer Championship



Cup in Paraguay.

The AFC Beach Soccer Championship Thailand 2019 will be played in Pattaya from March 9-17, 2019.

Squad:

Mohammad Ahmadzadeh, Moslem Mesigar, Peyman Hosseini, Amirhossein Akbari, Mohammad Mokhtari, Hamid Behzadpour, Mostafa Kiani, Mohammad Mporadi, Ali Mirshekاري, Saeid Piramoon, Mehdi Shirzohmohammadi and Mohammad Masoumizadeh

SPORTS TEHRAN — Iran national beach soccer team coach Marco Octavio has named his 12-man squad for the 2019 AFC Beach Soccer Championship on Sunday.

Team Melli have been drawn in Group D along with Oman and Iraq in the competition.

The second edition of the premier beach soccer championship in Asia will be an important competition as the top three teams will represent the Continent in the 2019 FIFA Beach Soccer World

Kuban Spring Women U19: Russia 1 – 0 Iran



SPORTS TEHRAN — Iran suffered a narrow 1-0 defeat to Russia at the 2019 Kuban Spring Women U19 Tournament on Sunday. Abdullina scored the only goal of the match just before the halftime at the Sputnik-Sport Stadium in Sochi, Russia. Iran started the competition with a 1-0 win over Belarus on Friday. Katayoun Khosrowyar's team will face Azerbaijan on Tuesday. The format for the tournament will be a single group of four teams, where

each participant will play all opponents.

Based on the results of three rounds, the champion and prize-winners of the "Kuban Spring-2019" will be determined.

Iran prepare for the AFC U19 Women's Championship Thailand 2019 Qualifiers Round 2, where they have been drawn in Group B along with hosts Vietnam, two-time champions Korea Republic and Lebanon.

The Round 2 Qualifiers will be played over three matchdays from April 26 to 30.

Matchday One: West Asia Preview



themselves embroiled in a battle to avoid relegation from the Saudi Pro League.

The Jeddah-based side play hosts to Qatar's Al Rayyan on Monday in what will be the second test for coach Jose Luis Sierra, having drawn 1-1 with city rivals Al Ahli on his return to the club he managed last season.

Al Rayyan had survived an early scare to defeat IR Iran's Saipa 3-1 in the play-off round to confirm an eighth appearance in the group stage. All previous seven attempts to reach the knockout stage ended in disappointment.

■ **PFC Lokomotiv (UZB) vs Al Wahda (UAE)**

Venue: Lokomotiv Stadium, Tashkent

Kick-off: March 4, 16:00 UTC+5

■ **Al Ittihad (KSA) vs Al Rayyan (QAT)**

Venue: King Abdullah Sport City, Jeddah

Kick-off: March 4, 20:35 UTC+3

■ **Group C**

Just like in Group B, this group brings a repeat of a Matchday One fixture from last season. Giants Al Ain and Al Hilal have been pitted in the same group again, but this time their first match-up will be in the UAE on Tuesday.

The match sees a return for coach Zoran Mamic to his old stomping ground, having swapped the Garden City for the Saudi capital in December, after he had helped Al Ain to the 2018 FIFA Club World Cup final.

Two 2018 quarter-finalists go face-to-face in the second

Tuesday encounter in Group C. Al Duhail had seen their run of nine consecutive wins ended by Persepolis, while Esteghlal were eliminated at the same stage by Al Sadd.

The Qatari champions have since strengthened their ranks with the likes of Medhi Benatia and Shoya Nakajima, while the Tehran giants snapped up striker Godwin Mensha from rivals Persepolis.

■ **Al Duhail (QAT) vs Esteghlal (IRN)**

Venue: Abdulla bin Khalifa Stadium, Doha

Kick-off: March 5, 18:15 UTC+3

■ **Al Ain (UAE) vs Al Hilal (KSA)**

Venue: Hazza bin Zayed Stadium, Al Ain

Kick-off: March 5, 19:20 UTC+4

■ **Group D**

Of the 16 West Asian sides participating in this season's AFC Champions League, it was Persepolis who went furthest last time around, losing the 2018 final 2-0 to Japan's Kashima Antlers.

Branko Ivankovic's men return to Azadi Stadium where the previous campaign ended in disappointment. They face Uzbekistan's Pakhtakor who had to overcome the reigning AFC Cup champions Air Force Club in the play-off round.

A repeat of last year's Round of 16 fixture sees Al Sadd travel to Jeddah to play Al Ahli. The Qatars had come away from King Abdullah Sport City with a 2-1 win which ultimately helped them seal a 4-3 aggregate result and advance to the quarter-finals.

Al Ahli, whose best Continental performance was reaching the final in 2012, return for the third time in four years, having finished second in the Saudi Pro League. Meanwhile, this will be Al Sadd's sixth consecutive Continental participation.

■ **Persepolis (IRN) vs Pakhtakor (UZB)**

Venue: Azadi Stadium, Tehran

Kick-off: March 5, 18:30 UTC+3:30

■ **Al Ahli (KSA) vs Al Sadd (QAT)**

Venue: King Abdullah Stadium, Jeddah

Kick-off: March 5, 20:15 UTC+3

(Source: the-afc)

Iran beaten by Australia at AFC U-16 Women's Championship 2019 qualifiers

Australia kicked off their bid to qualify for the Finals of the AFC U-16 Women's Championship 2019 with a 3-0 win over Islamic Republic of Iran in Group A while China PR sealed top spot in Group B after defeating Bangladesh 3-0 in Group B of the Qualifiers Round 2 on Sunday.

The match was held at the National Stadium in Vientiane, Laos.

The Iranian team will face Laos and Vietnam on Tuesday and Thursday in Group A respectively.

The 2019 AFC U-16 Women's Championship qualification is a women's under-16 football competition which decides the participating teams of the 2019 AFC U-16 Women's Championship.

A total of eight teams qualify to play in the final tournament held in Thailand, four of which are decided by qualification.

(Source: the-afc)

Ivorian Zie Diabate reaches agreement with Iran's Foolad

TASNIM — Iranian football club Foolad has reached an agreement with Ivorian defender Zie Diabate.

Diabate, 30, has already played in Romanian club Dinamo Bucuresti, French clubs Dijon, Nimes and Ajaccio and Belgian teams Standard Liege and Gent.

Diabate was a member of Ivory Coast U-17 and U-20 football teams.

Foolad have previously completed the signing of Brazilian striker Luciano Pereira Mendes, Cameroonian forward Raphael Messi Bouli and Japanese midfielder Takafumi Akahoshi in the current season.

The Ahvaz-based football team sit seventh in Iranian league with 25 points, 16 points adrift of leader Persepolis.

Iran Nat'l Olympic Committee chief elected as member of OCA executive board

IRNA — Members of Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) General Assembly have selected President of National Olympic Committee of Iran Reza Salehi Amiri as member of OCA council.

The OCA executive board will be active for four years.

Over the past 4 years, Kiumars Hashemi, former President of National Olympic Committee of Iran was the member of the board.

The Olympic Council of Asia is a governing body of sports in Asia, currently with 45 member National Olympic Committees.

The current president is Sheikh Fahad Al-Sabah.

Iranian chess player wins Arab tourney gold

IRNA — An Iranian teenager, who plays for an Iraqi team, won the gold medal of Arab clubs tournament in Tunisia.

Aryan Gholami, who plays for the Iraqi team al-Ittisalat, won the individual gold at the tournament. The Iraqi team ranked third in the tournament.

Gholami also scored 5.5 points out of 6 and promoted its rating by 8.

Twelve teams from Arab countries of Tunisia, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Algeria, Kuwait and Jordan participated in the tournament that ended on Saturday.

Special Asian Olympic Council Honor awarded to Iranian veteran sportsman

IRNA — The President of the Asian Olympic Council (OCA) awarded Special Honor of Competence to senior manager and veteran of Iran's sport Bahram Afsharzadeh in honor of many years of valuable and consistent strivings.



The thirty-eighth General Assembly of the Asian Olympic Council (OCA) opened Saturday evening with the speech of Ahmed Al-Fahad Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, chairman of the council, with the presence of members of the Executive Board of OCA and representatives of the Asian National Olympic Committees.

Afsharzadeh Five-time Secretary General of the National Olympic Committee of Iran, head of the former baseball, weightlifting and gymnastics federations of Iran, was also the 5-time chairman of the Committee on Information and Statistics of the Asian Olympic Council, and provided valuable services to Iran and Asia.

At the ceremony, Erick Thohir, chairman of the Asian Games 2018 Jakarta headquarters and Hammam former President of the National Olympic Committee of Lebanon, were also honored.



GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

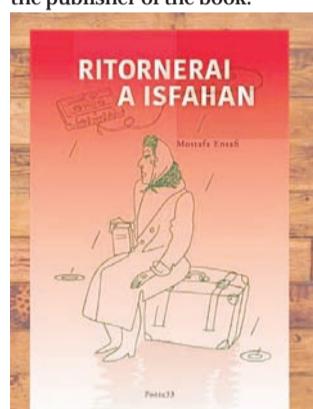
The weakest person is he who is unable to secure a friend for himself, and weaker than him is he who loses his friend.

Imam Ali (AS)

"You Will Return to Isfahan" published in Italian

CULTURE TEHRAN — An Italian translation of Iranian writer Mostafa Ensafi's novel "You Will Return to Isfahan" has recently been published in Italy.

Ponte33 Publications, a cultural association that publishes contemporary literature in the Persian language in Florence, is the publisher of the book.



Translated by Italian scholar Giacomo Longhi, the book centers on Eliza, a Polish girl who traces her grandmother back to Isfahan. Her grandma along with a number of Polish people and children took refuge in the central Iranian city of Isfahan during World War II.

Longhi has previously translated books from Persian contemporary literature. Among them are Mahsa Mohebali's "Don't Worry" and Mohammad Tolooi's short stories "Made in Denmark".

"You Will Return to Isfahan" will be unveiled on April 6 during the Incroci di civiltà, an international festival of literature in Venice. Ponte33 announced in a post published on its Instagram.

The original version of the book was published by Cheshmeh Publications in Tehran in 2016.

Niavaran center hosts retrospective of miniature painter Farrokh Shayesteh

ART TEHRAN — A retrospective displaying works by miniature painter Farrokh Shayesteh opened at the Niavaran Cultural Center in Tehran on Friday.

A collection of 200 mini-sized artworks composed of watercolors and digital art have been put on view at the exhibit.

Shayesteh, who is an associate professor at the Meio University in the Japanese city of Nago, has been working on the collection since 1979.

Inspired by ancient Persian miniature painting, he has used modern methods and techniques to link traditional painting with modern art.



A poster for a retrospective of miniature painter Farrokh Shayesteh at the Niavaran Cultural Center in Tehran.

The artist believes the small artworks make visitors get much closer to look at the works, helping the artworks and the visitors share the same private space.

The opening ceremony of the exhibition was attended by Deputy Culture Minister for Artistic Affairs Seyyed Mojtaba Hosseini and Visual Arts Office director Hadi Mozaffari.

The exhibit will be running until March 11.

"The Conductor" comes to Iranian bookstores

CULTURE TEHRAN — New Zealander writer Sarah Quigley's novel "The Conductor" has recently been published in Persian by Nimaj Publications in Tehran.

Translated by Fatemeh Tanasan, the book is about the composition of prominent Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich's Leningrad Symphony and its eventual performance in the besieged city in 1941, when Nazi troops march on Leningrad and surround it.

The book was the highest-selling adult fiction title in New Zealand in 2011 and was well received by book readers in other countries.

Iran's best cultural studies honored

1 → "A Tetragonal Pattern for the Assessment of Humanities" by Seyyed Amin Qanei and "Conceptual and Local Metaphors in the Quran" by Hojjatoleslam Alireza Qaeminia are among the books honored at the ceremony.

Morteza Farhadi, a professor at Allameh Tabatabai University, received an award for "Kamarenameh", a micro anthropological study on the town of Kamareh in Central Province.

Abdolhamid Noqrekar from the Iran University of Science and Technology was also honored for his book "A Clarification on Iranian-Islamic Architecture and Urban Planning".

Also among the honorees are "Cultural Policies in Iranian State Universities" by Fatemeh Javaheri of Kharazmi University and "An Assessment of Historical Sources for the Shahnameh during the Reign of King Anushirwan" by Farzin Ghafuri, a member of the Academy of Persian Language and Literature.

"The History and Development of Book Publication in Iran" by Abdolhossein Azarang from the Center for the Great Islamic Encyclopedia won an award.

In addition, "At Brother's Home: Afghan Refugees in Iran" by Arash Nasr Esfahani and "The Cultural Model of Marriage and Childbearing among Persian-speaking Women" by Leila Ardebili won honorable mentions.



Scholar Abdolhossein Azarang (R) shakes hands with Tehran City Council member Ahmad Masjed-Jamei after accepting his award from Culture Minister Seyyed Abbas Salehi (2nd L) for his book "The History and Development of Book Publication in Iran" during the 15th Festival of Cultural Research of the Year in Tehran on March 3, 2019. (Mehr/Majid Haqdoost)

Countries of origin incur foreign troupes' expenses to visit Tehran theater festival



A poster for the 22nd Iran International University Theater Festival.

ART TEHRAN — The 22nd Iran International University Theater Festival has announced that universities in the countries of origin must cover the travel expenses of foreign troupes planning to participate in the event as the organizers could not pay for their travel due to the adverse economic problems facing the country.

"Due to current financial problems in the country, we can't pay for the costs and awards in the international section," the director of the festival, Amin Mokhtari, said in a press conference on Sunday.

A number of Iranian and foreign troupes are scheduled to go on stage during the festival.

As part of the festival's program, workshops by international theater scholars Dominique DuPont and Pinar Alev are currently underway in the Iranian cities of Kashan and Kerman.

Iranian scholars Farhad Mohandespur and Abbas Jamali will also hold workshops on the sidelines of the festival.

The 22nd Iran International University Theater Festival will take place in Tehran from April 25 to May 4.

"Last Fiction", "Captain Morten" competing in Tehran animation festival



A scene from "Captain Morten and the Spider Queen" by Estonian director Kaspar Jancis.

ART TEHRAN — "The Last Fiction" by Iranian director Ashkan Rahgozar and "Captain Morten and the Spider Queen" by Estonian director Kaspar Jancis are the two sole feature-length movies competing in the 11th Tehran International Animation Festival, the organizers have announced.

"The Last Fiction" is based on a story from the Shahnameh, the epic masterpiece of the Persian poet Ferdowsi. It is about Zahak's treacherous rise to the throne in Jamshid in Persia. The young and naive hero Afaridoun wants to save the kingdom and its people from darkness. But he must first conquer

his own demons in this portrayal of Persian mythology that reveals human nature.

"Captain Morten and the Spider Queen" is about Morten, a dreamy 10-year-old boy who is magically shrunk down to the size of an insect and must learn to sail his toy boat across familiar but now dangerous surroundings.

The 11th Tehran International Animation Festival opened at the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) on Sunday.

Acclaimed animated movies from across the world are competing in the festival, which will continue until March 7.

AI portrait joins Warhol, Basquiat and Freud at London auction

LONDON (Reuters) — A computer-generated portrait of a face that will change and mutate forever is among the works that went on display in London on Friday ahead of a major art auction next week.

While paintings by Lucian Freud, Andy Warhol, Jean Michel Basquiat and Roy Lichtenstein are likely to fetch some of the

highest prices, "Memories of Passersby" by German computer programmer Mario Klingemann is an eye-catcher.

"The first self-contained, generative work of AI (artificial intelligence) ever to appear on the market" produces a "never-ending real time stream of original art", said auction house Sotheby's.

Consisting of two screens wired to a computer housed in a retro-looking wooden case, the artwork generates a male-looking face on one side and a female-looking one on the other — images in the style of the Old Masters, but constantly and seamlessly changing.

"Memories of Passersby" is a machine that I created that will keep on generating

portraits of non-existing people forever," Klingemann, who specializes in using computer code to create art, said.

It has an estimated price tag of 30,000-40,000 pounds — a snip compared with some of the more traditional works among the 68 lots on offer at Sotheby's Contemporary Art Auctions.

"To Kill a Mockingbird" compromise offered to small theaters

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The dozens of community and nonprofit theaters across the U.S. forced to abandon productions of "To Kill a Mockingbird" under legal threat were offered an olive branch in the form of Aaron Sorkin's script for the Broadway version.

Scott Rudin, producer of the New York adaptation of Harper Lee's novel, had cited an agreement with Lee's estate in demanding that what he called improperly licensed productions be shut down. Following a backlash in recent days, Rudin said the theater companies could perform the Sorkin play as long as they use his adaptation.

The offer is intended to "ameliorate the hurt caused here," Rudin said in a statement provided Saturday to The Associated Press. "For these theaters, this is the version that can be offered to them, in concert with our agreement with Harper Lee. We hope they will choose to avail themselves of the opportunity."

Maybe, maybe not, said the artistic executive director of one of the affected theaters.

"We are interested in the offer and intrigued," said Seth Miller of the Grand Theatre in Salt Lake City. But Rudin has yet to respond to questions that would need to be answered first, including how long the offer is good for, Miller said Saturday.

REVIEW: NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW MOTION PICTURES AWARDS GALA IN NEW YORK ON JAN. 11, 2011

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