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Rouhani makes high-profile official visit to Iraq

‘One Belt One Road a proper ground for Iran-China all-out relations’

TEHRAN — Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejpasand stressed that One Belt One Road Initiative lays the ground for the expansion of all-out relations between Iran and China.

The minister made the remarks in a conference on One Belt One Road Initiative, which was held at the place of Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Ministry on Monday, attended by a number of Iranian officials and also Chinese Am-

bassador to Iran Pang Sen, Shada news agency reported.

While stressing the strong and strategic ties between Iran and China, Dejpasand also put emphasis on the strong will of the Iranian government for the expansion of relations with China.

The two countries have previously agreed to develop a joint plan to work on China's One Belt One Road Initiative. **→4**

Raeisi vows no tolerance for breach of law

TEHRAN — Hojjatolislam Ebrahim Raeisi, Iran's new judiciary chief, said on Monday that no one at any position can violate law.

During a speech at his inauguration ceremony, Raeisi said that the issue of respecting law should be taken seriously.

Raeisi said that he will make any efforts to uphold the people's rights.

He attached great importance to administer justice at the “second phase of the revolution”.

The second phase of the revolution is a reference to a statement issued by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution after people massively participated in the rallies marking the 40 anniversary of the Islamic Revolution on February 11. **→2**

Fresh U.S.-led air raids kill dozens of civilians in Syria

Dozens of civilians, including women and children, have been killed after the U.S.-led coalition purportedly fighting the terrorist Takfiri Daesh group carried out a series of aerial assaults in Syria's troubled eastern province of Dayr al-Zawr.

Local sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Syria's official news

agency SANA that 50 people were killed and scores of others injured on Monday when U.S.-led warplanes targeted families fleeing the last vestiges of Daesh's territorial rule in the besieged village of Baghouz near the Iraqi border.

The sources added that the death toll was expected to rise as some of the wounded were in critical condition. **→13**



PERSPECTIVE

Heshmatollah Rahnama
Latin American expert

Human rights and democracy in U.S. is questionable

Ever since the rise of the Islamic Republic four decades ago, Iran has been under severe United States media attack, sanctions and threats.

Philp Alston, the UN's special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights has concluded that 40 million people in the U.S. live in poverty in 2018 and over 5 million lived in “extreme” or “absolute” poverty.

Among the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, the U.S. has the highest rate of youth poverty and infant mortality, no wonder, Professor Alston classifies the American society as the most unequal society in the developed states. According to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), for the majority of citizens, 80 percent, the U.S. is comparable to the Third World countries.

To reach this conclusion, economists utilized Arthur Lewis dual-sector model, the winner of the 1979 the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences. The model describes the U.S. as followings: the model explains the growth of a developing economy in terms of a labour transition between two sectors, the capitalist sector and the subsistence sector so as to analyze the different economy of each (dual economy) and its interconnections. The capital sector expands by absorbing unlimited labour supply in the subsistence sector. The marked feature of the capitalist sector is that this unlimited labour supply makes the wage in this sector constant, and the accumulation of capital is attained by the capitalists' reinvesting all the excess of profits over wages. This capital accumulation by capitalists is the key to development in developing countries. The Lewis model also theoretically explains the existence of in equality between the rich and the poor (exploited worker and peasants); and economic growth in less developed countries. subsistence sector has no hand in politics and they cannot counter the small yet influential capitalist sector. The high number of prisoners, the wealthy public policy aimed at reducing wages, forms a society in which social and economic movements are low. **→7**

What is not said about BREXIT!

By Hanif Ghaffari

TEHRAN — The apparent confrontation between the government and the British Parliament over how to leave the EU continues. The BBC has dedicated one of its most recent reports to the latest developments in the subject. The BBC writes in this regard:

The EU has said it is now up to MPs to decide the next steps for Brexit and it remains “com-

mitted” to agreeing a deal in time for the UK to leave this month.

Officials said they had offered fresh assurances on the issue of the Irish backstop ahead of Tuesday's second vote by MPs on Theresa May's deal. It was “now for the Commons to take an important set of decisions”, they said. Labour and Tory MPs have told the PM she must honour

her commitment to put her deal to the vote again on Tuesday.

Amid speculation the vote could be postponed or downgraded, No 10 confirmed it remained the plan to go ahead with another “meaningful vote”. Downing Street said the PM's focus was “getting on with the work required to allow MPs to support the deal and to bring this stage of the process to an end”. **→7**

Battle lines drawn for India elections; Modi and Gandhi main challengers

By Syed Zafar Mehdi

TEHRAN — Battle lines are drawn and countdown has virtually begun for the biggest electoral showdown on the earth — the elections for India's parliament — scheduled in April.

All major political parties in India have kicked off their campaign trial ahead of elections, with Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) seeking to retain power and Congress looking to stage a strong comeback.

On Sunday, India's election commission announced dates for the election that will see almost

900 million voters exercise their franchise at more than a million polling booths, which happens to the world's largest democratic exercise.

The commission announced that the election will be held in seven phases on April 11, 18, 23, 29 and May 6, 12 and 19. The counting of votes will be held on May 23, followed by announcement of results.

Assembly elections will also be held simultaneously to four states — Andhra Pradesh, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh and Odisha. Jammu and Kashmir, the restive northern state of India, where a coalition government collapsed in June

2018, will not have assembly election, but will go for parliament poll.

The commission has faced heat from opposition parties for using electronic voting machines (EVMs), which many believe is prone to poll fraud and irregularities.

Too allay the fears of voters and observers, the commission said the voter-verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT) system will be used in all polling stations. It is a device attached to an EVM and prints a small paper slip carrying the symbol, name and serial number of the candidate the voter votes for. **→6**

After Ethiopia crash horror, some nations ground Boeing 737 MAX 8s

China and Indonesia grounded their fleets of Boeing's 737 MAX 8 aircraft on Monday as witnesses recalled the terrifying spectacle of smoke and debris trailing from an Ethiopian Airlines plane before it crashed killing 157 people.

The disaster came five months after a jet of the same model came down in Indonesia, killing 189 people, and prompted a global aviation safety scare.

The Ethiopian Airlines 737 Max 8 plunged into a field minutes after take-off from Addis Ababa for Nairobi on Sunday.

The victims came from more than 30 nations and included 22 United Nations' staff.

“The plane was very close to the ground and it made a turn. We looked and saw papers falling off the plane,” Malka Galato, the farmer whose

land the plane crashed on, told Reuters.

“Cows that were grazing in the fields ran in panic ... There was smoke and sparks coming from the back of the plane.”

The plane tried to climb but failed then swerved sharply trailing white smoke and objects including clothes before crashing, said farmer Tamirat Abera, who was walking nearby. **→3**



© Tehran Times/ Asghar Khamseh

Tehran museum features decades of archaeological discoveries

Photo depicts centuries-old metal figurines in an exhibition at the National Museum of Iran in downtown Tehran, March 11, 2019.

Running through April 9, the exhibit features selects of objects unearthed in all Iranian provinces over the four past decades.

According to Britannica Encyclopedia, the enigmatic evidence of human presence on the Iranian plateau is as early as Lower Paleolithic times.



REPORT

Syed Zafar Mehdi

Journalist
from New Delhi

Iran wants Pakistan to walk the talk on terror

Imran Khan, the populist premier of Pakistan, created flutter when he assumed power following his party's landslide victory in general election late last year.

A cricketer-turned-politician, with massive following among the country's burgeoning young population, Khan was seen as a perfect candidate to replace the corrupt and inefficient old warhorse — Nawaz Sharif.

Among the biggest and immediate challenges for Khan were to revive the flailing economy and dismantle the terror infrastructure. However, he seems to be struggling in both the tasks.

The past few weeks have been particularly testing for the first-time premier, especially after two back-to-back terror attacks in Iran's southeastern Sistan-Baluchistan province and India-controlled Kashmir.

The two attacks last month, choreographed in a similar fashion, were carried out by two militant groups with identical names, both having sanctuaries in Pakistan.

While India, the arch-rival of Pakistan, carried out air raids inside Pakistan to 'avenge' the killing of its 44 paramilitary police personnel in Kashmir by Jaish e Mohammad (JeM), Iran took the diplomatic route, urging Islamabad to act tough against Jaish e Adl (JeA) based in Pakistan's restive Baluchistan region.

Following the attack, many top military generals in Iran, including IRGC Quds force chief General Qassem Soleimani, lashed out at Pakistan's military leadership, demanding prompt action.

Pakistan, rejecting any involvement in the attack, immediately offered cooperation to Iran. Imran Khan this week sent a close aide to Tehran with letters for President Rouhani and the Supreme Leader.

But, as it appears, there has so far been no 'decisive' action against the militant group that has been responsible for a series of attacks against members of Iran's military forces over the past few years.

On Saturday, President Rouhani telephoned Prime Minister Khan and reminded him of his commitment to act against the terror group. The reminder was followed by a gentle warning. **→6**

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



General Soleimani receives Iran's highest Medal of Honor

POLITICS **TEHRAN** – IRGC Quds Force Commander Major General Qassem Soleimani has received Iran's highest Medal of Honor, the Order of Zolfagar, from Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, making him the first Iranian commander to receive the medal after the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

Leader's representative in the IRGC Quds Force Hoja-toleslam Ali Shirazi announced the news and congratulated General Soleimani, the Iranian nation and the personnel of the IRGC Quds Force for the achievement, Mehr reported on Monday.

The top general is widely known as one of the most influential military commanders in the world.



Tehran: Yemenis victim of Western arms sales to aggressors

POLITICS **TEHRAN** – Tehran has denounced the Saudi-led coalition's "brutal" aggression against Yemen, saying the Yemeni people are the everyday victims of weapons granted and sold to the aggressors by some Western countries.

"When they (Yemenis) are alive, their innocent voice is not heard, but with their innocent deaths they sign the bill of shame of those false human rights advocates," Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said, Mehr reported on Monday.

He further slammed the self-proclaimed human rights advocates for remaining silent in the face of daily massacre of the Yemeni women and children.

"They are also complicit in these crimes because of selling arms to the aggressors," he added.



Rouhani likely to visit Syria soon: envoy

POLITICS **TEHRAN** – Iranian Ambassador to Syria Javad Torkabadi has said President Hassan Rouhani is likely to make an official visit to Damascus in the near future to hold talks with senior Syrian officials.

Torkabadi said Iranian and Syrian leaders are in constant contact with each other, Tasnim reported on Monday, citing Lebanon's Arabic-language al-Ahed news.

"I believe that Bashar al-Assad's recent trip to Iran has been very successful, and in fact, we expect these trips and relations to continue," he said.

Assad recently made an unannounced visit to Iran and met with Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and other senior officials.



Rouhani's Iraq trip shows Baghdad's defiance of U.S.

POLITICS **TEHRAN** – President Hassan Rouhani's visit to Iraq was a slap in the face of Washington which was trying to pressure the Arab country to join the U.S. unilateral sanctions against Tehran, former Iranian Ambassador to Baghdad Hassan Kazemi Qomi said on Monday.

"Though the Americans pressured Baghdad to accompany them in the oppressive sanctions against people of Iran, the Iraqi government and parliament resisted against the illegal demand of the U.S.," Fars quoted Kazemi Qomi as saying.

"The visit is being made right at the time when we are witnessing great developments in the region," he remarked.



'IRGC tasked with fighting goods smuggling'

POLITICS **TEHRAN** – A member of the Majlis Agriculture Committee says the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) has been tasked with fighting smuggling of goods in the light of shortcomings in dealing with the issue, ISNA reported on Monday.

"One of the reasons behind increase in meat prices is the smuggling of livestock," Ali-Mohammad Shaeri said, adding, "In such circumstances and because of the weak management in controlling smuggling, the management of combating smuggling has been handed to the Guards."

Shaeri also expressed the hope that the IRGC would be able to immediately resolve the issue, ahead of the new Iranian year, which starts on March 21.



MPs submit motion to form North Isfahan Province

POLITICS **TEHRAN** – In an open session of the parliament on Monday, the presiding board acknowledged receipt of a motion which proposes to form North Isfahan Province.

According to the YJC, the motion has been signed by 33 lawmakers, who cited the vastness of Isfahan Province and the high number of counties as reasons behind the motion.

The country's big provinces are faced with management inefficiencies because of their vast area and the high number of cities within them, the lawmaker said.

They added that such issues lead to public discontent and decreased levels of social welfare.

In bright daylight



Iraqi PM Adil Abdul-Mahdi (R) talking to President Rouhani

about visiting Iraq, saying it was "pretty sad" that he needed such secrecy to see U.S. troops.

"Pretty sad when you spend \$7 trillion in the Middle East, and going in has to be under this massive cover with planes all over and all of the greatest equipment in the world, and you do everything to get in safely," he said.

The visit sparked a wave of condemnations from Iraqi officials, with some of them demanding the expulsion of American forces.

Rouhani said, "Since 2003, the Americans have been claiming that they have salvaged Iraq and Afghanistan; but if this claim is true, then why don't you openly make an official trip to see how the Iraqis would welcome you on the streets of Baghdad and Basra?"

"I hope these are lessens to be taken by the White House for the year 2019, and to stop interfering with the lives of nations."

Rouhani's visit is considered a milestone in ties between Iran and Iraq at the current

juncture in history by many commentators. It won great attention by international media outlets.

Experts have said efforts by the Trump administration to reduce ties between Tehran and Baghdad is futile because Iran and Iraq are closely interlinked in terms of economy, religion, and culture.

Iran was the first country which recognized the Iraqi government after the downfall of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003.

According to Iran's Ambassador to Baghdad Iraj Masjedi, Iran and Iraq are eying a \$20-billion trade.

Later the day, Rouhani met Prime Minister Abdul-Mahdi before accompanying delegations discussed and signed agreement on a wide range of issues, including the Khorramshahr-Basra railway project, establishment of industrial zones, customs relations, cooperation in health sector, and the enactment of 1975

Rouhani's trip to Iraq garners international media attention

President Hassan Rouhani's 3-day trip to Iraq, which began on Monday, has drawn international media attention, with many outlets describing it an act of defiance of U.S. sanctions.

According to Reuters, Rouhani's visit signaled to Washington and its Persian Gulf Arab allies that, in the face of U.S. sanctions reimposed after the U.S. pullout from the Iran nuclear deal, Tehran still plays a dominant role in the region.

It further said the trip is meant expand trade ties to help offset renewed U.S. sanctions.

"Iraq is another channel for Iran to bypass America's unjust sanctions imposed on Iran. This trip will provide opportunities for Iran's economy," a senior Iranian official, who is

accompanying Rouhani, told Reuters.

Al Jazeera reported that the visit is a strong message to the U.S. and its regional allies that Iran still enjoys support in Iraq, a key arena for rising tension between Washington and Tehran.

During the three-day visit, a series of agreements will be signed in fields such as energy, transport, agriculture, industry and

health.

Following the defeat of ISIL (Daesh) in Iraq, Iran is trying to position itself to gain a prime role in rebuilding the war-ravaged country, France 24 reported.

The New York Times pointed to Iraq's internal affairs, saying the trip comes while Iran was the real winner of last year's parliamentary elections in Iraq.

"Iran is a small body with a big brain, and the United States is a big body with a small brain," The New York Times quotes former Iraqi Parliament speaker Mahmoud al-Mashhadani as saying.

Iran strongly resisting against sanctions: MP

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee Chairman Hesmatollah Falahatpisheh said on Monday that Iran is strongly standing against sanctions imposed by the Donald Trump administration.

During a meeting with Veselin Naydenov Mareshki, the vice chairman of the National Assembly of Bulgaria, Falahatpisheh said imposing sanctions is a "defeated policy".

He also said that Iran has suffered more from U.S. unilateralism than the European countries.

The senior lawmaker also praised efforts by Bulgaria to preserve the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Falahatpisheh went on to say that the two countries share close views on international issues and called for expansion of relations and cooperation.

President Trump unilaterally pulled Washington out of the nuclear deal in May 2018 and ordered reimposition of sanctions against Iran. This happened despite the fact that the United Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency has repeatedly



confirmed that Iran is fully abiding by the terms of the nuclear agreement. U.S. intelligence agencies have also endorsed Iran's compliance to the deal.

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

European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas and British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt has said INSTEX will support legitimate European trade with Iran.

Russia and China have also remained publicly committed to the existing accord.

Raeisi vows no tolerance for breach of law

1 → In his statement, the Leader asked the youth to take "the second great step" for the progress of the revolution", insisted on the need to administer "justice and fight against corruption", and attached an emphasis on science and research, economy, independence, freedom, national dignity, and foreign relations.

Uphold freedom and civil rights Elsewhere in his inauguration ceremony, Raeisi said that it is essential to protect the people's freedom and civil rights.

"We will support any brave manager who does not recognize any impediment especially under current situation in which cruel sanctions have been imposed on the country. We will support any investment and entrepreneur," the top judge promised.

"Many efforts have been made; however, the people still have concerns about administration of justice and their key demand is to see justice at various levels more than ever. Therefore, the legal transformation needs to be based on the second phase. The government and Majlis (parliament) should cooperate in legal transformation," he said.

In a decree issued on Thursday, Leader

Algiers Agreement.

The 1975 Algiers Agreement (commonly known as the Algiers Accord, sometimes as the Algiers Declaration) was an agreement between Iran and Iraq to settle their border disputes and conflicts (such as the Arvand Rud), and it served as basis for the bilateral treaties signed on 13 June and 26 December 1975.

The two countries signed an agreement to bilaterally remove visa fees starting April.

Salih: Iraq will seek to remove obstacles in ties with Iran

Speaking during a joint press conference with Rouhani in Baghdad on Monday, Salih said Baghdad will work towards removing obstacles to boost cooperation with Iran.

"This gives me a precious opportunity to thank our dear guest for Iran's role and help in Iraq's great victory over Daesh (ISIS)," the Iraqi president noted.

"Shared security is one of the areas where greater cooperation between Tehran and Baghdad is needed, as well as cooperation with all regional countries to improve peace and security and ensure common interests in the face of deviant thoughts and terrorist groups."

Iran rushed to the help of Iraq when Daesh made rapid and sudden attacks on Iraq in June 2014 after capturing large swathes of territory in Syria.

Rouhani: Iraq's security is important to Iran

For his part, Rouhani said, "I had very positive and constructive talks with Iraq's president and did not see any point of disagreement in the issues discussed."

"Improving ties between the two countries is in the interest of Tehran and Baghdad and we will not let the development trend be stalled."

He added that Iran attaches great significance to security and democracy in Iraq because "stability in Iraq and the improvement of security in this country will benefit regional peace and stability."

"Iran is a small body with a big brain, and the United States is a big body with a small brain," The Times quoted Mahmoud al-Mashhadani, a Sunni Muslim who was a former speaker of the Iraqi Parliament, as saying.

According to the Times of Israel, Iran sees Iraq as a possible route to bypass U.S. sanctions.

"Last year, Iran's exports to Iraq amounted to nearly \$9 billion. Tehran hopes to increase the roughly \$13 billion volume in trade between the two neighboring countries to \$20 billion. Also, some 5 million religious tourists bring in nearly \$5 billion a year as Iraqis and Iranians visit Shiite holy sites in the two countries," it added.

of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei officially appointed Hojatolislam Raeisi as the new head of the Judiciary, replacing Ayatollah Sadeq Amoli Larijani who served in the post for more than nine years.

The Leader cited knowledge, experience, and competence displayed by Raeisi at various junctures and his long-term service in the Judiciary as the basis of his decision.

"The onset of the fifth decade of the revolution and the completion of forty years after the formation of the Judiciary based on Fiqh and Islamic laws necessitates that relying on the experiences, achievements and guidelines that have been gained during this period of time, a change in accordance with the needs, advancements, and shortcomings be applied within the Judicial Branch, so that with fresh energy and increased motivation as well as wisdom-based discipline and management, the department of Justice vigorously starts a new era, which deservedly fits the second phase of the Revolution," the Leader said in his decree, according to the khamenei.ir

Ayatollah Khamenei said it is essential that the Judiciary fight "corruption".

U.S. afraid of close Iran-Iraq ties: analyst

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Seyyed Reza Ghazvini Ghorabi, an analyst, has said that the U.S. seeks to reduce interaction between Iran and Iraq, and that Washington is afraid of the close ties between Tehran and Baghdad.

The Iraqi officials have clearly said that they are against the U.S. sanctions on Iran and do not let Washington's animosity affect ties with Iran, IRNA quoted him as saying in an interview published on Monday.

He said that Iran-Iraq interaction increased to eight billion dollars in 2018 which indicates increase despite all the pressures by the Trump administration.

"Iran and Iraq have had great relations over the past 15 years. Even certain legal differences which have roots in the past have not cast shadow on the good relations," he said.

He noted that President Hassan Rouhani's visit to Iraq will pave the grounds for ending the legal differences.

Rouhani arrived in Iraq on Monday on a three-day visit. Elsewhere, Ghazvini Ghorabi said that the U.S. has adopted the policy of confronting the Popular Mobilization Forces in Iraq to counter Iran.

He also said that the U.S. seeks to cause chaos in Iraq in order to remain in the country.

"A stable Iraq is not acceptable for certain international powers," he added.

Iran-Iraq ties role model for regional co-op: diplomat

Hassan Rouhani's three-day visit to Iraq will be a turning point in relations.

Rouhani arrived in Iraq on Monday.

Masjedi said that the U.S. withdrew Washington from the 2015 nuclear deal - the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action - and put pressure on other countries, including Iraq,

to reduce economic interaction with Iran.

However, he said that the Iraqi officials have repeatedly refused to comply with the U.S.

The ambassador said Rouhani's visit to Iraq at the current situation in which Iran has come under harsh sanctions by the United

States is highly important.

President Trump unilaterally pulled Washington out of the nuclear deal in May 2018 and illegally ordered reimposition of sanctions against Iran.

Iraq is one of the major economic partners of Iran.

Saudi warplanes kill nearly two dozen women in Yemen

UNICEF concerned about Yemeni children's education

Nearly two dozen women and a child have been killed in the latest round of Saudi airstrikes in Yemen as the Riyadh regime presses ahead with its atrocious campaign against the impoverished southern neighbor.

Local sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Saudi warplanes bombarded residential buildings in Talan village of Kushar district in Yemen's northwestern province of Hajjah on Sunday afternoon, leaving 20 women and a child dead, Arabic-language al-Masirah television network reported.

The sources added that the attacks leveled five houses to the ground. Locals were looking for possible survivors under the rubble.

Saudi warplanes also reportedly targeted ambulances, preventing doctors and paramedics from reaching the area.

The leader of Yemen's Houthi Ansarullah movement recently said Yemeni women and children are being brutally killed by U.S. and Western-made munitions used in the campaign.

Delivering a televised speech broadcast live from the Yemeni capital, Sana'a, on February 25, Abdul-Malik al-Houthi said, "The main goal of the enemies of Islam from the ongoing aggression against Yemen is to get full control over us. However, the most important outcome of Islam ... is to protect us against slavery and exploitation."

"The enemy has focused its primary attention on women as they hold an important position both in the family and the society. Islam brought independence to us, and freed us from the grips of reliance and dependence."

Separately, scores of Saudi-sponsored militiamen loyal to Yemen's former President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi were killed and injured when a powerful bomb explosion struck them as they sought to infiltrate an area in Nihm district of Yemen's central-west province of Sana'a.

Yemeni soldiers and allied fighters from Popular Committees also pounded the posi-



tions of Riyadh's mercenaries in Jaribat area of the country's central province of Bayda.

Elsewhere in Ajasher desert area of Saudi Arabia's southern region of Najran, Saudi-paid militiamen suffered losses when Yemeni troops and their allies launched a major offensive there.

Saudi Arabia and a number of its regional allies launched the devastating campaign against Yemen in March 2015, with the goal of bringing the government of Hadi back to power and crushing Ansarullah.

According to a report by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), a nonprofit conflict-research organization, the Saudi-led war has so far claimed the lives of around 56,000 Yemenis.

The war has also taken a heavy toll on the country's infrastructure, destroying hospitals, schools, and factories. The UN has already said that a record 22.2 million Yemenis are in dire need of food, including 8.4 million threatened by severe hunger. According to the world body, Yemen is suffering from the most severe famine in more than 100 years.

■ Saudi war damages education sector in Yemen: UNICEF

The United Nations children's agency estimates that out of seven million school-aged children in Yemen over two million are not being educated amid a Saudi-led coalition's war against the impoverished Arab state.

"The situation of Yemen's education sector is daunting. Out of 7 million school-aged children, over 2 million children are already out of school," a regional director of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund said on Sunday.

"School infrastructure is badly damaged and learning materials are in short supply. One in five schools in Yemen can no longer be used because they are damaged or being used in the fighting or to shelter displaced families," said Geert Cappelaere, UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

Apart from education, the Saudi aggression has killed or endangered the lives of Yemeni children since 2015.

Last month, United Nations Secretary-Gen-

eral Antonio Guterres said tens of thousands of children under the age of five have died of starvation in Yemen ever since Saudi Arabia and a number of its allies launched their atrocious military aggression against the impoverished country nearly four years ago.

"Children did not start the war in Yemen, but they are paying the highest price. Some 360,000 children are suffering from severe acute malnutrition, fighting for their lives every day. And one credible report put the number of children under 5 who have died of starvation at more than 80,000," Guterres told a donor conference in the Swiss city of Geneva on Feb. 26.

The UN chief warned of the worsening health and humanitarian situation in Yemen, saying, "Over half of all health facilities are out of action, and nearly 20 million people lack access to adequate health care."

"In 2017, the worst cholera epidemic in history reached unprecedented levels as water supplies and sanitation and public health services collapsed... Almost 18 million Yemenis still do not have adequate access to safe drinking water or sanitation," Guterres noted.

In the latest Saudi attack on Yemeni civilians, nearly two dozen women and a child were killed on Sunday, when Saudi warplanes bombarded residential buildings in Talan village of Kushar district in Yemen's northwestern province of Hajjah.

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(Source: agencies)

UN envoy fears 'new crisis' for Rohingya if moved to Bangladesh island



A United Nations human rights investigator on Myanmar voiced deep concern on Monday over Bangladesh's plan to relocate 23,000 Rohingya refugees in April to a remote island, saying it may not be habitable and could create a potential "new crisis".

Bangladesh says moving refugees to Bhasan Char - whose name means "floating island" - will ease chronic overcrowding in its camps at Cox's Bazar, which hold some 730,000 Rohingya. The UN says the Muslim minority fled mass killings and rapes committed during an army crackdown in Rakhine state since August 2017.

Some humanitarian groups have criticized the relocation plan, saying the island in the Bay of Bengal is vulnerable to frequent cyclones.

"There are a number of things that remain unknown to me even following my visit, chief among them being whether the island is truly habitable," said Yanghee Lee, UN special rapporteur on Myanmar, who visited the island in January.

"Ill-planned relocation, and relocations without the consent of the refugees concerned, have the potential to create a new crisis," she told the UN Human Rights Council.

Shah Kamal, secretary of Bangladesh's Disaster Management Ministry, said the government was in talks with UN agencies on the issue.

"(The agencies) have agreed. Now we're finalizing with them how to move them (the refugees) and all other factors. Everything is ready... Housing, power, healthcare, communication, storm surge embankment, cyclone shelter centers and all other facilities," he told Reuters in Dhaka.

"There is absolutely no reason to be concerned about floods because we have built an embankment. And no one will be moved there against their will."

■ "Systematic genocide"

Lee, who is banned by Myanmar's government from visiting, told the Geneva forum that up to 10,000 civilians were reported to have fled their homes in Myanmar's Rakhine state since November due to violence and a lack of humanitarian aid.

"For decades we faced a systematic genocide in Myanmar. They took our citizenship, our land, they destroyed our mosques," Mohibullah, a Rohingya refugee from the camps who is documenting name-by-name those killed in Myanmar, told the Council.

"Over 120,000 Rohingya still live in concentration camps in Myanmar, others outside live in fear of violence," he said. "We want to go home to Myanmar, with our rights, our citizenship, and international security on the ground."

A UN fact-finding mission last year said Myanmar's 2017 military campaign that pushed out the Rohingya was orchestrated with "genocidal intent". Myanmar denies allegations of mass killings and rape and says its offensive was a legitimate response to an insurgent threat.

Lee urged the UN Security Council to refer alleged atrocities in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and encouraged Yangon to accept its jurisdiction.

But Myanmar's ambassador, Kyaw Moe Tun said the Hague-based court had "no jurisdiction over Myanmar whatsoever".

"Myanmar is fully committed to ensuring accountability where there is credible evidence of human rights violations committed in Rakhine State," he said.

The most pressing task is to focus on a speedy start to repatriating the refugees, he said, without using the word 'Rohingya' - who are mostly stateless in Myanmar.

(Source: Reuters)

After Ethiopia crash horror, some nations ground Boeing 737 MAX 8s

1 → Boeing's share price plunged at the prospect that two such crashes in such a short time could reveal flaws in its new plane. The company has already accepted orders for more than 5,000 of the new, high fuel economy planes, which entered service less than two years ago and are set to be the workhorses for airlines around the globe for decades.

■ International alert

The 737 line, which has flown for more than 50 years, is the world's best selling modern passenger aircraft and viewed as one of the industry's most reliable.

The new MAX 8 variant, with bigger engines designed to use less fuel, entered service in 2017. By the end of January this year, Boeing had delivered 350 of the new jets to customers, with another 4,661 on order.

Its stock slid 11 percent in early trading on Monday.

The move, if maintained through normal trading hours, would be the biggest fall in Boeing's stock in nearly two decades, halting a surge that has seen it triple in value in just over three years to a record high of \$446 last week.

Various worried nations took swift action.

Ethiopian Airlines, which has four other 737 MAX 8 jets, said it was grounding them as a precaution.

China ordered its airlines to suspend their 737 MAX 8 jets by 6 p.m.

Noting that the accidents involving newly delivered planes had both taken place shortly after take-off, the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) said it would notify airlines when they could resume flying the jets, after contacting Boeing and the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

Indonesia, where a Lion Air 737 Max 8 went down in October, also said it would temporarily ground the model for inspection.

Cayman Airways grounded both of its new 737 MAX 8 jets temporarily too, while India announced a safety review and new instructions later on Monday or Tuesday for local carriers.

■ Mourning

At the crash site, men in Red Cross jackets and face masks picked through a large crater, bagging body parts and items like clothing, boarding passes, serviettes and other personal effects. The dead included aid workers, doctors, professors of literature and botany, a law student, a newly-wed woman, a father soon expecting a child, and a couple who recently had a baby.

In Nairobi, a major hub for aid workers and diplomats in Africa, a summit opened with a moment of silence and tears for the U.N. members killed.

"It is one of the biggest catastrophes we have had in years," said Michael Moller, U.N. head in Geneva.

Ethiopian Airlines said its pilot Yared Getachew, who was a dual Ethiopian-Kenyan national, had a "commendable record" and more than 8,000 hours of flying experience.

The airplane was received in November 2018, had flown more than 1,200 hours, and returned from Johannesburg earlier on Sunday, Chief Executive Tewolde GebreMariam said. Getachew had mentioned difficulties and wanted to return. The flight had unstable vertical speed after take-off, the flight tracking website Flightradar24 tweeted.

The Sweden-based service said the aircraft had climbed almost 1,000 feet after taking off from Addis Ababa, a hot and high-altitude airport whose thinner air requires extra effort from an aircraft's engines.

It dipped about 450 feet before rapidly climbing another 900 feet until the point where satellite tracking data was lost.

(Source: Reuters)

Arms flow into Mideast dangerously rises: Study

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) has found that arms sales to the Middle East have grown by 87 percent over the past five years, with Saudi Arabia topping the list of importers.

The SIPRI said in a report on Sunday that Saudi Arabia's arms imports in 2014-2018 increased by 192 percent, compared to the preceding five years, becoming the world's top arms importer.

Other countries at the top of the list of global arms buyers included Egypt, Algeria, the United Arab Emirates and Iraq. The institute measures the volume of deliveries of arms, not the dollar value of deals.

According to the report, arms sales to the Middle East now account for more than a third of the global trade.

The defense think-tank's annual survey also showed how the United States and European countries sell jets, jeeps and other gear used in controversial wars in Yemen and beyond. Pieter Wezeman, a senior researcher with SIPRI, told Middle East Eye.

"Weapons from the U.S., the UK and France are in high demand in the Persian Gulf, where conflicts and tensions are rife. Russia, France and Germany dramatically increased their arms sales to Egypt in the past five years," he said. Wezeman attributed the growth in Middle Eastern imports to the need to replace military gear that was deployed and destroyed in Yemen, Syria, Iraq and Libya, as well as political tensions and a regional arms race.



"The UAE, Saudi Arabia and Israel are readying for a potential conflict with Iran," the 12-page report said. The report also referred to a severe diplomatic crisis between Qatar and a Saudi-led quartet of states.

The survey also found that the U.S. remains the world's top arms seller, with a 29 percent jump in its exports over the past five years. Over half of the U.S. arms (52 percent) were sold to customers in the Middle East.

British sales rose by 5.9 percent over the same period. Most of the UK arms exports (59 percent) also went to Middle Eastern countries, with Saudi Arabia and Oman being the main destinations for its combat aircraft.

Patrick Wilcken, an arms control specialist

with the UK-based watchdog Amnesty International, decried the "hypocrisy" of Western governments not following their own rules by continuing to supply authoritarian regimes that commit wartime abuses or violations against their own people.

He noted that Western arms more often end up being used in human rights abuses, referring to Egypt's crackdown on political dissidents, Israel's occupation of Palestinian land and the Saudi-led aggression against Yemen.

"In Yemen, totally unaccountable militias are being armed and supported by the UAE and Saudi Arabia, which is setting the scene for a future period of instability and human

rights violations," he added.

Last month, the Trump administration threatened to veto a bid by the United States Congress to end the country's military support for the Saudi Arabia-led coalition's onslaught in Yemen. In Britain, the House of Lords International Relations Committee concluded that UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia since the start of the Riyadh-led war on Yemen have been causing "significant civilian casualties" in the country.

Germany alone has taken a stand. Last week it extended until the end of March a ban on arms exports to Saudi Arabia imposed over the kingdom's deadly campaign against Yemen and the murder of dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

Germany's decision to halt arms sales to the kingdom has drawn criticism of European partners, including France and Britain, due to the fact that the move has impacted joint military projects.

Jeff Abramson, a scholar at the Arms Control Association, said Washington should follow Germany's example.

"Instead of being challenged, the U.S. continues to claim a larger share of an expanding global arms market," Abramson said.

"As such, the U.S. should take the lead in promoting responsible behavior, rather than encouraging trade to repressive and irresponsible regimes, such as those in Saudi Arabia and the UAE."

(Souce: Press TV)

Top Russian MP compares Trump to Hitler, warns of new war

Two years of Donald Trump's presidency has brought the international situation back to 1935 when Hitler came to power, according to three-star Russian General Vladimir Shamanov.

Speaking at a briefing for foreign military attaches, Shamanov recalled that Hitler had begun preparing Germany for war just two years after coming to power. "Trump has been at the helm for two years, and we see the parallels," he said.

The general, who is head of the lower house's Committee on Defense, also warned non-nuclear nations that participation in U.S.-led nuclear drills could make them the target of a retaliatory strike by Russia in the event of conflict.

"Along with regular weapons, Americans could stock you with nuclear ones," he explained. "We have to take it into account and you could become our priority strike targets, you have to be aware of it."

The "eagerness" of some European countries to deploy military assets on their territories "raises eyebrows," Shamanov added.

Military attaches from 90 countries attended the annual briefing in the lower house of Russia's parliament, which the general noted was a higher attendance than usual. However, the U.S. delegation didn't respond to an invitation "for the first time in many years," he added.

(Source: RT)



STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	167371.3
IFX	2097.01

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,187 rials
GBP	54,497 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$66.63/b
WTI	\$56.84/b
OPEC Basket	\$65.57/b
Gold	\$1,297.30/oz
Silver	\$15.35/oz
Platinum	\$819.15/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Vegetable exports at \$935m in 10 months

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran exported 3.27 million tons of vegetables worth \$935 million during the first ten months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2018 - January 20, 2019), according to a director general in the Ministry of Agriculture. Hossein Asgari said neighboring countries specially Russia were the major export destinations of the Iranian vegetables during the ten-month period, IRIB reported.

The official said Iran exported 2.9 million tons of vegetables in the past Iranian calendar year.

He said 65-70 percent of the country's seed requirement is domestically met and put the annual need for seed at about 4,000-4,500 tons.

Last week, French seed maker Vilmorin, said it was continuing some exports to Iran with the backing of a French bank, and will participate in efforts to implement a European scheme to avoid U.S. sanctions targeting trade with Tehran, Reuters reported.

Vilmorin, one of the world's largest suppliers of seeds for grain and vegetable crops, has cited the U.S. sanctions against Iran as among the short-term risks to its activities in emerging markets.

Food and agricultural goods are not directly targeted by U.S. sanctions related to Iran's nuclear program.

The seed maker is considering taking part in a proposed European scheme, known as INSTEX, to conduct non-dollar trade with Iran via a barter system that would avert U.S. penalties.

'Boosting LPG exports an agenda of NIGC's next year's activities'

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — Increasing exports of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) will be an agenda of National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC)'s activities in the next Iranian calendar year (starts on March 21, 2019), the managing director of company announced.

Hassan Montazer Torbati said a huge amount of LPG is currently produced in the country which could be exported to the global markets, Shana reported on Monday.

As previously announced, NIGC exported 7.1 million tons of LPG in the first half of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 22, 2018).

The country earned \$250 million of income through exporting LPG in the first half of the present year.

Syria calls on Iranian private sector to take part in its reconstruction

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Syria has called on Iranian private sector to have a greater part in reconstruction of the war-damaged country, IRNA reported.

A trade delegation from Syria visited Iran this week and attended a meeting which was held at Iran Chamber of Cooperatives in Tehran on Monday.

In the meeting the Syrian side expressed their appreciation for Iran's significant role in helping the Arab nation in various areas and called on Iranian private companies to cooperate with their Syrian counterparts in order to accelerate the reconstruction process.

According to the officials, Syria is going to need billions of dollars of investment for reconstruction.

The two sides further emphasized the need for using the local currencies in trade in order to facilitate the transactions between the two countries.

Many urban areas across Syria, particularly around Damascus, have been hard-hit by war, and President Bashar Assad said this month that rebuilding would be his "top priority".

Iran and Syria have been exchanging numerous trade delegations in the past few months and Iranian private companies are already investing in different areas like providing construction materials especially



cement and working on several reconstruction projects in Syria.

In August 2018, a delegation comprised of Iranian economic experts traveled to Syria to explore investment opportunities and finalize the reconstruction plans of the war-stricken country.

Also in January, the 14th preparatory meeting of Iran-Syria high joint technical committee of economic cooperation was held at Damascus.

The event was attended by the Iranian

Deputy Transport Minister Amir Amini and Deputy Head of the Planning and International Cooperation Authority of Syria Thoraya Ildbi.

Amini had also said that Iranian private sector has started cooperation with Syria in order to rebuild the country's war-damaged infrastructures.

According to the official, Iranian investors and enterprises are eager to play a key role in Syria's potential \$600-billion worth of projects.

30-member Iranian trade delegation embarks on a visit to Iraq

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Headed by the chairman of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA), a 30-member trade delegation accompanied President Hassan Rouhani in his three-day visit to Iraq. ICCIMA portal reported on Monday.

Comprised of businessmen and representatives of the Iranian companies active in various areas including technical services, food, clothing, steel, cement, petrochemicals and mining, the delegation is due to take part in an Iran-Iraq business forum as well as holding B-2-B meetings with Iraqi counterparts.

President Hassan Rouhani arrived in

Baghdad on Monday for a three-day official visit. The visit by Rouhani is considered a milestone in ties between Iran and Iraq at the current juncture in history.

The exchange of trade delegations between Iran and Iraq has increased by 137 percent in 2018, compared to the same period last year.

According to Iran's commercial attaché in Iraq Naser Behzad, during the mentioned period, 19 Iraqi trade delegations constituting 300 businessmen and officials have visited Iran to attend various exhibitions and economic events.

Last week, the official website of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO)

announced that Iran has established a center in Baghdad for marketing its products in the Iraqi market and also expand the exports of its products to the neighboring country.

Relations between Iran and Iraq have increased greatly since the fall of Saddam Hussein in Iraq in 2003. Iran was the first country that recognized the governing system in Iraq after the Saddam fall.

On March 4, the secretary general of Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce said Iraq has expressed readiness to establish a joint bank with Iran.

"The Issue was discussed during Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif's

talks with the Iraqi side and the Iraqi Rafidain Bank expressed its readiness to establish branches in Iran." Hamid Hosseini said.

Iran is one of the major trading partners of Iraq. Baghdad has resisted pressure by the Trump administration to cut economic ties with Iran since Washington reintroduced sanctions against Iran last May. Iran and Iraq have agreed to trade in euros.

Also, the number of Iranian exhibitions held in Iraq is on an increasing trend.

The first specialized exhibition of Iranian electricity and related industries kicked off at Baghdad International Exhibition Center last week.

'One Belt One Road a proper ground for Iran-China all-out relations'

1 → The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), also known as the One Belt One Road (OBOR) or the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-century Maritime Silk Road is a development strategy adopted by the Chinese government involving infrastructure development and investments in 152 countries

and international organizations in Europe, Asia, Middle East, Latin America and Africa.

"Belt" refers to the overland routes for road and rail transportation, called "the Silk Road Economic Belt"; whereas "road" refers to the sea routes, or the 21st Century Maritime

Silk Road.

The Chinese government calls the initiative "a bid to enhance regional connectivity and embrace a brighter future". Some observers see it as a push for Chinese dominance in global affairs with a China-centered trading network.

German industrial production drops unexpectedly

German industrial output dropped unexpectedly in January with production of capital goods falling 2.5 percent as gloom over the Eurozone's largest economy intensified, official data revealed.

Industrial production dropped 0.8 percent from December while, stripped of energy and construction figures, the data showed a decline of 1.2 percent, the Federal Statistics Office (Destatis) said. Compared with January 2018, output fell 3.3 percent.

Analysts in a Reuters survey had predicted a 0.5 percent monthly increase in output.

The December monthly output figure was revised to an increase of 0.8 percent, from an earlier reported decline of 0.4 percent, Destatis said.

(Source: Financial Times)

Shahrvand Chain Stores to Offer Special Discounts on Products to Citizens

Shahrvand Chain Stores will offer special discounts for all its products in its branches across the country as of Tuesday March 12.

Managing Director of Shahrvand Chain Stores Masoud Sari' ol-Ghalam made the above remarks in an interview with MEHR News Agency (MNA) and said, "offering special discounts on all products is a bonus given by Tehran Mayor Pirouz Hanachi to the noble citizens of the country.

Turning to the measures adopted by Shahrvand Chain Stores for the provision of goods and products required by the noble people of the country on the eve of Iranian New Year, he said, "like previous years, Shahrvand Chain Store Department has considered special discounts for its dear customers in the current Iranian month of Esfand (to end March 20, 2019)."

For this reason, Shahrvand Chairn Store has considered special discounts, ranging from 5 to 50 percent, to different groups of commodities on March 12-21, 2019, he said, adding, "with the coordination made in cooperation with the Municipality of Tehran and bylaw ratified in the Board of Directors, all relevant profits in Shahrvand Chain Store have been minimized into zero level, the issue of which is a bonus offered by Tehran Mayor Pirouz Hanachi."

There is no problem in the field of supply of basic goods and commodities of people in the stores, he reiterated, adding, "in this regard, basic commodities and products have been warehoused at least for a few months later sufficiently."



Elsewhere in his remarks, the managing director revealed the planning for the supply of basic commodities according to the market regulation rate and added, "Shahrvand Chain Store is leader and forerunner in terms of supply of high-quality protein products, red- and poultry meats at the consumer market."

According to the notification issued by the Ministry of Agricultural Jihad and the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade, meat price at the approved governmental price will be provided available to dear customers.

Salient services of Shahrvand Chain Store are released by highly-acclaimed media such as official news agencies and the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), he said, adding, "in this regard, advertisements of the department stores have been kicked off on different channels of IRIB a couple of days ago, so that the department stores are offering highest-quality services to the noble people of the country and dear customers."

He pointed to the establishment of 41st store of Shahrvand Department Stores in Shemiran Center area and said, "40th store of Shahrvand will be inaugurated in Qolhak area, Tehran province while

installing equipment in its 41st store is underway."

Moreover, the first store of Shahrvand outside Tehran province will be inaugurated in Mehrshahr of Karaj, Alborz province, as of the beginning of the next Iranian calendar year in 1398 (to start March 21, 2019).

With the cooperation made with the municipalities in megacities, Shahrvand chain stores will be established in metropolises and with this approach, expansion project of Shahrvand Department Stores has been readied in Mashhad, Isfahan, Shiraz and Tabriz.

He also pointed to two new services in Shahrvand Department Stores and added, "for the first time in the country, Self-Checkout system has been launched in Shahrvand Department Stores in Beyhaghi Branch."

"Self-Checkout" is a system that customer can pay cost of purchased goods in the Cashier without any delay in the shortest time possible, he said, adding, "this system has been designed by Shahrvand Department Stores."

He also revealed that a new service will be unveiled in District 2 Municipality of Tehran entitled "RVM" (Reverse Vending Machine) in the current week in a way that these fully automatic devices receive plastic bottles and give shopping tickets to customers in return.

In the end, Managing Director of Shahrvand Chain Stores Masoud Sari' ol-Ghalam pointed to the job creation of Shahrvand Department and said, "presently, 2,300 employees are cooperating with the department stores."

First Announcement

IN THE NAME OF GOD

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING

INTERNATIONAL TENDER NO. 97-12/205

Tender Holder:

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING (IRIB)

Subject of Two-Stage Tender:

Localization and Implementation of Hybrid TV Based on HBBTV2,0,2 Standard according to the tender documents

Deadline of Receiving Documents:

As of publishing second announcement of advertisement latest by the business hour dated on **Monday March 18, 2019**.

Place of Receiving Documents:

Secretariat of Tenders' Commission, Technical Purchasing (KALA) Dept., Media Technology and Development Deputy Office, Bldg. No. 2, IRIB, Jam-e Jam St., Vali-e Asr Ave., Tehran

Type and Amount of Guarantee for Participating in Tender:

The amount of **USD 12,500** which should be in the form of extendable bank guarantee

Time and Place of Delivering Priced Bid:

The sealed A, B & C packages/envelopes should be submitted within one main envelope marked with tender number no later than **15 p.m.** on **Tuesday April 16, 2019** and submitted to the Secretariat of Commission of Tenders.

Time and Place of Opening Envelopes

The date of opening envelopes A&B is at **8:30 a.m.** on **Saturday April 20, 2019** in the office of Vice President of IRIB Planning and Financial Resources and opening of envelope C will be after technical evaluation.

It should be noted that bidders should hold license from the authorized bodies.

For more information, please contact the following phone numbers: **0098-21-22166313**

It is obvious that cost of publishing two advertisements shall be borne by the winner of tender.

Public Relations Dept. of IRIB

Oil gains on signs that demand outweighs supply in market

Staff & Agencies

Oil prices rose on Monday, on the signs that the demand side of the market is going to overweigh the supply side in the months to come.

Last week, U.S. energy services firm Baker Hughes' reported that the number of rigs drilling for new oil production in the United States fell by nine to 834.

According to Reuters, the slowdown in drilling is an indicator that we should expect a more timid output growth going forward, but because the overall drilling level remains relatively high despite the recent decline, many analysts still expect U.S. crude output to rise above 13 million bpd soon.

As another supporting factor, comments from Saudi oil minister Khalid al-Falih that an end to OPEC-led supply cuts was unlikely before June, helped the prices gaining a firmer footing.

"We will see what happens by April, if there is any unforeseen disruption somewhere else, but barring this I think we will just be kicking the can forward," Falih told Reuters.

Based on a report by Bloomberg, a Saudi official said on Monday that the country plans to cut crude oil exports in April to below 7 million barrels per day.



U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude oil futures stood at \$56.50 per barrel at 0945 GMT GMT, up 43 cents, or 0.77 percent from their last close while Brent crude futures reached \$66.29 per barrel,

up 55 cents, or 0.84 percent.

In general, from the beginning of 2019, the oil prices have been supported by ongoing supply cuts by the OPEC and non-OPEC nations, which pledged to cut

1.2 million barrels per day (bpd) of their production since the start of the year to tighten markets and prop up prices.

OPEC+ is due to meet on April 17-18 to discuss whether the cuts have been successful in balancing the market. Yet another gathering is scheduled for June 25-26, to further discuss supply policy.

However, despite all the mentioned efforts by the OPEC+ group and the help of other supporting factors, still the markets are holding back since recent data suggest that the global economy is not in its best shape.

Last week data regarding the U.S. employment raised concerns that an economic slowdown in Asia and Europe was spilling into the United States.

China on the other hand is having problem keeping up its export levels. Multiple sources last week reported that China's huge export industry suffered its worst month in three years, hurt by the trade war with the United States and a slowing global economy.

Chinese exports plunged 21 percent in February from a year earlier, according to Chinese government data released Friday.

China, is the world's No.2 economy and the largest crude importer, and the worries over the giant economy could significantly affect the oil market in the long run.

Saudi Arabia to cut crude oil exports in April: Saudi official

Saudi Arabia plans to cut its crude oil exports in April to below 7 million barrels per day (bpd), while keeping its output "well below" 10 million bpd, a Saudi official said on Monday, as the kingdom seeks to drain a supply glut and support oil prices.

State-owned Saudi Aramco's oil allocations for April are 635,000 bpd below customers' nominations — requests made by refiners and clients for Saudi crude, the Saudi official said.

"Despite very strong demand from international waterborne customers at more than 7.6 million bpd, customers were allocated less than 7 million bpd," the official said.

March's oil exports will also be below 7 million bpd, the official said.

The April allocations by Aramco show "a deep cut of 635,000 bpd from customer requests for its crude oil," he added.

"This will keep production well below 10 million bpd in April," the official said, adding that this is also below the 10.311 million bpd that the kingdom has agreed as its production target under an OPEC-led supply cut agreement.



The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and other producers such as Russia, colloquially known as OPEC+, agreed in December to reduce supply by 1.2 million bpd from Jan. 1 for six months.

"Saudi Arabia is demonstrating extraordinary commitment to accelerating market rebalancing," the Saudi official said, adding that the kingdom expects all other OPEC+ countries to show similar levels of contributions and high conformity.

Saudi Energy Minister Khalid al-Falih said on Sunday that March oil production was 9.8 million bpd and that the country, OPEC's biggest producer, plans to keep its April output at the same level.

(Source: Reuters)

UK oil output to fall 23 Percent to 840,000 bpd in 2024: regulator

UK oil production will fall by 23 Percent from last year's level to 840,000 bpd in 2024, the Oil & Gas Authority said Monday.

The projection is based on latest production data and takes a "conservative" approach, including a "small notional allowance" for recently discovered and undiscovered fields that might be brought on line in the period, the OGA said in the report, 'Projections of UK Oil and Gas Production and Expenditure.'

Gas production is set to fall 21 Percent to 27.31 million mt of oil equivalent, or 480,000 boe/d, from 2018 to 2024, the report said. The oil production projection for 2023 is unchanged on the equivalent OGA report a year ago, at 890,000 bpd, while gas production in 2023 is slightly higher in the latest report, at 510,000 boe/d.

UK oil output, including natural gas liquids, rose by 9 Percent last year, or 90,000 bpd, to 1.09 million bpd, boosted by fields recently brought on stream, official data published February 28 showed.

The OGA's report on Monday forecast a 4 Percent increase in capital expenditure on upstream oil and gas this year, to GBP5.2



billion (\$6.8 billion), after four years of decline. That level of spending is less than half the GBP12.5 billion of spending in 2015.

The spending increase will contribute to a rise in the total amount of oil and gas produced over the 2016-2050 period, of 200 million barrels of oil equivalent, compared with the OGA's last production projection in September 2018. Other factors pushing up production include efficiency improvements, efforts at enhanced oil recovery, and the launch of newly producing fields, it said.

Despite a recovery in UK production, and signs of more positive sentiment in the North Sea industry, levels of exploration activity have slumped, weighing down expectations of a more solid recovery.

(Source: Platts)

Malaysia's floating LNG vessel stops LNG production ahead of relocation

Malaysia's floating LNG export vessel PFLNG Satu has stopped producing LNG in preparation for a relocation exercise, national oil company Petronas confirmed in a statement late Friday.

"However, as of today, it still remains at the Kanowit gas field, offshore Bintulu, Sarawak. An announcement on this will be made in due course," Petronas added.

The production halt will have negligible

impact on the spot market as the plant's LNG output has been well below its full capacity, with few cargoes being offered on the market since it started operations, according to a Singapore-based LNG trader.

PFLNG Satu has a capacity of 1.2 million mt/year of LNG. It was billed as the world's first floating LNG production facility at the time of its launch, and exported its first LNG cargo April 1, 2017.

Petronas has been working to move the vessel to a new gas field in an attempt to boost LNG production volumes, the trader said.

Petronas has a second floating LNG facility under construction -- PFLNG Dua -- which will be mechanically completed by the end of this year and is expected to start in the first quarter of next year, CEO Tan Sri Wan Zulkiflee Wan Ariffin said Friday.

Petronas' total production volume for

2018 rose to 2.36 million boe/d from 2.32 million boe/d in 2017, mainly due to higher production from Iraq and Turkmenistan.

Malaysia's average sales gas volume rose marginally to 2.78 billion scf/d over the period due to higher demand.

However, its total LNG sales volume fell by 1.78 million mt to 28.94 million mt in 2018 due to pipeline outages at the Bintulu plant.

(Source: Platts)

Oil's big reset: energy majors learn to thrive after price crash

When OPEC started an oil-price war in late 2014, most people believed U.S. shale was doomed. In reality, the giant oil majors suffered most -- burdened by expensive mega-projects, Chevron Corp., BP Plc and the rest struggled to adapt to the fall in energy prices.

Slowly, those companies figured out how to survive in the lower-for-longer price era. They cut costs and, more importantly, learned how to stop them from rising again. In an industry that favored tailored solutions for every project, companies started to talk about standardization. At closed-door sessions in Davos, Switzerland, Big Oil bosses didn't waste time on self-important talk, but instead discussed how to share the design of anything from underwater valves to pumps.

Nearly five years after the crash, the cultural change is starting to work. The world's major energy companies have managed to press the reset button, allowing them to make profits today similar to what they did in a world of \$100-plus a barrel oil prices.

■ Big Oil's reset

"Big Oil has been able to re-emerge from this downturn stronger and lower on the cost curve," said Michele Della Vigna, the top oil industry analyst at Goldman Sachs Group Inc., who had been a critic of the majors.

The level of spending at the world's eight largest integrated oil and gas companies fell last year to \$118 billion, down 45 percent from a pre-crisis peak of \$215 billion in 2013, according to data compiled by Bloomberg News.

But their business model has changed a lot in the process. The reliance on multi-billion dollar projects in far-flung corners of the world has been reduced and the majors are pouring billions into Texas's Permian Basin, once dominated by independent exploration and production companies.



Other strategies include trying to build new projects closer to existing ones and reusing old infrastructure to reduce costs. They've also re-discovered the joys of integration, investing in refineries and petrochemical plants that make money even when prices are low.

To the surprise of many in the industry, lower costs haven't translated into slower development. In fact, projects have often come ahead of expectations, like the giant Zohr gas field in Egypt, developed by Italian major Eni SpA.

■ New era

The industry got a lot of help from its suppliers. According to Exxon Mobil Corp., the cost of 3D seismic technology, used to find underground reservoirs, and the deep-water rigs needed to exploit them has fallen more than 50 percent from the 2013 level.

The new era means combining projects that pay back quickly, whether in U.S. shale or elsewhere, with some traditional larger projects. In the oil industry, it's a model

called short-and-long oil cycle, because some projects pay back in as little to two-to-three years, compared to as long as 10 years for conventional projects.

"Big Oil now wants a diversified portfolio with short-and-long cycle oil," said Daniel Yergin, the oil historian that this week hosts the annual CERAWEEK energy conference in Houston. "Before the oil crisis in 2014-15, the mere concept of short-cycle oil didn't exist in Big Oil."

Short-cycle oil has a one big advantage over mega-projects: companies can dial them up and down quickly to respond to changes in oil and gas prices.

■ Gas boom

The other significant change is natural gas. Big Oil had already embraced gas before the crisis, with companies like Exxon investing in massive projects in Qatar. But today some executives suggest gas is gaining the upper hand.

"Gas is the fastest growing hydrocarbon," said Bernard Looney, chief executive for upstream at BP. "It's the future."

Despite the significant reduction in spending and much lower energy prices, returns haven't suffered, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. The biggest oil companies posted return-on-capital-employed -- a traditional yardstick used by investors -- of about 8.7 percent last year, higher than the 8.4 percent of 2014. Return-on-equity, another closely watched measure, has risen to 11.6 percent, the highest in six years.

The whole industry isn't moving at the same pace, though. Exxon, for example, is boosting spending to catch up with rivals after some bad bets in Russia stymied its output growth. But in contrast to the pre-2014 world, the company is promising investors they'll be given bang for their bucks, developing projects that will boost production.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Shale on the brink of M&A as oil majors flex muscles in Permian

Cowboy boots and turquoise belt buckles are giving way to smart suits and silk ties as the world's biggest shale oil field prepares for mergers.

As oil executives from across the world gather in Houston for the annual CERAWEEK by IHS Markit conference, the Permian Basin in the U.S. Southwest is on the cusp of a radical transformation with one simple premise: bigger is better. The energy industry appears primed for deals at a time when Big Oil is flexing its muscle in the region.

Just last week, Exxon Mobil Corp. and Chevron Corp. unveiled audacious growth plans for the Permian Basin, hitherto the domain of smaller rivals. Royal Dutch Shell Plc is said to be on the prowl for deals while BP Plc bought in last year. Meanwhile, independents are under increasing pressure from investors to merge or sell out, in an effort to end the relentless production growth that has burned through some \$200 billion of cash over the past eight years.

"The ability of the larger companies to do an accretive acquisition is probably at its highest level since the beginning of the shale revolution," said Michael Roomberg, a fund manager at Miller/Howard Investments Inc. which manages \$5 billion. "M&A interest is at its highest in nearly a decade."

But the century-old oilfield cycle of big players swallowing up smaller ones may not happen quickly or follow the conventional path.

The supermajors, facing investor pressures of their own, are unwilling to throw cash around like they did in the heady days of \$100-a-barrel oil. All-stock deals could be dilutive because many U.S. independents trade at higher price-to-earnings multiples than integrated oil companies, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

Diamondback Energy Inc. and Concho Resources Inc. pulled off all-stock deal that together were worth almost \$20 billion last year.

Pressure has mounted on smaller companies in recent weeks. Pioneer Natural Resources Co. and Halcon Resources Corp. replaced their CEOs while names such as Alta Mesa Resources Inc., Centennial Resource Development Inc., and Laredo Petroleum Inc. have seen their market values decimated.

There are 112 operators in the Permian Basin and that means an excessive number of management teams operating similar assets, said Ben Dell, founder of activist investor Kimmeridge Energy Management Co. Economies of scale are needed and about 20 companies, or any valued under \$3 billion, should be combined in a "merger of equals," he said.

Independents were once the innovators that worked out how to pump oil from previously impermeable shale formations. That turned the U.S. from a petroleum importer dependent on the Middle East into a global energy superpower.

But the revolution came at a cost. North American oil companies, excluding the integrated majors, spent \$200 billion over the last eight years, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. Investors have signaled they've had enough. They want a manufacturing-style production mode, which favors the biggest, most efficient operators.

Exxon Chief Executive Officer Darren Woods was blunt in his assessment of how the supermajor will meet its Permian target of 1 million barrels a day by 2024 - more than OPEC member Libya's entire output. "We're changing how the game gets played," he said.

Exxon and Chevron both emphasized their focus on existing Permian holdings, favoring small land swaps rather than big corporate deals.

But the European supermajors, playing catch-up, appear to be willing to play the acquisition game. BP Plc entered the fray last year with its \$10.5 billion purchase of BHP Billiton Ltd.'s onshore assets and Shell is said to be interested in buying Endeavor Energy Resources LP, one of the Permian Basin's largest private operators, for as much as \$8 billion.

The arrival of Big Oil may change the region's Wild West image. Until now, the barrier of entry has been low, with dozens of private equity-backed wildcatters, many of whom are in their early 30s, flipping leases and drilling exploratory wells with the aim of selling them to the highest bidder.

It's a far cry from Exxon's systematic approach, perhaps a sign that the days of the rags-to-riches wildcatters may be ending.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Saudi crude official selling prices on the higher end of expectations: Asian traders

Saudi crude oil OSP hikes issued by the OPEC leader last week was on the higher end of market expectations, traders and end-users in Asia told S&P Global Platts on Monday.

"Saudi OSP is expensive, yes," a Middle East sell-side source said early Monday in Asia.

Last week, Aramco raised the price differentials for four of its five crude grades to Asia in a notice issued to stakeholders. The producer hiked price differentials for its Arab Extra Light and Light grades by 50 cents/b each, Arab Medium by 40 cents/b, and Arab Heavy by 20 cents/b for crude loading in April.

Aramco kept the price differential for its Arab Super Light grade to Asia unchanged.

In a survey conducted by Platts at the end of February, traders had expected a hike of around 30 cents/b for Arab crude grades to Asia. Price hikes were expected across the board from producers owing to tightening supply of medium and heavy sour crude globally.

The Dubai market structure, or the spread between the April Dubai cash and swap, averaged 62 cents/b over February. The Dubai cash/swap spread averaged 32 cents/b the month before, marking a month-on-month rise of 30 cents/b.

The change in the sour crude structure is thought to be a key reference point for producers when setting monthly prices for Asian destinations.

Some market participants said the higher-than-expected price hike could temporarily balance out incremental demand for Saudi crude from its Asian customer base.

Customers may possibly nominate less, or "at least they won't request incremental barrels," a North Asian trader said on the issue.

Refiners with long term contracts for Saudi crude have requested for, and been denied incremental volumes in recent months as global supplies of sour crude tighten, they told Platts.

Details about nominated volumes for April loading will emerge closer to the end of this week, once refineries have finalized grade requirements and had discussions with producers, traders said.

"Waiting for customers to run LPs and gauge demand or supply," the seller added.

(Source: Platts)

NEWS IN BRIEF

**Trilateral talks held between Pakistan, China, Afghanistan**

INTERNATIONAL **TEHRAN** — Officials from Pakistan, China and Afghanistan held a meeting in Kabul on Monday to discuss cooperation in various fields, said a statement by Afghanistan's foreign ministry.

The trilateral meeting was presided over by Afghanistan's deputy foreign minister Idrees Zaman in which the three sides discussed agreements on practical cooperation mechanism between them.

The respective envoys of China and Pakistan represented their countries in the meeting, said reports.

The trilateral forum at the level of foreign ministers was launched in 2017 at the initiative of China when relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan had hit a low.

In December last year, Pakistan's foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi joined his Afghan and Chinese counterparts Salahuddin Rabbani and Wang Yi at the second Afghanistan-China-Pakistan foreign ministers' dialogue in Kabul.

The officials at Monday's meeting reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening relations, increasing cooperation in various fields, advancing connectivity under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) of Chinese government and other regional economic initiatives, said sources.

Pakistan, an important neighbor of Afghanistan, plays a key role in Afghanistan's peace process and economic development. China, a regional heavyweight, has increased its engagement in the war-torn country with gradual withdrawal of the U.S.

**Pakistan not yet out of the woods, says Qureshi**

INTERNATIONAL **TEHRAN** — Despite de-escalation of tensions after weeks of saber-rattling, Pakistan's foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Sunday said Pakistan still was not out of the woods.

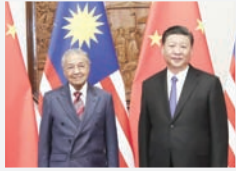
Speaking to media persons in Islamabad, Qureshi said Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi might make another 'foolhardy attempt' before going to the polls next month.

He said India has vowed to isolate Pakistan diplomatically, and was sparing no effort to undermine its neighbor at the world forums.

Qureshi said India was habituated to blaming Islamabad without evidence whenever it faced any untoward situation.

He said terrorists used militant hideouts in Afghanistan to launch attacks in Pakistan, but Afghanistan always blamed Pakistan for its problems. He said tough time was not over yet and China, like in the past, was standing firmly behind Pakistan.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's foreign Office said the Indian government and the media continue to spread disinformation to mislead the international community and their people for domestic political gains.

**Malaysia sides with China in U.S.-China trade war**

INTERNATIONAL **TEHRAN** — In a major snub to the Trump administration, Malaysia says it would prefer to take sides with China over the U.S. if his country was forced to take sides in the trade war.

Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad was quoted as saying in South China Morning Post that China is an "economic power that presents opportunities", even though he has been a critic of Beijing.

Malaysia has to "accept that China is close to us", he told the SCMP. "And it is a huge market. We want to benefit from China's growing wealth."

Mahathir further said that the Southeast Asian country will decide how to handle relations with China independently, without coming under the influence of U.S.

The 91-year-old prime minister said that Beijing will make use of its economic strength "to achieve what is to China the best objective – that they have to grow richer and richer, and this is the ambition of all countries."

"With their wealth they are going to be in the same position that the Western countries were in the past," he said.

**Kashmir newspapers run blank front pages**

INTERNATIONAL **TEHRAN** — To register their protest against the government's move to stop advertisements to two prominent newspapers in Indian-controlled Kashmir, newspapers in the region ran blank front pages on Sunday.

More than 13 newspapers published from the Himalayan region ran blank front pages in solidarity with Greater Kashmir and Kashmir Reader – two widely read dailies in Kashmir.

The front pages of the newspapers on Sunday carried a two-line caption, which read: "In protest against the unexplained denial of government advertisements to Greater Kashmir and Kashmir Reader."

Officials of the Kashmir Editors Guild (KEG), a group of Kashmir-based editors, staged a protest on Sunday and raised the issue with the Press Council of India and the Editors Guild of India.

The advertisements were "abruptly" stopped to the new dailies in the middle of February, the KEG said.

Mainstream political parties in the disturbed region also came out in support of the newspapers.

"The government is attempting to choke the media by denying them advertising revenues. I hope the Centre and the State immediately reverse this decision of trying to silence the fourth estate," said Omar Abdullah, who heads National Conference (NC) party.

Taliban founder Mullah Omar lived close to U.S. army camp in Afghanistan

INTERNATIONAL **TEHRAN** — In a startling disclosure that has once again raised questions over U.S. involvement in war-ravaged Afghanistan, a new book says Mullah Omar lived close to a U.S. army base in Afghanistan.

The leader of Taliban, who died in 2013 following a prolonged illness, lived out his final days in 'relative peace' and 'within walking distance of a U.S. (military) base in Afghanistan, reveals a book by Dutch journalist Bette Dam.

It is widely believed that Omar fled Afghanistan following the invasion of U.S.-led coalition forces and hid himself in the border region of Pakistan from where he planned and orchestrated attacks in Afghanistan.

However, the forthcoming book claims he was right under the nose of U.S. forces in southern province of Zabul in Afghanistan.

The one-eyed Taliban leader's former bodyguard and some Afghan officials told the author that he spent first four years of insurgency living in a modest house in Zabul, an hour's walk from the U.S. military's Forward Operating Base (FOB) Lagman, the author was quoted as saying a Dutch newspaper De Volkskrant.

The book says the U.S. forces occasionally patrolled the area but failed to find him. He relocated to a mud hut in the remote district



of Siuray when the U.S. forces made another base close to his house.

In Siuray, he was under the nose of FOB Wolverine, which at one point housed more than 1,000 U.S.-led coalition troops. "It was very dangerous for us there," Omar's bodyguard tells the author.

In his eight years in Siuray, Omar was a 'spiritual leader' for the Taliban, but rarely planned military offensives with the militants. He received food and clothing from local people who hated the presence of U.S. forces mostly remained indoors, praying and

meditating, the author reveals.

He eventually fell sick in 2013 and died April 23 that year but the news was not disclosed until 2015.

Dam's book contradicts the U.S. claims on Omar's location. How Omar eluded the world's most powerful military for over a decade, the author said the issue was that of trust.

"[The Americans] are in big military camps," she told De Volkskrant. "Very little information comes to them... I also speak to the guys they speak to. But I come in local

clothing, as a citizen. I have nothing with me. That makes everything different."

Omar's rise to prominence began when he joined the fight against Russians in 1980s. He fought against Russians on the main Kabul-Kandahar high way in Shahr-i-Safa and Qalat cities of southern Zabul province, according to his biography posted on Taliban's official website.

A large number of Taliban commanders at a meeting in Kandahar on April 4, 1996 chose him as the supreme leader of the insurgent group, following which the group Afghanistan ruled for a few years.

Ironically, Omar fought alongside U.S. forces against Russia and later the U.S. forces sought to kill him.

However, some analysts feel that he had full support of the U.S. forces which helped him survive all those years, even under their noses.

"How is it possible that you are the 'most wanted man' living in the shadow of a massive U.S. military camp for almost 10 years," asks Hashmat Yousufzai, a researcher and analyst based in Kabul. "There is definitely more to it than meets the eye."

Ali Moosavi, a university student in Mazar Sharif, says if locals had knowledge about his presence there it is virtually impossible that the U.S. intelligence agents wouldn't know of it. "He lived there, not despite the U.S. presence, but because of it".

Iran wants Pakistan to walk the talk on terror

1 → According to a statement published on President Rouhani's official website, he urged Khan to take "decisive" action against Jaish e Adl, saying failure to act could jeopardize relations between the two countries.

President Rouhani described relations between the two countries as "unique and historical", stressing that the onus for sustaining and strengthening bilateral relations lies on officials of the two countries.

"We must not let decades of friendship and fraternity between the two countries be undermined because of terrorist groups' actions," President Rouhani told Khan in the telephone conversation.

He said it was clear who the terror groups are, where they are based and who supports them. "We are awaiting your strong action against these terrorists," he said.

The continuation of these attacks from the Pakistani soil, President Rouhani reaffirmed in unequivocal terms, can undermine relations between the two countries.

Khan, in response, said Pakistan's civilian and military leadership is prepared to eliminate terror modules and not let them use Pakistan's soil against neighbors, especially the people of Iran.

He also accepted the invitation of President Rouhani to visit Iran. Pertinently, PM Khan undertook his maiden visit as Pakistani premier to Saudi Arabia, followed by a visit to China.

Pakistan has faced tremendous pressure from the international community, including its neighbors India, Afghanistan and Iran, in recent weeks, urging it to take action against terror outfits based in Pakistan.

"Chinese demanded action against Lal Masjid, Afghanistan against Taliban, India against LeT & JeM & now Iran against Jaish-al-Adl! Arabian Sea is the only neighbor that hasn't

**Among the biggest and immediate challenges for Khan were to revive the flailing economy and dismantle the terror infrastructure.**

complained about #Pakistan's jihadist proxies," tweeted Pakistani journalist and commentator Mohamad Taqi.

Although Khan is seen as a dove, the powerful military leadership in Pakistan maintains a hawkish policy, in which

non-state actors are used for proxy activities, say experts.

On Friday, addressing a rally in southern Pakistan, Khan said that his government will not allow any terror group to use Pakistani soil for destabilizing other countries.

He said a 'new era' is emerging in 'new Pakistan' and there was a huge desire to build a peaceful and stable Pakistan.

The remarks came days after his government announced a sweeping crackdown on armed groups, which includes Jaish e Mohammad and Jaish e Adl, according to sources.

"There are people among these groups which have done welfare works, they shouldn't worry... I know there are groups whose militant wings have already ended but we are part of the international community and we will not allow any militant armed group to function here," he added, referring to the crackdown against banned groups.

"The traditional dalliance between Pakistan's military and some Arab states has led to the birth of groups like Jaish e Adl in Pakistan's border region, whose only aim is to destabilize neighboring Iran," says Sadiq Ali, an analyst based in Islamabad.

He says Khan, despite his own "bromance" with Saudi Arabia's Mohammad Bin Salman, looks determined to maintain friendly ties with Iran, unlike his predecessor.

Iran, a senior government official in Tehran said, has always advocated friendly ties with Pakistan, despite continued attacks against Iranian military forces by Pakistan-based militant groups.

"Unlike what some Saudi-funded propaganda media outlets are saying, Iran has no intention to confront Pakistan militarily," he said, wishing anonymity. "Mounting pressure on Pakistan to act on terror outfits does not mean Iran will violate Pakistan's sovereignty. We are committed to resolve issues amicably."

Battle lines drawn for India elections; Modi and Gandhi main challengers

1 → This system, authorities say, will help in verification process later and prevent allegations of fraud.

A total of 543 parliament seats are up for grabs in this election to Lok Sabha, India's lower house of parliament, which ultimately decides which party is eligible to form the government in New Delhi.

The incumbent Prime Minister Narendra Modi is running again for the top post, and he faces strong opposition in the form of Congress president Rahul Gandhi, the scion of India's famed Gandhi family.

Although many political parties and powerful regional politicians are also in the fray, these two leaders are the main protagonists to represent more than 1.3 billion people.

While some analysts have given right-wing BJP a slight edge over Congress because of the hardcore Hindu narrative peddled by the party leaders to woo majority Hindu voters, some analysts see Gandhi putting up a tough challenge to BJP.

The recent military escalation between India and its arch-rival Pakistan in the aftermath of a deadly attack in Indian-controlled Kashmir has become an important, emotive poll issue for the ruling party, as Modi seeks to project his 'heroic image' as the mastermind of 'surgical strikes'.

However, the election commission has asked political parties not to use images of the country's armed forces in their campaign posters and other advertising material during the general election.

In a notice published on its website on Saturday, the commission said political parties must refrain from using photographs of

**The commission has faced heat from opposition parties for using electronic voting machines (EVMs), which many believe is prone to poll fraud and irregularities.**

defence personnel in advertisements or their election campaign propaganda as the armed forces are "apolitical and neutral stakeholders in a modern democracy".

Moreover, Modi has come under criticism for poor economic policies and lack of jobs in the country.

Some latest opinion polls have pointed to diminishing support for Modi-led BJP over job and economy, and hinted that the party

may fall short of the absolute majority of 272 seats to form the next government without any external support.

Gandhi, who failed to impress political pundits in India for many years, has shown signs of political maturity and seriousness over the past one year, which was evident from party's sweep in elections to three key states in December, a big setback for the BJP.

He has been scathing in his criticism of Modi's economic policies, his failure to help impoverished farmers and to create jobs for unemployed youth.

However, his party is not seen as strong enough to clinch the election on its own. So, it has entered into alliances with a number of regional parties across India, all of them having a common agenda to prevent BJP from coming back to power.

While acknowledging that national security issues could outdo economic issues in impacting voter behaviour in the elections, the latest HSBC Global Research report says a wave of new coalitions suggests "non-BJP parties are less fragmented today, making it a tough contest for the incumbent."

The factors that will shape 2019 results, according to the report, are the geopolitical issues that will dominate the next few weeks.

"It is the BJP that faces anti-incumbency sentiment. Whether or not the youth will show up to vote with as much enthusiasm as before, and vote for the BJP as they did last time, cannot be ascertained," the report notes. "Growth in some pockets of the economy is slowing, though not to worrisome levels, in our view. And the non-BJP votes may not be as fragmented as before," it says.

It further says the recent surveys show the gap between Modi and Gandhi's popularity ratings narrowing down and that voters' preference for Gandhi as an alternative for PM's post among opposition leaders is also on the rise.

So, will the Gandhi scion have the better of Modi? Or will Modi find the going easy. We shall know on May 23.

Ansarallah following path of third Shia Imam, “Never to Humiliation”

TEHRAN (FNA) — Yousef Mawry, Yemeni Journalist and Filmmaker, says, Ansarallah “was founded upon the Islamic principles enacted by Imam Hussain ibn Ali”, saying Imam Hussain’s reply “never to humiliation” is a motto that Ansarallah lives by today.

Commenting on the lack of response from the world body to the atrocities carried out by the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen, Yousef Mawry said, “Saudi Arabia is America’s watchdog in the region... to check and dismantle any nations or group that poses strategic threat to the ancient hegemonic power structure.”

“As long as you are pushing America’s agenda in the region, International humanitarian law will not apply to you.”

Yousef Mawry is a Yemeni Journalist and filmmaker who has been covering the war in Yemen since it started. He was the first reporter on the ground to expose the use of US laser-guided missiles by Saudi Arabia in civilian areas. He has filed reports and produced documentaries which helped direct world attention on the dire humanitarian crises due to the Saudi-led coalition offensive in Yemen.

Below is the full text of the interview:

■ How does the Saudi-led coalition claim its raids are consistent with international humanitarian law, while thousands of civilian Yemenis have been killed by such air raids?

A: Clearly Saudi Arabia has committed many war crimes which violate international humanitarian law. The clearest example of this is the Saudi airstrike that killed 45 children on a school bus. Did the UN or US take any meaningful actions to hold Saudi Arabia accountable for this? No. International humanitarian law is only a tool used by the world elite to entrap or condemn nations, groups or leaders who are not subservient to the colonial western political agenda. In point blank, the US and the United Nations view Saudi Arabia as one of their strongest allies in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia is America’s watchdog in the region. Its job is to check and dismantle any nation or group that poses strategic threat to the ancient hegemonic power structure. As long as you are pushing America’s agenda in the region, international humanitarian law will not ap-



ply to you. On the other hand, when the Houthis launch a missile into Saudi Arabia or when Hamas or Hizbollah in Lebanon fire a rocket into Israel, the international community condemns the act as a violation of international laws of war. Saudi Arabia is getting away with war crimes in Yemen because it understands very well it can and will get away with it.

■ Why is the world ignorant about Yemeni civilians killed by the Saudi-led coalition equipped with weapons manufactured by the West?

A: The double standard here is the Houthis are constantly being accused and condemned by the West for using “Iranian weapons” in the war. Every time the Houthis fire a rocket into a Saudi military base, Saudi Arabia and western powers claim that Iran supplied the Houthis with those weapons without there actually being any proof. Thanks to US President Donald Trump, I think the world is now becoming more aware of the fact that the weapons being used to kill civilians in Yemen are US and British made. Donald Trump admitted on live television that the US government is selling 110 billion dollars worth of weapons to Saudi Arabia. Whether the world knows or not, US-made weapons are killing innocent Yemenis, the

US and the UK are not going to stop their arms trade with Saudi Arabia. America is making billions of dollars in profit in the arms trade and also equipping their allies with highly advanced weapons to fight their enemies.

■ Considering around 5 years of war, added to six other wars the Ansarallah of Yemen has fought against the forces of former Yemeni President Ali Abdallah Saleh, do you believe the word “surrender” could be found in Ansarallah’s lexicon?

A: Surrender does exist in Ansarallah’s lexicon. However, to Ansarallah that word only exists or is mentioned when it is used in the sentence “we will never surrender”. Surrender is simply not an option to movement. According to the Houthis their entire struggle was founded upon the Islamic principles enacted by Imam Hussain ibn Ali (AS) in the battle of Karbela where he was martyred by the army of the tyrant Yazid. Before Imam Hussain (AS) was martyred, his enemies gave him the option to surrender. Imam Hussain (AS)’s reply is a motto that Ansarallah lives by today, “Hayhat minna dhilla” which translates to “never to humiliation.” Ansarallah views surrendering as the ultimate disgrace. In a TV address to the Saudi-led coalition,

Ansarallah leader, Sayyid Abdal Malik al-Houthi, made his position clear on the matter of surrendering when he said, “by Allah it is more beloved and honored for us to transform into small particles of dust in the air before we ever surrender to these cowards.”

■ The recent peace talks indicate that Riyadh has come to this conclusion that it can never win the war on Yemen. In case a political solution leads to a sustainable truce, what future would you see for the Houthi Ansarallah movement?

A: The Houthis will continue to strive to rid Yemen of all types of foreign meddling, while concurrently striving to build a stronger Yemeni economy, Yemeni army and air defense system. Therefore, Ansarallah should make sure they do not sign any peace deal that compromises the unity of Yemen and the prosperity of the economy and army. Still, Saudi Arabia and the West will continue to plot and scheme against them through many avenues. One of the avenues will come from the South, where separatists are hell bent on breaking from the North and declaring an independent Southern state. Another issue will be the Island of Socotra which is now under UAE control. Abu Dhabi has no plans to relinquish control of the Island which poses a huge threat to the stability of Yemen. I believe the US and Saudi Arabia will push for an agreement that will aim to establish a decentralized federal system in Yemen, which in return could divide the country into 4 to 7 Yemeni regions or an independent South to ensure a pro-Saudi entity remains a player on the ground. I think all UN-backed peace deals will insidiously maneuver to limit the military advancement of Ansarallah to prevent them from obtaining fighter jets which could be used to conduct airstrikes on any occupying force in Yemen. The future of Yemen and Ansarallah will be based on the conditions of the truce agreement. Unless the Houthis or the pro-Houthi government become a regional power, the long arm of colonial powers will continue to interfere in Yemen. Due to Yemen’s geo-strategic importance, whoever controls the country will have the ability to tip over the scale of power in the region.

U.S. aid trojan horse to subvert democracy in Venezuela: scholar

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — The so-called U.S. aid to Venezuela appears to be a Trojan Horse funded by Washington to subvert a democratic-elected government in the Latin American country, an American scholar and political commentator said.

“The ‘humanitarian aid’ gambit very much appears to be a Trojan Horse. The drivers could be assassins, the goods being brought in could be armaments, and the entire exercise could be to function as the tip of a spear striking the heart of Venezuela,” James Henry Fetzer told Tasnim.

He added, “How embarrassing that the U.S., which claims to promote freedom and democracy around the world, is, once again, as in the cases of Syria and of Ukraine, subverting democracy”.

James Henry Fetzer is an American philosopher of science. He is an editor at Veterans Today and co-founder of Scholars for 9/11 Truth.

The following is the full text of the interview:

■ Russia and China on Thursday vetoed a U.S.-sponsored resolution at the United Nations Security Council, which called for early presidential election in Venezuela amid ongoing unrest in the Latin American country. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and other senior U.S. officials, however, have repeatedly said that Washington “will take action” in support of anti-government protesters amid clashes between them and Venezuelan police. What do you think?

A: The cynicism of the United States in moving for

new elections in Venezuela boggles the mind. Nicolas Maduro is the democratically-elected President of the country, reelected to a second term with 60% of the vote to 20% for his nearest competitor. Jimmy Carter, who knows something about politics, was there and said it was a clean and fair election--even “the best in the world!” How embarrassing that the U.S., which claims to promote freedom and democracy around the world, is, once again, as in the cases of Syria and of Ukraine, subverting democracy.

■ Russia has warned that the United States is using humanitarian aid to instigate a “dangerous provocation” in Venezuela by arming the country’s opposition while moving its own forces closer to Venezuelan borders in preparation for a military invasion. What are your thoughts on this?

A: The “humanitarian aid” gambit very much appears to be a Trojan Horse. The drivers could be assassins, the goods being brought in could be armaments, and the entire exercise could be to function as the tip of a spear striking the heart of Venezuela. When the crisis appears to be manufactured--especially, as in this case, by outside intervention, especially in the form of U.S. sanctions--the “solution” may be a subterfuge. That seems to be the case here: the vanguard of an invasion.

■ China has also said that the “so-called aid” should not be forced into Venezuela, lest it cause violence. What’s your take on this? Will the U.S. finally intervene militarily in the country?



A: Venezuela has perhaps the largest oil resources in the world. The U.S. has made its practice to exploit the natural resources of other nations for the benefit of U.S. and multinational companies. John Perkins, CONFESSIONS OF AN ECONOMIC HITMAN, has a book about it that everyone should read, explaining how the IMF and World Bank are used to hook developing nations on projects they don’t need, in order to extort them for resources at bargain-basement prices when they find themselves unable to cover their debts, then sending in the jackals (assassins and saboteurs) before calling on the Marines. We seem to be getting closer to that end.

Power supply resumes in Venezuela post cyber attack

CARACAS — Electricity supply is being rapid restored in Venezuela after three days of power failure in 70% of the country as a result of the sabotage of a vital hydro-electric facility. Massive power outages began on March 7 following a cyber-attack on the Simon Bolivar Hydroelectric Plant or the El Guri plant in Bolivar State. Telesur reported that as of 6 am local time, 40% of supply to Caracas was restored, with more and more suburbs regaining power in the following hours. The provinces of Aragua, Carabobo and Yaracuy to the north were still awaiting resumption of supply as of morning.

President Nicolas Maduro tweeted on March 10, “The National Electric System has been subject to multiple cyber-attacks which led to its crash and these have prevented the attempts of a national reconnection. However, we are striving to restore the power supply in a stable and definite manner in the next couple of hours.”

The power outage resulted in great difficulty to the people, with daily life being affected in 18 states of Venezuela.

The Caracas Metro, as well as traffic, was brought to a halt. A holiday was declared for schools and commercial enterprises on Friday.

Even as attempts were made by the opposition and U.S. officials to provoke the people, Venezuela remained largely calm. A massive rally was held on Saturday in support of the government, and was addressed by President Maduro. He said that the attacks made to the electricity sector used high technology that interrupted the transmission process, with more than 150 electricity substations being targeted and a fresh attack recorded on March 9. “The east of the country was the first area we recovered from sabotage, then part of Caracas and the west of the country. They cannot defeat us,” he declared.

Mobilization in Caracas on March 9 denouncing continued imperialist aggression. Banner reads “Venezuela wants peace”

On March 7, Jorge Rodriguez, Minister of Communication and Information, said three of the five backup generators at El Guri plant were sabotaged,

leading to at least 70% of the country being affected. He cited tweets by U.S. senator Marco Rubio within minutes of the power outages as proof of the fact that the U.S. and the opposition backed by it were involved in the sabotage.

He also denied claims by the media of deaths at hospitals due to the outage by pointing out that generators were in place for such an eventuality. President Maduro had also announced that Local Committees for Supply and Production (CLAP) would be deployed to supply food and water.

Geronimo Paz of the Corriente Revolucionara Bolivar Zamora pointed out the stages of the attack on the infrastructure of the country. “The blackout was executed in 3 simultaneous actions: 1) the physical attack, sabotaging key plants of the system, in order to show the supposed evidence that the cause of the blackout is lack of maintenance and, therefore, government’s responsibility, 2) the electronic attack: a cyber-attack to the central control system and 3) the electromagnetic attack. This may sound like science fiction, but beware, the 4th generation war has a lot of that and that

is exactly why it is deniable.” He noted that the enemy’s aim was to create chaos and blame it on the government, and use this opportunity to question the government’s legitimacy.

Social movements and organizations part of the ALBA Movements Venezuela Chapter issued a statement condemning the attacks stating: “We demand that this action against the civilian population be categorized as a state crime against humanity by the Government of Donald Trump...We know that this attack obeys the need of the U.S. to take control of our oil, and for that, they are determined to make our people suffer, as Marco Rubio, Mike Pompeo, John Bolton, Elliot Abrams, Mike Pence and Donald Trump have already declared.

In view of this, we reaffirm the determination of our people to be free and maintain the democracy and sovereignty that we have conquered in these years. The destiny of Venezuela is to be defined by Venezuelan men and women in peace. We will continue raising the flags of our historic project: communal socialism from the power of the people.”

What is not said about BREXIT!

1 → The BBC’s political editor Laura Kuenssberg said the prime minister was “likely” to head to Strasbourg later - where European Parliament is based.

■ **What the BBC does not say!**

Like many English media, the BBC does not reveal many of the behind-the-scenes truths about the choices and policies of the two traditional parties in terms of exit from Europe.

Britain should leave the EU in March, but parliamentarians opposed the prime minister’s plan in January. They wanted to make changes to the plan. However, there are other realities beyond the controversy that has emerged between the supporters and opponents of PM’s plan!

It should not be forgotten that according to the statements of the officials of both mainstream British parties, the Labor Party and the Conservative Party, the probability of holding a referendum is not to be ruled out again.

The precondition for a referendum on this is to “create blind nodes” on the BREXIT, and to make demands among public opinion to hold a referendum again. The British government has allegedly committed itself to pursuing its departure from Europe (following the 2016 referendum), but is actually redirecting public opinion to a referendum. It is stressed that holding a re-referendum is the backdrop of the headlines of both the traditional British parties. In such a situation, “the complexity of the mystery of the departure of Europe” by media like the BBC is a policy that we have been seeing over the past two years.

Human rights and democracy in U.S. is questionable

1 → According to analysis of the three-year National Commonwealth Fund of 2017, the United States ranked last overall among the 11 countries for six consecutive times on measures of health system equity, access, administrative efficiency, care delivery, and health care outcomes. Despite having the most expensive health care system, the U.S. has the highest costs and lowest overall performance of the nations in the study.

Another unfortunate news is that in the U.S. every day 115 people die after overdosing on opioids. At the end of the 1990s, pharmaceutical companies began massive advertising campaigns to convince doctors and medical centers to prescribe non-addictive painkillers. And the results of the over-prescription of antidepressants and ultimately consumer addiction, which provided good benefits to these companies. Authorities are trying to restrict the administration of these drugs through powerful lobbyists. Once again, the overwhelming interest in politicians’ health influences the majority of society. The issue is not that there are no good drugs in the U.S. but millions of Americans do not have the power to buy good medications.

Some drug companies have been acting very unusually. They have been increasing the price of drugs without any explanation in recent years, for example, the cost of insulin has increased by 325 percent for people with diabetes, Lomustine, used for the treatment of cancer since 1993, has increased 1,400 percent, the anti-allergic Epi Pen, which was sold for \$57 in 2007, has now risen to \$500, and the cost of 30 cyclosporine capsules has risen from \$500 to \$10,800 for treating tuberculosis.

Life expectancy for U.S. residents has declined in the past three consecutive years to 1 percent decline from 1915 to 1918, given the fact that the country was engaged in the global war and the epidemic of influenza those years.

From 1990 through 2016, education ranking in the U.S. fell from 6 to 27, making it the worst education system among developed countries.

In Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib, prisoners openly face violation of human rights, or people like Gina Haspel, who was directly involved in the U.S. government’s torture program, became the CIA director in the Trump administration.

In the Black and Latin regions, police excessive force has declined. According to Boston University, the systematic killing of black men by the police represents a structural racism in American society, reflects in a judicial system against black communities.

Paul Butler, author of the book Chokehold: Policing Black Men, argues, “If the police patrolled white communities with the same violence that they patrol poor black neighborhoods, there would be a revolution.”

Americans make up about 4.4 percent of the global population but own 42 percent of the world’s guns. The highest number of school shootings belongs to America. Since 2002, some 400 students, teachers, and school staff have been killed with guns. Trump and the National Rifle Association (NRA) insist the root of the problem is not guns but a range of issues such as mental health.

Seventy five percent of the population demands more control over the sale of guns and firearms possession, but the demands of this overwhelming majority are being trampled by the NRA’s demands.

The NRA is an American non-profit organization and lobby for gun manufacturers and owners. The organization says it has around five million members who affect the election process. In the 2016 Presidential election cycle, the NRA spent almost \$30 million supporting Trump and \$5 million for senators like Marco Rubio of Florida.

Violations of the rights of ethnic and religious minorities, and the strengthening of fascist groups with direct or indirect support from the central government and some state governments has increased this century. This is a worrying scenario for millions of blacks and Latinos and other minorities in the U.S.

The most obvious violation of the human rights agenda is the departure of the U.S. from the United Nations Human Rights Council. Undoubtedly, American politicians have been aiming to escape accountability for the massacres in Yemen and Palestine, the forced separation of immigrant children from their parents and other horrendous issue.

Concern for Venezuela, Yemen, Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, which began in the last two decades under the name of human rights and democracy, resulted in aggression and violence. The U.S. military expenditures all told at pushing one trillion dollars annually.

The U.S. military expenditure in 2019 is more than \$680,000 million, which is more than the combined budgets of China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, India, France, Britain and Japan.

Even in economic freedom (12th in the world), or in GDP growth (147 out of 224 countries), such a rating does not exist.

The U.S. is a military system based on warfare, and humanitarian assistance is an instrument to promote chaos and create benefits.

But with the current international situation, what the world is experiencing is actually the slow collapse of a superpower. That’s why the U.S. is trying to upset the Maduro government in Venezuela and control others countries in Latin America.

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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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Electronic hospital information system to start next year

HEALTH DESK **TEHRAN** — Electronic system for hospital treatment services will become operational in the next Iranian calendar year, beginning on March 21, the deputy health minister Qasem Janbabaie said, Mehr reported on Saturday. Prescription, clinical guidelines, medical decisions, and all the process during hospitalization should be available in an electronic record, he added.

It is not useful to provide some services in electronic services and some others on paper, he said, adding that the electronic structure should be applied to all health-care services.

Electronic prescribing system - a technology framework that allows physicians to write and send prescriptions to a participating pharmacy electronically - has become operational in Iran.

The project was first piloted in the south-

eastern province of Kerman and it is now operational in 31 provinces nationwide, CEO of Salamat insurance company Taher Mouhebati said, ISNA news agency reported on Sunday.

An electronic health record or electronic medical record is the systematized collection of patient and population electronically-stored health information in a digital format.

These records can be shared across different health care settings. Records are shared through network-connected, enterprise-wide information systems or other information networks and exchanges.

The electronic health record may include a range of data, including demographics, medical history, medication and allergies, immunization status, laboratory test results, radiology images, vital signs, personal statistics like age and weight, and billing information.



Type-2 diabetes: 'Weight loss arrests disease for years'

Consuming 850 calories a day for three months and then keeping the weight off can arrest type-2 diabetes for at least two years, a study suggests.

The GP-led programme worked for more than a third of participating patients.

The study report builds on earlier work suggesting weight loss is one key solution and offers more time off medication than previously thought.

Experts say it challenges the view that type-2 diabetes is always a life-long, progressive condition.

Type-2 diabetes affects one in 16 adults in the UK.

It causes uncontrolled sugar levels that can lead to serious complications such as amputations, visual problems and heart disease.

■ 'I lost 17kg in 12 weeks'

Joe McSorley, 58, who lives near Glasgow, was diagnosed with type-2 diabetes six years ago and though he was given two types of medication, found it hard to keep his blood sugars under control.

He told BBC news: "All I could see for the future was continuing to take these pills forever."

When he started the trial diet - consuming only low-calorie shakes every day - he found it very difficult.

But he saw rapid results, dropping from 90kg (14st 2lb) to 73kg in just 12 weeks.

And, Mr McSorley said, the hardest part came when he had begun to eat solid food again.

"Using the shakes is only the start of the journey," he said.

"It gets you to the point where you can take destiny in your own hands."

Two years later, his weight is stable at 77kg.

He exercises regularly and hopes to become a lifestyle coach when he retires.

Mr McSorley was one of 149 people in Scotland and Tyneside put on a 12-30-week low-calorie diet of shakes and drinks to help trigger weight loss.

They were then reintroduced to solid meals over the next few weeks.

After one year, 69 of them (46%) had gone into remission, compared with just 4% of people given standard treatment including pills.

And after two years, 53 of them (36%) remained off medication and in remission.

Participants were encouraged to keep healthy through monthly meetings and had the option of a "rescue" plan including using the liquid diet again, if they gained weight.

■ 'Not all about weight'

Prof Roy Taylor, an investigator on the trial at Newcastle University, said: "These results are a significant development and finally pull down the curtain on the era of type-2

diabetes as an inevitably progressive disease."

Researchers said most of the weight-loss group whose diabetes had gone into remission had lost 10kg or more and maintained this weight loss during the trial.

But Dr Nicola Guess, at King's College London, said weight loss was not the whole story.

"Type-2 diabetes returned in a minority of people (16%) who kept off 15kg or more for two years," she said.

"Further research is needed to help us understand why this is."

"It is possible that these people had type-2 diabetes for longer before losing weight or perhaps there might be dietary or genetic factors which contributed."

The NHS in England is planning on piloting the programme and NHS Scotland has begun rolling out similar schemes. But NHS experts caution that this type of calorie restriction is not be suitable for everyone and should be done under medical supervision only.

The charity Diabetes UK, which funded the study, said the findings were exciting but added: "We know type-2 diabetes is a complex condition and this approach will not work for everyone."

The trial is published in the Lancet Diabetes and Endocrinology.

(Source: BBC)

Missing out on sleep robs brain cells of ability to repair themselves

People who do not get enough sleep are robbing their brains of the vital time they need to repair themselves, according to a new study.

While we are awake, our brain cells are slowly accumulating DNA damage that can accumulate to unsafe levels and lead to problems.

However, every night we are granted a reprieve as the machinery of the cells perform vital maintenance work to fix issues that have accumulated during the day.

The new work, which examined brain cells in fish, helps solve the long-standing mystery of why sleep is so crucial that we spend a third of our existence doing it.

All animals with nervous systems, even the simplest creatures like jellyfish and worms, enter sleep-like states at regular intervals.

But while sleep deprivation is harmful to cognitive performance and can even be fatal, understanding why rest is necessary at a cellular level has proved elusive to scientists.

To understand this complicated question, Professor Lior Appelbaum of Bar-Ilan University managed to take time-lapsed images of individual neurons in the brains of living zebrafish.

They showed that in a process not seen in other cells, natural repair processes in neurons go into overdrive during sleep, repairing harmful breaks that build up in their genetic code.

Double-strand breaks – when both parts of the DNA's double helix are severed – appear regularly in cells, and can cause them to die or mutate.

Unfortunately, besides obviously harmful things like radiation exposure, normal brain activity can also lead to these breaks as part of natural wear and tear.

Professor Appelbaum called this damage "the price of wakefulness", but said fortunately sleep provides a solution as the cells' maintenance processes kick in.

"It's like potholes in the road," the neurologist explained.

"Roads accumulate wear and tear, especially during daytime rush hours, and it is most convenient and efficient to fix them at night, when there is light traffic."

In their study, published in the journal Nature Communications, the scientists made use of the transparent heads of young zebrafish to provide a window into the tiny processes in their brains.

A powerful microscope revealed the creatures' DNA springing into action at night, and the researchers suggested this movement could serve as the first reliable indicator of sleep that is not based on monitoring animal behaviour.

Though much smaller than humans, the scientists said the processes in the fishes' brains served as a reminder of the restorative function of sleep, even down to a cellular level.

(Source: The Independent)

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Iran, Iraq likely to relax visa rules to boost investment, tourism

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran and Iraq are working out an agreement to ease some visa rules in an effort to boost investment and tourism, IRNA reported.

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Sunday that good news about easing visa requirements between the two neighbors is probable to be heard during President Hassan Rouhani's visit to Baghdad.



Zarif made the remarks in Baghdad addressing a news conference.

"In today's negotiations between delegations of the two countries, good agreements were made, including visa issuance," the foreign minister said, expressing hope that simultaneous with President Rouhani's presence in Baghdad on Monday, the two nations will hear good news in this regard.

The Iranian delegation have proposed visa requirements between the two countries to be revoked or free of charge or become reduced at least, the FM added.

Negotiations in this regard are still underway, Zarif concluded. Rouhani arrived in Baghdad on Monday for a three-day visit.

Enameled works on show in Tehran

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — An exhibit, featuring collections of enameled works by 15 Iranian crafters, has opened doors to the public in Tehran's Sa'dabad Cultural-Historical Complex, IRNA reported.



Minakari or Enameling is the art of painting, coloring and ornamenting the surface of metals by fusing over it brilliant colors that are decorated in an intricate design.

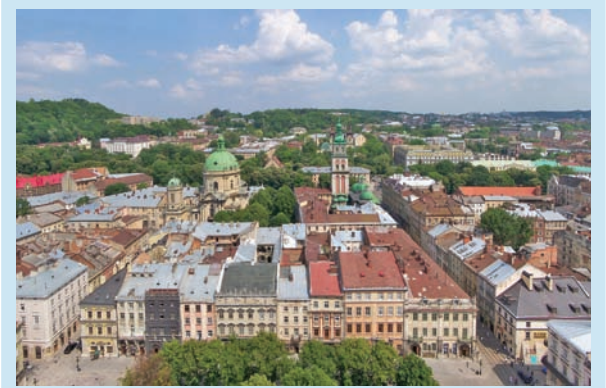
Visitors may also tour the complex, itself a top tourist destination of the Iranian capital. Sprawled on about 110 hectares of a mountainside parkland, the Sa'dabad was once a royal summer residence during Qajar era (1789–1925) and during its subsequent Pahlavi epoch (1925–1979).

The exhibit will be running through March 16.

ROUND THE GLOBE

L'viv – the Ensemble of the Historic Centre

The city of L'viv was founded in the late Middle Ages where a settlement had existed since the 5th and 6th centuries. It flourished as an administrative, religious and commercial center due to its favorable geographical position for trade and political development.



Today, the surviving architectural and artistic heritage, which is situated in modern Ukraine, reflects a synthesis of Eastern European traditions influenced by those from Italy and Germany. The property, "L'viv – the Ensemble of the Historic Centre", consists of two components: the primary area, encompassing the castle, its surrounding area and the city center, and to the southwest, a smaller area on St. Yuri's Hill for the ensemble of St. Yuri's Cathedral.

L'viv's historic center includes many distinct parts representing different stages in its development. The Vysokyi Zamok (High Castle) and Pidzamche (area around the castle) are the main and oldest part of the town, dating to the 5th century.

It retains its original topography with a hill, on which the castle sits, and lowlands on which a system of streets and squares developed between the 13th and 17th centuries. Evidence of occupation by separate ethnic communities is seen in the surviving buildings, including a mosque, a synagogue and a variety of religious buildings from the Orthodox, Armenian and Catholic churches.

Located on a mountain plateau to the southwest of the medieval city is the Ensemble of St. Yuri. This complex was the heart of Halychyna Church Metropolis and features buildings primarily in Baroque-style with a high artistic value.

(Source: UNESCO)

Poets' Mausoleum, a prime cultural destination

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — Poets' Mausoleum or Maqbaratoshora is a prime cultural destination for travelers to Tabriz. It attracts a great number of Iranian and foreign visitors interested in literature and art.

Some visitors say the site is photography heaven. Scenic, angular and interlocking concrete arches of the mausoleum maybe best viewed through a reflecting pool from the south.

Located in Sorkhab district, Maqbaratoshora is where over 400 writers, poets, mystics and linguists are buried from the 11th century onwards. It is a testimony to the glorious cultural scene of the northwestern Iranian city.

Formerly known as Sorkhab cemetery, its original texture was hurt by earthquakes and floods over the course of time until it was renovated and adorned with a memorial monument in the 1970s. The precise date of its establishment is not known.

Its modern design was developed by Iranian architect Gholamreza Farzanmehr who made an amalgam of modern and traditional elements of Persian architecture. Construction operation started in 1972 and was completed in 1982.

Iranian poet, linguists, and author Abu Mansur Ali ibn Ahmad Asadi Tusi is believed to be the first literary figure buried at the mausoleum. Narratives say that a tradition was established by entombing other prominent classical poets such as Khaqani, Anvari Abivardi, and Qatran Tabrizi.

Poets Shamseddin Sojasi, Shapur Nishapuri, and Homam Tabrizi are other examples of literary and cultural figures buried there.

Mohammad-Hossein Shahriar (1906 – September 18, 1988) is probably the most



renowned contemporary Iranian poet being laid to rest at the site. His mausoleum is situated in the middle of the complex with almost 30 meters in height.

Soaked in history and dotted with splendid vibrant historical sites, Tabriz has much to offer its visitors such as Azarbaijan Museum, Arg-e Tabriz, Elgoli Park, Shahriyar House Museum, Municipal

Hall, St Mary's Church, Qajar Museum, Constitution House, Khaqani Park, and Sarkis Church just to name a few.

Tabriz has long been a place of cultural exchange since antiquity. Its UNESCO-registered bazaar complex gives reference to the city's glorious past when it was a peak commercial center on the Silk Road. It is also famous for having hospitable

people, ubiquitous carpet shops, abundant public places and efficient transport system.

■ Under travelers' eyes

Here is a select of comments that visitors to the Poet's Mausoleum have posted to TripAdvisor, one of the most popular travel websites in the world:

■ "Tombs of poets"

The structure of the monument catches your eye from a far and you wouldn't know at once that you are entering a sepulcher. The places is the resting place for a large number of Tabrizi poets, the most famous of whom is Shahriar. Now, due to renovation process, one may not be able to get the photos he wishes to outside of the building. (Reza Sattarzadeh from Muscat, Oman; Reviewed September 2018)

■ "Visit the tombs"

After my visit I would say the outside of the building was more impressive than the inside. There are only a few tombs inside. (Leovanstraten2015 from Leeuwarden, the Netherlands; Reviewed April 2018)

■ "Not interesting"

The monument itself is not worth visiting, but the climb uphill and the view over Tabriz and its surrounding areas is splendid. If you decide to climb uphill together with a lot of locals you should do it in the early morning before it becomes too hot. (Rsmid1959 from Amsterdam, the Netherlands; Reviewed December 2017)

■ "Very interesting"

Not somewhere we would normally visit but we did to try and better understand the Iran people, we are glad we went. Unfortunately work is being done outside which restricts the views but inside was very interesting. (Youngone51 from New Plymouth, New Zealand; Reviewed October 2017)

Kish sets sights on more travelers, intl. events

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — As an established leisure destination, Iran's Kish Island, plans to attract more travelers by playing host to further regional and international events.

CEO of Kish Free Zone Organization (KFZO) on Sunday said that the Persian Gulf island of is prepared to host major events both in regional and international scales.

"Having proper environment, coastlines, transport and recreational infrastructures, tourism attractions and suitable sports amenities, Kish Island enjoys high capacity for hosting regional and international events," Gholamhossein Mozaffari told IRNA.

The coral island hosted six international events including five sports-related exhibitions and a scientific-research conference over the past few days, he stated.

Those events had been organized within just 10 days, he said, adding "It can demonstrate high capacity and good infrastructures of the island for turning it into a hub for international events, exhibitions and conferences."

The KFZO is in charge of handling the infrastructure affairs, development and economic growth, creating job opportunities, attracting local and foreign investors, regulating the good and labor market and ultimately utilizing the Island's tourist potentials.

Over the past couple of decades, Kish has become a beach resort where visitors can swim, shop and sample a laid-back and relatively liberated local lifestyle. It is home to free-trade-zone status, with ever growing hotels, shopping centers, apartment blocks and retail complexes.



Abarkouh hidden pearl

By Moslem Foroudi

YAZD — Abarkouh, a city with a thousand years of splendid background, is located in south west of Yazd province, with a span of 5641 square kilometers.

Abarkouh has tens of landmarks, including castles, traditional mansions, an ice house and importantly a 4500-year old cypress tree. The ice house or its equal in Persian (yakh-chal) is located right at the entrance of the city as an unmissable structure!

Boasting an elegant design, the ice house gets everybody's attention, prompting travelers to stop and take a few photos at least.

This building is almost 300 years old. When there was no electricity, no refrigerator, no appliances, people kept a huge amount of water out side of the ice house next to a very high wall. The high wall cast a shadow that kept the water cool.

But how it preserved ice for the locals in its heyday? Easy! Water turned into ice in during the wintertime. Then people cut the ice into many portable parts and put



them in the ice house, then covered the surface of the ice with a special local grass called Pizoo.

This structure is built high to minimize the contact of warm air with the ice surface as the warm air floats upwards. The feature of the ice house was essential to its functioning. Amazingly there is a well behind the ice house that is 25 meters deep. And there is a connective canal at the bottom of the ice house with the well with a slight slope.

What has been the purpose of this well? When people piled up the ice, a little amount of water remained under the heap of ice. If the water was not removed it would make the rest of the ice melt.

By channeling the water into the well, not only did they prevent the ice stored in the ice house from melting, but also they had cold and tasty water during summer months when the weather got up to 40 degrees Celsius.

They made this structure in cony form to decrease and divide the pressure onto other parts in case of collapsing. It's a wonder how people at that time knew how to meet their needs by living in harmony with the nature and the seasons.

Five must-have travel apps that you can use with or without cellular date

It's often when we leave home that we need the help of apps most. But unfortunately, that can end up eating tons of our data, adding to the already exorbitant cost of travel.

The good news is that your app store is filled with handy services that don't require too much data — if at all. The best part? They'll keep you safe and entertained without doing too much damage on your phone bill. Download these five must-have travel apps before you arrive at your destination.

■ Travel expert

This app is your travel chaperone in every sense of the word. It provides offline maps so you can navigate your new city with ease, weather functions so you can prepare for downpours, and reviews on local establishments. From the app, you can also download individual city guides for a variety of major cities like San Jose, Philadelphia and Amsterdam.

■ TripIt

The last thing you want to do on a trip is carry around a binder of all your reservation

documents or look through your overflowing inbox for confirmation numbers as the front desk attendant taps their fingers. TripIt compiles all of your bookings in one place — including hotels, rental cars and flights — and automatically builds a chronological itinerary for you. You can then send said itinerary to family and friends so they can keep track of your whereabouts and flight information. You'll need a WiFi connection in order for the app to pull all of your travel information in the first place, but you can do that at home. Once you land, the service works without data.

■ Zello

Traveling to remote or less-developed countries no longer means staying out of touch since this handy app operates like a modern-day walkie-talkie. Send photos and messages to folks at home and coordinate meet-up times with your travel buddies.

"Zello uses a fraction of bandwidth of phone calls and will often work in low bandwidth areas when phone calls won't get

through," said Zello founder Alex Gavrilov. "But it almost always works in areas with incredibly weak or almost non-detectable Internet." What's more is that Zello has historically been instrumental in allowing survivors of natural disasters, like hurricane Irma, to communicate with one another, according to Gavrilov.

■ Google Translate

Haggling at a flea market is a lot more effective when you can communicate in their mother tongue, and finding directions is a lot easier when you can ask a local.

Google Translate is beyond helpful abroad since you don't need to use your mobile web browser to look up translations. Simply choose from their 59 data-free language packs, download them to your phone, and type in the term or phrase you need translated.

If you need to translate languages that don't use the English alphabet — say, Russian or Korean — simply point your in-app camera at the phrase and it'll do all

the work for you. You can also choose to draw the characters yourself if you don't have the correct keyboard.

■ ICE - In Case of Emergency

Given the sometimes confusing process of accessing medical care abroad, we have to be extra vigilant about our health when traveling. In Case of Emergency compiles all of your information — including insurance plan, medications, medical history, conditions, allergies and more — into one place so you can show it to your travel buddy or healthcare provider in the event of an emergency. It includes a widget that allows healthcare personnel to bypass your lockscreen passcode and access the app themselves. Note that this app is Android-compatible only. For an iPhone-friendly version, access the Medical ID function on your home screen and plug in all your medical information. No matter what operating system you're on, though, both features are accessible without data.

(Source: mic.com)

Physicists are decoding math-y secrets of knitting to make bespoke materials

Knitted fabrics like a scarf or socks are highly elastic, capable of stretching as much as twice their length, but individual strands of yarn hardly stretch at all. It's the way those strands form an interlocking network of stitches that give knitted fabrics their stretchiness.

Physicists are trying to unlock the knitting "code" — the underlying mathematical rules that govern how different stitch combinations give rise to different properties like stretchiness — in hopes of creating new "tunable" materials whose properties can be tailored for specific purposes.

"Knitting is this incredibly complex way of converting one-dimensional yarn into complex fabric," said Elisabetta Matsumoto, a physicist at the Georgia Institute of Technology. "So basically this is a type of coding." Figuring out how different stitch types determine shape and mechanical strength could help create designer materials for future technologies — everything from better materials for the aerospace industry to stretchable materials to replace torn ligaments.

■ From designed structures
Knitted fabrics can technically be considered a type of metamaterial (engineered materials that get their properties not from the base materials but from their designed structures), according to Matsumoto, who points to the medieval embroidery technique known as "smocking" as an early example.

The elasticity (aka stretchiness) of knitted fabrics is an emergent property: the whole



is more than the sum of its parts. How those components (strands of yarn) are arranged at an intermediate scale (the structure) determines the macro scale properties of the resulting fabric. It's analogous to a lump

of gold, which is made up of millions of atoms at the microscale and has macro scale properties like hardness and its golden hue. But the individual atoms themselves do not possess those properties, just like the indi-

The elasticit of knitted fabrics is an emergent property: the whole is more than the sum of its parts. How those components (strands of yarn) are arranged at an intermediate scale (the structure) determines the macro scale properties of the resulting fabric.

vidual strands of yarn don't stretch the way a knitted scarf does.

An avid knitter since childhood, Matsumoto started pondering the underlying mathematics when she went into science and developed a new appreciation for all the math and materials physics behind her hobby.

■ Huge wealth of knowledge
"There's this huge wealth of knowledge in the knitting community that hasn't been translated into a quantitative model yet," she said. "We're trying to take that knowledge and bring it into the physics world, where we can study these as materials and look at elasticity and other emergent properties." In essence, knitted fabrics are composed of an interlocking series of slip knots composed of a single thread hooking back and forth on itself. (Woven fabrics, in contrast, are composed of multiple threads crossing each other.) To make a knitted stitch, you pull the slip knot through the front of the fabric; to make a purl stitch, you pull it through the back of the fabric.

"There are hundreds of books with thousands of patterns of stitches, with seemingly unbounded complexity," said Matsumoto. "And every type of stitch has a different elasticity. By picking a stitch, you are not only choosing the geometry but the elastic properties, and that means you can build in the right mechanical properties for anything from aerospace engineering to tissue scaffolding materials."

(Source: arstechnica.com)

New approach facilitates spectroscopy on individual molecules

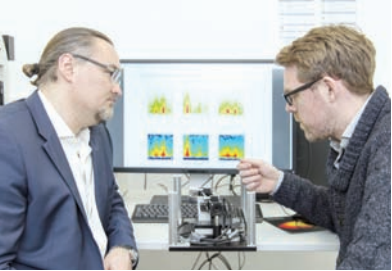
While spectroscopic measurements are normally averaged over myriad molecules, a new method developed by researchers at the Technical University of Munich (TUM) provides precise information about the interaction of individual molecules with their environment. This will accelerate the identification of efficient molecules for future photovoltaic technologies, for example.

An international team led by the TUM chemist Professor Jürgen Hauer has now succeeded in determining the spectral properties of individual molecules. The researchers acquired the absorption and emission spectra of the investigated molecules over a broad spectral range in a single measurement and accurately determined how the molecules interact with their environment, capturing and releasing energy.

Normally, these kinds of measurements are averaged over thousands, even millions, of molecules, sacrificing important detail information. "Previously, emission spectra could be routinely acquired, but absorption measurements on individual molecules were extremely expensive," explains Hauer. "We have now attained the ultimate limit of detectability."

■ The new method
The new method is based on a compact, DIN-A4-sized instrument that the Munich chemists developed in collaboration with colleagues at the Politecnico di Milano. It generates a double laser pulse with a controlled delay in between. The second pulse modulates the emission spectrum in a specific manner, which in turn provides information about the absorption spectrum. This information is then evaluated using a Fourier transformation.

The "primary advantage is that we can, with little effort, transform a conventional measurement setup for acquiring emission spectra into



a device for measuring emission and absorption spectra," says Hauer. The measurement itself is relatively easy. "At nine o'clock in the morning, we installed the apparatus into the setup at the University of Copenhagen," says Hauer. "At half past 11, we already had our first useful measurement data."

Using the new spectroscopy method, chemists now hope to study individual molecules to understand phenomena such as the energy flow in metal-organic compounds and physical effects in molecules when they come into contact with water and other solvents.

The influence of solvents at the single-molecule level is still poorly understood. The chemists also want to display the flow of energy in a time-resolved manner to understand why energy flows faster and more efficiently in certain molecules than in others. "Specifically, we are interested in the transfer of energy in biological systems in which photosynthesis takes place," says Hauer.

The researchers have cast their view on the light collection complex LH2 for future applications. "Once we understand the natural light-harvesting complexes, we can start thinking about artificial systems for deployment in photovoltaics," says Hauer.

The findings could form the basis for future technologies in photovoltaics. The goal is the development of a novel organic solar cell.

(Source: phys.org)

Massive photons could explain dark matter, but don't, suggest researchers

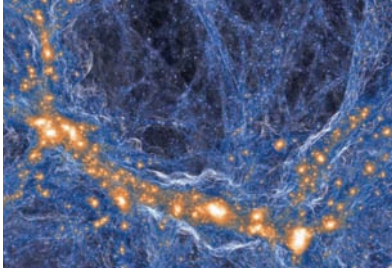
Scientists still do know for sure that something funny is going on at large scales in the universe ("large" here meaning at least as big as galaxies). In short, the numbers just aren't adding up. For example, when we look at a galaxy and count up all the hot glowing bits like stars and gas and dust, we get a certain mass. When we use any other technique at all to measure the mass, we get a much higher number. So the natural conclusion is that not all the matter in the universe is all hot and glowy.

A major piece of the dark matter puzzle (though certainly not the only one, and this will be important later in the article) comes in the form of so-called galaxy rotation curves. As we watch stars wheel about in rotation around the center of their galaxies, by all rights the ones further from the center should be moving slower than the ones closer to the center.

This is because most of the galactic mass is crowded into the core, and the outermost stars are far away from all that stuff, and by simple Newtonian gravity they should follow slow lazy orbits.

■ A game of gravity
Since this is a game of gravity, there are only two options. Either we're getting gravity wrong, or there's extra invisible stuff soaking every galaxy. And as far as we can tell, we're getting gravity very, very right (that's another article), so boom: dark matter. Something is keeping these freeheeling stars trapped inside their galaxies, otherwise they would've flung out like an out-of-control merry-go-round millions of years ago; ergo, there's a whole bunch of stuff that we can't directly see but we can indirectly detect.

Strong nuclear only operates at teensy tiny sub-atomic scales, so it's right out. And nobody cares about weak nuclear except in certain rare decays and interactions, so we can put that to the side too. And electromagnetism... well, obviously radiation and magnetic fields play a role in galactic life, but radiation always pushes outwards (so obviously isn't going to help keep fast-moving stars reined in) and galactic magnetic fields are incredibly weak



(no stronger than a millionth the Earth's own magnetic field).

Like just about everything in physics, there's a sneaky way out. As far as we can tell, the photon — the carrier of the electromagnetic force itself — is completely massless.

■ The current estimates
But observations are observations and nothing in science is known for sure, and current estimates place the mass of the photon at no more than 2×10^{-24} the mass of the electron. For all intents and purposes, this is basically zero for just about anything that anybody cares about. But if the photon does have mass, even below this limit, it can do some pretty funny things to the universe.

With the presence of mass in the photon, Maxwell's equations, the way we understand electricity, magnetism, and radiation, take on a modified form. Extra terms appear in the mathematics and new interactions take shape.

Rotation curve of the typical spiral galaxy M33 (yellow and blue points with errorbars) and the predicted one from distribution of the visible matter (white line). The discrepancy between the two curves is accounted for by adding a dark matter halo surrounding the galaxy.

But it's not easy. The magnetic fields thread throughout the interstellar gas of the galaxy, not the stars themselves. So this force can't pull on stars directly. Instead, the force has to make its pull known to the gas, and somehow the gas has to let the stars know that there's a new sheriff in town.

(Source: universetoday.com)

Why you lose hearing for a while after listening to loud sounds

When we listen to loud sounds, our hearing may become impaired for a short time. Researchers at Linköping University, Sweden, have discovered a mechanism that helps to explain how this happens. Their results are presented in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, PNAS.

"Most people have experienced that their hearing is impaired and the ear feels numb after listening to loud sounds. After a while hearing returns to normal. We have discovered that a tiny structure in the cochlea known as the tectorial membrane plays an important role in this process, by acting as a storage depot for calcium ions. These calcium ions contribute to regulating the function of the sensory cells", says Anders Fridberger at the Department of Clinical and Experimental Medicine, who has led the study.

Calcium ions, which are calcium atoms with a positive charge, play a key role in the processes that make hearing possible. The conversion of sound waves to nerve impulses takes place in the inner ear, also known as the cochlea, which looks like the spiral shell that some snails have. The cochlea contains many sensory cells, which detect sounds and generate signals that are passed on to the brain.

■ Concentration of calcium ions
Previous research has shown that the fluid that surrounds the sensory cells in the cochlea has a low concentration of calcium ions. There were, however, questions surrounding this, because sensory cells that are placed in fluids with the natural level of calcium no longer work normally. The



scientists at LiU have investigated the calcium ion concentration in the inner ear of guinea pigs, which is very similar to the human ear.

By fluorescently labelling the calcium ions, the researchers discovered that a membrane that lies on top of the sensory cells, the tectorial membrane, has a much higher concentration of calcium ions than the surrounding fluid. The membrane seems to function as a store, such that the sensory cells are surrounded by higher levels of calcium ions than previously believed.

When the scientists added a substance that mops up calcium ions, the sensory cells ceased to function. In the

next step, they exposed the inner ear to noise levels that correspond to those experienced at rock concerts, which had the same effect.

"When we expose isolated inner ears to loud noise in the lab, the level of calcium in the tectorial membrane falls, and the sensory cells cease to function. After a while, however, the calcium ion concentration returns to its previous level, and the sensory cells start to function again", says Anders Fridberger.

■ Mechanical function
Until now, scientists have thought that the tiny membrane has a mainly mechanical function, but the discovery made by the LiU researchers suggests that the tectorial membrane may play an important role in regulating hearing by storing calcium.

"We knew that the tectorial membrane is necessary for hearing, and that it must be intact and correctly located, but it has been unclear why damage to this membrane contributes to impaired hearing", says Pierre Hakizimana, one of the researchers behind the study.

The research group is now planning to investigate whether the same mechanism is important in age-related hearing impairment. The research has been financed by, among other contributors, the Swedish Research Council, the Torsten Söderberg Foundation, the Tysta Skolan Foundation and AFA Försäkrings AB.

(Source: eurekalert.org)

NASA halts InSight drilling instrument on Mars after hitting obstacle

Things have been going swimmingly for NASA's InSight lander on the surface of Mars. After a textbook landing, InSight found itself in a nice, flat area perfect for deploying its seismic sensors. The weather monitoring package even allowed NASA to set up the first interplanetary weather report. It wouldn't be a robotic mission on another planet without at least a few problems. NASA says the probe's temperature probe is stuck just below the Martian surface.

InSight has three main instruments for studying Mars. There's the Seismic Experiment for Interior Structure (SEIS), which was successfully deployed early this year. There's also the Rotation and Interior Structure Experiment (RISE), which uses the lander's x-band radio to take precise rotational readings of Mars. The third instrument is the Heat Flow and Physical Properties Package (HP3), and this is the one that's encountered a problem.

NASA often calls the HP3 a "self-hammering nail" or a "mole." The probe is supposed to dig down into the planet to a depth of five meters (16 feet), dragging a tether along with it containing a string of temperature sensors. NASA started driving the HP3 into mars on Feb. 28, but the probe only got about three-quarters of the way out of its housing before it stopped.

The HP3 instrument deployed on the surface. One-quarter of the mole is still inside the housing seen here.

The team hoped that the soil immediately under the surface would be relatively free of rocks and gravel. Even if there were some obstructions, the HP3 was designed to curve around the occasional rock. However, it can't do that when it's still partially inside the lander housing. The team has decided to pause the HP3 mission to take a detailed look at the problem.

For now, the temperature probe is working correctly. By heating to 50 degrees Fahrenheit (28 degrees Celsius), it measures how quickly heat dissipates in the Martian soil. That thermal conductivity value is necessary to calibrate the sensors the mole drags behind it. NASA doesn't want to risk damaging the mole by moving too hastily. (Source: extremetech.com)



Melting glass experiment surprises scientists by defying a law of electricity

A team of scientists working with electrical currents and silicate glass has been left gobsmacked after the glass appeared to defy a basic physical law.

If you pass an electrical current through a material, the way that current generates heat can be described by Joule's first law. It's been observed time and time again, with the temperature always evenly distributed when the material is homogeneous (or uniform).

But not in this recent experiment. A section - and only a section - of silicate glass became so hot that it melted, and even evaporated. Moreover, it did so at a much lower temperature than the boiling point of the material.

The boiling point of pure silicate glass is 2,230 degrees Celsius (4,046 degrees Fahrenheit). The hottest temperature the researchers recorded in a homogeneous piece of silicate glass during the experiment was 1,868.7 degrees Celsius.

Jain and his colleagues from materials science company Corning Incorporated were investigating a phenomenon they had described in a previous paper. In 2015, they reported that an electric field could reduce the temperature at which glass softens, by as much as a few hundred degrees. They called this "electric field-induced softening."

It was certainly a peculiar phenomenon, so they set up another experiment. They put pieces of glass in a furnace, and applied 100 to 200 volts in the form of both alternating and direct currents.

"In our experiments, the glass became more than a thousand degrees Celsius hotter near the positive side than in the rest of the glass, which was very surprising considering that the glass was totally homogeneous to begin with," Jain said.

This seems to fly in the face of Joule's first law, so the team investigated more closely - and found that the glass wasn't remaining as homogeneous as it started out. The electric field changed the chemistry and the structure of the glass on nanoscale, in just a small section close to the anode.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

Secret group of killer whales discovered in southern Ocean: new study

Killer whales are beautiful and majestic, but there's very little variation in what they look like — their shape, size and coloring are pretty standard from whale to whale. So, when people started spotting killer whales with a noticeably different physique — thinner, with much smaller white eye patches and narrower, sharp dorsal fins — scientists paid attention.

In January, an international team of researchers tracked down these potential killer whale imposters and collected samples for genetic testing that will reveal whether or not the animals are a newfound, distinct species of killer whale.

"We are very excited about the genetic analysis to come," Bob Pitman, a researcher from NOAA Fisheries' Southwest Fisheries Science Center in La Jolla, California, said in a statement. "Type D killer whales could be the largest undescribed animal left on the planet and a clear indication of how little we know about life in our oceans."

The first record of these mysterious whales dates back to 1955 when 17 of the animals stranded on the coast of New Zealand. While their markings resembled known killer whales, these animals were smaller, with a blunt snout and bulbous head. The stranded whales also had narrower, pointy dorsal fins and much smaller white patches above their eyes compared with typical killer whales. Experts speculated that the unusual whales were simply a product of a genetic aberration that existed in only those individuals.

Then, in 2005, a French scientist showed Pitman photos of some odd-looking killer whales that were stealing fish from fishers in the Crozet Islands in the southern Indian Ocean. The whales looked just like the ones that had stranded in New Zealand, more than 5,500 miles (9,000 kilometers) away. This suggested that the unique whales were more widespread than previously thought.

(Source: livescience.com)

Department of Environment to employ female rangers



W O M E N **TEHRAN** — Department of Environment (DOE) is to employ female rangers, Jamshid Mohabatkhani, the commander of DOE's environment protection unit, said here on Sunday.

Since last year (beginning March 21, 2017), some rangers have trained students and their parents which resulted in an increase of 134% in the number of rangers this year, ISNA quoted Mohabatkhani as saying.

A new project for "training 100 rangers at schools" is to be implemented, he announced.

In this direction, the DOE is employing female rangers, to wear rangers' uniform and hold training courses at schools.

Female rangers are to be employed for environment protection positions or some administrative posts, said the official.

Female rangers are ambassadors of the environment at girls' schools, he concluded.

1st exhibition of handicapped women's artworks to be held

W O M E N **TEHRAN** — The first exhibition of artworks of handicapped women is to be held March 12-17 at Tehran's Milad Tower.

The festival aims at empowering women's capabilities and discovering artistic talents of handicapped women, said Zahra Behrouz Azar, head of women's department of Tehran Municipality.

The festival will be held simultaneous with the Iranian-Islamic fashion and clothing exhibition which is to be held in 22 districts of Tehran, ISNA reported.

Out of 110 handicapped women artists, 40 are selected to participate in the exhibition.

Iranian female professor wins UK award in science and technology

W O M E N **TEHRAN** — Iranian female professor, Marzieh Moosavi-Nasab, from Shiraz University, has gained 2019's Suffrage Award in Science and Technology in the UK, IRNA reported.

The Suffrage science award is granted in order to promote the leading roles held by women in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The award, introducing women's scientific success, makes attempts to remove gender inequality in scientific fields.

Moosavi-Nasab has presented more than 250 scientific papers and she has provided guidance to more than 60 graduate students.

Dr. Zohreh Azimifar, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Shiraz University, was the previous winner of Suffrage science award, 2017.

For Iranian women, the family is the foundation of life and society and Iranian women make special efforts to en-



Zohreh Azimifar

Marzieh Moosavi-Nasab

courage their offspring to study hard in different fields of

basic sciences, arts and literature, said the female scientist speaking at the award grating ceremony in UK.

MRC London Institute of Medical Sciences tweeted that Azimifar, associate professor of Shiraz University and adjunct professor of University of Waterloo has passed her heirloom to Marzieh Moosavi-Nasab, also of Shiraz University, for having numerous impacts in motivating and encouraging young students, in particular female students, to continue in higher education.

The Suffrage Science scheme celebrates women in science for their scientific achievement and for their ability to inspire others. It encourages women to enter scientific subjects, and to stay. This public engagement scheme was initiated in 2011, by the MRC Clinical Sciences Centre (CSC), a biomedical research institute of the UK's Medical Research Council.

The award was granted on the occasion of the International Women's Day, March 8th.

Out-of-school girls decrease to 3% over four decades: VP

W O M E N **TEHRAN** — Iranian Vice President for Women's and Family Affairs, Masoumeh Ebtekar, has said that the rate of out-of-school girls in the country has decreased from 38 percent to 3 percent over the four past decades

Ebtekar praised women's progress in different fields of high education, sports, women, and health.

She made the remarks in a meeting with Deputy Human Rights Commissioner, Kate Gilmore, in Tehran on Wednesday, ILNA reported.

The official further criticized sanctions against Iran and its negative impact on health and nutrition, medicine, life quality, agriculture and environment as a clear violation of human rights.

Women's strategy is to make more efforts



on production and entrepreneurship, stated the vice president.

Referring the concept of gender equality, Ebtekar noted that it is welcomed in Islamic countries.

Gilmore for her part said "Iranian Women's progress is honorable for the regional viewpoint and not receiving international support for women's development is fully understandable."

20 women killed in latest Saudi massacre in Yemen

Nearly two dozen women and a child were killed in the latest round of Saudi airstrikes in Yemen as the Riyadh regime presses ahead with its atrocious campaign against the impoverished southern neighbor.

Local sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Saudi warplanes bombarded residential buildings in Talan village of Kushar district in Yemen's northwestern province of Hajjah on Sunday afternoon, leaving 20 women and a child dead, Arabic-language al-Masirah television

network reported.

The sources added that the attacks leveled five houses to the ground. Locals were looking for possible survivors under the rubble.

Saudi warplanes also reportedly targeted ambulances, preventing doctors and paramedics from reaching the area, Press TV reported.

The leader of Yemen's Houthi Ansarullah movement recently said Yemeni women and children are being bru-

tally killed by the U.S. and Western-made munitions used in the campaign.

Delivering a televised speech broadcast live from the Yemeni capital, Sana'a, on February 25, Abdul-Malik al-Houthi said, "The main goal of the enemies of Islam from the ongoing aggression against Yemen is to get full control over us. However, the most important outcome of Islam ... is to protect us against slavery and exploitation."

(Source: IQNA)

South Pars Gas Field, Iran's Trump Card in Gas Exports in Global Market

Islamic Republic of Iran faced with the problem of gas cut in household, industrial and petrochemical sectors until a few years ago. Presently, the country has managed to meet its gas demand in domestic due to the South Pars Gas Field. Not only country's demand to gas has been met in the current situation, but also it [Iran] has currently got the lion's share of gas exports in the global markets due to the existence of the South Pars Gas Field. In general, giant steps have been taken in this regard.

In the past years, we witnessed the gas cut in cold areas of the country but after the launch of South Pars Gas Field, gas production volume increased significantly in the country and following, gas shortage problem was removed completely.

Now, the daily gas production volume in the country has hit more than 800 million cubic meters/day which exceeds the domestic demand. Under such circumstances, the country even enjoys high capability of meeting gas demand of a number of neighboring countries.

It is predicted that total gas production volume in the country will hit 1.2 billion cubic meters/day with the launch of all phases of South Pars Gas Field.

Once all phases of South Pars Gas Field are put into operation, total gas production volume in the country will increase up to 1.2 billion cubic meters/day. This issue has caused that large gas consumers in the world such as Europe, Indian subcontinent have shown deep interest to meet a part of their gas demand from the Islamic Republic of Iran.

■ Registering Daily Gas Production Record of 600mcb Gas in South Pars Gas Field

The gas production volume from first 10 phases of South Pars Gas Field in 2013 hit approx. 285 million cubic meters, the volume of which was accelerated when the 11th government assumed office.

Given the above issue, volume of gas production in South Pars Gas Field increased considerably during 11th and 12th governments.

Presently, the daily gas production volume in this area has exceeded 600 million cubic meter. Moreover, meeting domestic



demand, Iran's extraction of gas from the field has exceeded neighboring Qatar.

■ Iran, among World's Great Gas Giants

According to the annual report released by the British Petroleum (BP) in 2017, Iran stands at second rank after Russia in terms of rich gas reserves, owning 33.200 trillion cubic meters of gas. In this regard, Islamic Republic of Iran accounts for 17.2 percent of rich gas reserves in the world.

Also, with the annual production of 223 billion and 900 million cubic meters of gas, Islamic Republic of Iran stands at third rank after US and Russia in terms of gas reserves, accounting for 6.1 percent share of gas reserves in the international arena.

■ Iran Seeking to Get 10% Share of Gas Exports in the World Market

Now, Islamic Republic of Iran holds about 1.5 percent of gas exports share in the global market, so that Iran can increase its gas export share in the regional and international markets due to its rich gas reserves and also its strategic situation.

In this way, Tehran tries to increase its gas export share in the world market at least 10 percent hike.

Accordingly, daily gas exports of 200

million cubic meters of gas/day has been targeted in the 6th Five-Year Socioeconomic and Cultural Development Plan, so that priority will be given to neighboring countries in the field of export of gas.

European continent is the next destination for Iran's gas exports, based on which, it is more likely that 30 billion cubic meters of gas would be exported to Europe. In this regard, Iran intends to get lion's share of energy market in European continent.

■ Iran's Gas Export Markets

Since the country enjoys rich gas reserves in the world, Iran has not managed to export its gas to the international markets properly due to the shortage of production in the country and also outbreak of tough sanctions imposed by the US against Iran.

Gas pipeline and LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) are the most important methods for exporting gas to other countries, so that Islamic Republic of Iran has thus far managed to export its gas via this pipeline.

Gas exports through LNG needs to advanced and sophisticated technologies which belong to a limited number of countries. In general, Iran has not thus far managed to get access to the international markets in the field of export of gas.

Presently, Turkey and Iraq are considered

as Iran's main gas export markets, followed by the Republic of Azerbaijan and Armenia that purchase a partial and meager volume of gas from Iran.

In other words, Republic of Azerbaijan and Armenia import small volume of Iranian gas.

Currently, 30 million cubic meters of gas is exported to neighboring Turkey per day. Statistics showed that the average volume of gas exports to neighboring Iraq is 15 million cubic meter per day. With the agreements made in this regard, Iran's gas exports will increase to 40 million cubic meter in coming years.

The average Iran's gas exports to Armenia stands at 1 million cubic meters/day, so that Iran receives electricity from Armenia in exchange for exporting gas to this country.

Exporting gas to the Republic of Azerbaijan is carried out in two forms: In the first method, approx. 1 million cubic meters of gas is swapped (exchanged) from the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Nakhichevan Autonomous Region and in the second method, an Iranian company based in Turkmenistan buys gas and sells 6 million cubic meters/day in the Republic of Azerbaijan, so that this project has been ceased at the current condition.

In recent years, a number of European countries including Georgia, Bulgaria and Greece have raised the gas import from the Islamic Republic of Iran but this issue has not yet been finalized.



Fresh U.S.-led air raids kill dozens of civilians in Syria

1→ The development came a few days after U.S.-led coalition warplanes dropped white phosphorus bombs on Baghouz, leaving a number of citizens, mostly women and children, dead.

The U.S.-led coalition has been conducting airstrikes and operations against what are said to be Daesh targets inside Syria since September 2014 without any authorization from the Damascus government or a United Nations mandate.

The military alliance has repeatedly been accused of targeting and killing civilians. It has also been largely incapable of achieving its declared goal of destroying Daesh.

On February 12, the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, in two separate letters addressed to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and the former rotating president of the Security Council, Anatolio Ndong Mba, denounced the coalition strikes conducted against Baghouz a day earlier, saying the U.S.-led warplanes had pounded a refugee camp.

Local sources told the state-run Ikhbariyah Syria television news network that 16 civilians, including seven children, were killed as a result of the raid.

“This new crime is in line with the series of war crimes and crimes against humanity, which the U.S.-led coalition has perpetrated against Syrian people, its continued support for terrorism, and its use of terrorists and separatist militia forces to advance its fiendish plots aimed at Syria’s sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity,” said the letters.

The ministry also called on the UN Security Council to stand up against such attacks and crimes.

It also demanded that the UN body assume its responsibilities regarding the establish-



ment of international peace and security, conduct an international probe into these criminal acts, condemn them, and put an immediate halt to such air raids as well as the “aggressive” presence of American and other foreign military forces in Syria.

■ U.S.-backed militants prevent Syrians from leaving camp

U.S.-sponsored militants are preventing displaced Syrians stranded in a camp near the Jordanian border from leaving the site toward government-controlled areas, a Syrian analyst says.

Mazen Bilal, a political analyst, told Reuters on Monday that the militants had blocked civilians at the Rukban camp from using a safe passage set up by the Syrian government and Russia last month to leave the area.

The camp is located near the U.S. base at

al-Tanf which is a key center for training and equipping militants opposed to the Syrian government.

U.S. reports have said the base will stay despite President Donald Trump’s announcement in December to withdraw troops from Syria.

In February, Russia and Syria announced that two humanitarian passages had been opened for the displaced Syrians to move to other places.

Bilal said the Syrian government hopes to solve the problem in Rukban as soon as possible from a humanitarian perspective and expects the militants not to cause trouble.

“Inside this camp, there are some Syrian civilians as well as militants and some remnants of Daesh. The Syrian government hopes to solve the problem of militants inside

Rukban camp, so as to prevent them from unleashing attacks.”

According to a joint statement by Syria and Russia, some militant groups at the Rukban camp are holding people hostage, which make rescue operations impossible.

Moreover, the U.S. forces in al-Tanf zone failed to ensure the safe passage of the rescue convoy through the occupied area, which actually jeopardized the rescue operation.

Therefore, Bilal said, the U.S. forces do not want to withdraw from al-Tanf zone because of its strategic importance, so it collaborates with anti-government militants to justify its presence in the zone.

“There is some specific reason why the U.S. forces prevented the rescue convoys from entering the camp, except for unwillingness to help,” he said.

“If they allowed the vehicles to enter, some militants would be transferred. The U.S. wants to take more actions or impose pressure on the Syrian government under the pretext of the militants.”

According to a survey conducted by the United Nations and the Syrian Red Crescent Society, 95 percent of about 45,000 Syrians held in Rukban wish to leave the camp as soon as possible.

Last week, Russia and Syria called on the U.S. to release the Rukban camp residents and ensure their access to places of permanent residence.

Many of the residents at Rukban have fled areas seized by Daesh terrorists, who have now lost nearly all the territory they once held.

The UN says the residents, mostly women and children, are trapped inside the camp where conditions are desperate.

(Source: agencies)

Malaysia frees Indonesian suspect in Kim Jong Nam murder case

An Indonesian woman accused in the 2017 killing of the North Korean leader’s half-brother was freed on Monday, as a Malaysian court dropped the murder charge against her in a case that drew suspicions of being a political assassination.



As the court gave its decision, Siti Aisyah, 26, turned to her Vietnamese co-defendant Doan Thi Huong, 30, in the dock and the two women, who had been facing the death penalty together, embraced tearfully. They stood accused of poisoning Kim Jong Nam, the half-brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, with liquid VX, a banned chemical weapon, at Kuala Lumpur airport in February 2017.

Following the dramatic decision to release Siti Aisyah, a defence lawyer asked for an adjournment in the case against Huong, in order to submit a request that charges be dropped against her too.

Defense lawyers have maintained that the women were pawns in an assassination orchestrated by North Korean agents.

Interpol had issued a red notice for four North Koreans who were identified as suspects by Malaysian police and had left the country hours after the murder.

During the trial, the court was shown CCTV footage of two women allegedly assaulting Kim Jong Nam while he prepared to check-in for a flight at Kuala Lumpur’s international airport.

Siti Aisyah, who had worked as a masseuse at a hotel in the Malaysian capital, and Huong, who described herself as an actress, had maintained that they believed they had been hired to participate in a reality TV prank show.

Once the court released her, Siti Aisyah wearing a black traditional Malay dress and headscarf, was rushed to the Indonesian embassy, where she spoke briefly with journalists.

“I feel so happy. I did not expect that today I would be released,” Siti Aisyah said, adding that she was healthy and had been treated well in prison.

Prosecutors told the court on Monday that they had been instructed to withdraw the charge against Siti Aisyah. No reason was given for the application.

While the court discharged Siti Aisyah from the case, it rejected her lawyer’s request for a full acquittal, as it said that the trial had already established a prima facie case and she could be recalled if fresh evidence emerged.

The defence had disputed whether the CCTV footage was clear enough to identify the Indonesian woman as an assailant, or establish what she had done to the victim.

Gooi Soon Seng, Siti Aisyah’s lawyer, expressed happiness with the outcome, but said his client was “a scapegoat”.

“I still believe that North Korea had something to do with it,” Gooi said. Kim Jong Nam had lived in exile in Macau for several years before the killing, having fled his homeland after his half-brother became North Korea’s leader in 2011 following their father’s death.

Some South Korean lawmakers said the North Korean regime had ordered the assassination of Kim Jong Nam, who had been critical of his family’s dynastic rule. Pyongyang has denied the accusation. Left to stand trial by herself after Siti Aisyah’s release, Huong was still sobbing as she prepared to take the stand on Monday at the start of her defense.

But, the court agreed to resume proceedings on Thursday, pending a reply from the attorney-general to a request that charges against her also be withdrawn.

“The charge against Siti Aisyah was withdrawn, but the charge against Doan (Thi Huong) was not, and no reason was advanced,” Hisyam Teh, Huong’s lawyer, said.

Although they had regularly been brought to the dock together, they were being tried separately in the case.

Siti Aisyah’s trial was suspended in December as her lawyers argued with prosecutors over access to statements made by seven witnesses.

Prosecutor Muhammad Iskandar Ahmad told Reuters the decision to withdraw the charge against her was made based on “several representations”, without elaborating.

Indonesia’s law minister, Yasonna H. Laoly, said Siti Aisyah’s release was the result of high-level diplomacy by his government, adding that she would board a flight home later on Monday.

Yasonna had earlier written to Malaysia’s attorney-general, laying the blame on North Korea.

“Miss Aisyah was deceived and had no awareness whatsoever that she was being used as an intelligence tool of North Korea,” Yasonna wrote.

(Source: Daily Star)

Hariri, Saudi king talk regional developments

Prime Minister Saad Hariri held talks with Saudi King Salman in Riyadh Monday on developments in the region and in Lebanon, according to a statement from Hariri’s office.



Hariri and the Saudi leader also looked into ways to strengthen bilateral cooperation between Lebanon and Saudi Arabia, the statement added.

The meeting was attended by Saudi Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Assaf, Saudi royal court envoy Nizar al-Aloula, Saudi Ambassador to Lebanon Walid Bukhari and Lebanese Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Fawzi Kabbara.

(Source: Daily Star)

Canada’s no-sex, no-money scandal could topple Trudeau

There’s no money, no sex and nothing illegal happened. This is what passes for a scandal in Canada.

U.S. President Donald Trump has been engulfed in allegations involving possible collusion with Russia and secret payments to buy the silence of a porn star. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is facing a controversy that seems trivial by comparison, but it could topple him in elections later this year.

Two high-profile women ministers in Trudeau’s Cabinet, including Canada’s first indigenous justice minister, resigned in protest, and his top aide and best friend quit too.

The former justice minister and attorney general, Jody Wilson-Raybould, says Trudeau and senior members of his government pressured her in a case involving a major Canadian engineering company accused of corruption related to its business dealings in Libya. Trudeau reportedly leaned on the attorney general to instruct prosecutors to reach the equivalent of a plea deal, which would avoid a criminal prosecution of SNC-Lavalin, because he felt that jobs were at stake.

“People south of the border would be astonished to think that this is the type of scandal that they have in Canada,” said Eddie Goldenberg, a former adviser to former Prime Minister Jean Chretien.

Many countries would be jealous of a scandal that went no further than a prime minister asking another minister to do something she is legally entitled to do, Goldenberg said.

“I just don’t really see it as a scandal,” he said. “There is a political correctness here. Nobody wants to go after an indigenous woman minister. It’s become politically incorrect to question the former minister.”

Trudeau has said he asked Wilson-Raybould to revisit her decision not to instruct prosecutors and said she agreed to consider that. He denied applying any inappropriate pressure, saying he and his officials were only pointing out that prosecution could endanger thousands of jobs.

SNC-Lavalin has pleaded not guilty to fraud and corruption charges related to allegations it paid about \$35 million (CA\$47 million) in bribes to public officials in Libya between 2001 and 2011.

“It’s a pseudo-scandal. It’s crap. What the hell? You are doing business in Libya and you are not bribing?” said Robert Bothwell, a professor of Canadian history and international relations at the University of Toronto. “It does suggest to me that the director of public prosecutions ... is also nuts. And so is Wilson-Raybould. These people are delusional.”

Wilson-Raybould was demoted from her role as attorney

general and justice minister in January as part of a Cabinet shuffle by Trudeau. She has testified that she believes she lost the justice job because she did not give in to “sustained” pressure to instruct the director of public prosecutions to negotiate a remediation agreement with SNC-Lavalin.

That solution would have avoided a potential criminal conviction that would bar the company from receiving any federal government business for a decade. The company is a major employer in Quebec, Trudeau’s home province. It has about 9,000 employees in Canada and more than 50,000 worldwide.

The company publicly led the lobbying charge for a law that allows for deferred prosecution agreements as a way to resolve the criminal charges it faces. The new attorney general has not ruled out approving a settlement.

Wilson-Raybould has said herself that the pressure from Trudeau and others was not illegal and that she was not explicitly instructed to do a remediation agreement.

Gerald Butts, Trudeau’s former principal secretary and best friend who resigned, said nothing inappropriate was alleged until after Wilson-Raybould left the Cabinet, suggesting she felt sour grapes about losing her dream job.

Opposition Conservative Andrew Scheer leader has demanded that Trudeau resign, saying he tried to interfere in a criminal prosecution. Canadian media have covered the story as intensely as American networks have covered Trump, noted Nelson Wiseman, a professor at the University of Toronto.

“Trudeau would not be able to get away with what Trump does because the political cultures and the state of political polarization of the two countries are still quite different,” Wiseman said.

The differences among Canadian media outlets, for example, are “relatively narrow compared to the chasms between Fox and MSNBC or CNN. The American media are reporting on two different worlds. The Canadian media are reporting on the same Wilson-Raybould-Trudeau story,” Wiseman added.

Daniel Beland, a politics professor at McGill University in Montreal, said Trudeau has framed himself differently than Trump. Trump said sympathetic things about Russia during the campaign and was elected despite that and other controversies, giving him “the sense that he can do anything and his base will still follow him.”

Trudeau, meanwhile, promised transparency while describing himself as a feminist who was also determined



to right the wrongs against Canada’s indigenous people. Women make up half of his Cabinet.

“He depicted himself as a feminist, as someone who believes in indigenous reconciliation, and then you have two of his top female Cabinet ministers resign, and they are depicting him in a very different light,” Beland said.

Trudeau said he tried to foster an environment where his lawmakers can come to him with concerns, but one of his female Liberal party colleagues, Celina Caesar-Chavannes, took issue with that, tweeting, “I did come to you recently. Twice. Remember your reactions?”

“When you add women, please do not expect the status quo. Expect us to make correct decisions, stand for what is right and exit when values are compromised,” she also tweeted.

Caesar-Chavannes, who is not running for re-election, has issued messages of support for Wilson-Raybould and Jane Philpott, a respected Cabinet minister who said she lost confidence in how the government has handled the affair.

“It is a fundamental doctrine of the rule of law that our Attorney General should not be subjected to political pressure or interference regarding the exercise of her prosecutorial discretion in criminal cases,” Philpott wrote in the resignation letter to Trudeau.

Other Liberal lawmakers have expressed confidence in Trudeau. The federal election is in October.

Antonia Maioni, McGill University’s dean of arts, said citizens of every democracy will look at the Trump scandals and say everything else is small potatoes.

But, she added, “I’m not sure Trump is a good reference point here. Leaders fall in parliamentary systems for many other reasons beyond personal scandal.”

(Source: AP)

Turkey protests Belgian court ruling decision on PKK

Turkey summoned the Belgian ambassador in Ankara to protest a Brussels appeals court decision that said the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, or PKK, cannot be considered to be a terrorist organization.

A Turkish Foreign Ministry official said Monday that Turkey “conveyed its unease” over the decision to Ambassador Michel Malherbe. The decision relates to a case under which Belgian federal prosecutors were seeking to try

around 30 suspected member of the PKK, who allegedly recruited young Kurds in Belgium and elsewhere in Europe, and then took them to combat training camps.

A Brussels appeal court however, ruled

Friday that “insufficient elements were provided to conclude that the PKK is guilty of terrorist offenses.” The PKK is considered a terror organization by Turkey, the United States and the EU.

(Source: AP)

Trump says he’d win if he ran in Israeli prime ministerial elections

U.S. President Donald Trump says he would gain 98 percent of the vote if he ran for Israeli prime ministerial vote.

Speaking at a closed meeting with Republican Party donors at Trump’s Mar-a-Lago residence, Trump pointed to his rare popularity among the Israelis.

He cited his controversial decision to recognize Jerusalem al-Quds as Israel’s “capital” and relocate the U.S. embassy to the city as the reasons for his support base.

Jerusalem al-Quds remains at the core of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with Palestinians hoping that the eastern part of the city would eventually serve as the capital of their future independent state.

The businessman-turned-president, however, seems to be taking his trade war to Israel.

According to Bloomberg, U.S. trade negotiators will be

visiting Israel this week to discuss upgrading the existing agricultural trade pacts and reducing tariffs for American farm exports to Israel.

Under the existing deal, virtually any product produced in Israel that can be competitive in the U.S. market, can enter the U.S. duty-free.

In contrast, U.S. products continue to face high tariffs in many sectors limiting their access to the Israeli market, according to a 2018 report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Foreign Agricultural Service.

The U.S. trade deficit with Israel, an economy 55 times smaller, was about \$14 billion in 2017.

Ever since taking office in 2017, Trump has repeatedly vowed to reduce U.S. trade deficits with its trade partners, calling out India, China and a number of European countries

for their high tariffs.

The president has put tariffs on \$250 billion of Chinese goods, as well as on most foreign steel and aluminum, solar panels and washing machines.

Trump pulled the United States out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership and renegotiated the North American Free Trade Agreement, both of which he called some of the “worst” deals.

However, the U.S. government’s Census Bureau revealed this week that the country’s trade deficit hit a 10-year high in 2018 as it grew to 621 billion dollars. That’s over \$100 billion since he entered the White House.

Trump views the trade deficit as a measure of whether the U.S. is winning or losing on trade.

(Source: Press TV)

Real Madrid captain Ramos responds to critics after season crumbles

Real Madrid captain Sergio Ramos took to Twitter on Monday to discuss some of the recent controversies that have surrounded him and the European champions as their season fell apart within the space of a week.

The defender asked himself various questions on the social networking site after Madrid suffered elimination from both the Copa del Rey and Champions League, as well as falling 12 points behind leaders Barcelona in La Liga.

“Recent events have been disastrous and I’m not hiding. We are not hiding. We the players are primarily responsible and I, as captain, more than anyone,” wrote Ramos.

“That’s why I thought that the most honest way to answer the questions that are circulating around us would be to tackle them directly.” Ramos said he was “200 percent” to blame for getting himself deliberately suspended for the second leg of the Champions League last 16 clash with Ajax Amsterdam, which Madrid lost 4-1 last Tuesday, being knocked-out 5-3 on aggregate.

Ramos was at the Bernabeu that night being filmed as part of a documentary series for Amazon, provoking some criticism from supporters. “There are certain commitments made and it never remotely went through my head that the game could have turned out as it did,” explained Ramos. “The recording itself was scaled down as the game went on.”

The defender also said the squad would not have an influence on coach Santiago Solari’s future, with the Argentine expected to be sacked on Monday per Spanish reports.

“It’s a decision that’s not ours to make and in which we never interfere,” added Ramos. “We have enormous respect for the position and we always support the Real Madrid coach.”

(Source: Reuters)

‘Extreme dizziness’ forces Serena Williams withdrawal

Serena Williams was forced to retire from her third-round match at Indian Wells after complaining of “extreme dizziness.”

The 23-time grand slam champion won the first three games of her much anticipated clash with Spain’s Garbine Muguruza in the California desert.

But she lost the next seven games and was trailing 3-6 0-1 when she called it a day.

“Before the match, I did not feel great, and then it just got worse with every second; extreme dizziness and extreme fatigue,” Williams was reported as saying on the tournament’s official website.

“By the score, it might have looked like I started well, but I was not feeling at all well physically. I will focus on getting better and start preparing for Miami.”

A Tweet from tournament organizers later said Williams was suffering from a “viral illness.”

Williams was competing in her first tournament since exiting the Australian Open at the quarter-final stage in January.

She was in fine form as she defeated former world No.1 Victoria Azarenka in the second round on Saturday.

Muguruza, a two-time grand slam champion ranked 20th in the world, will face seventh seed Kiki Bertens in the Indian Wells fourth round.

(Source: CNN)

Manchester United pushing for De Gea deal

Manchester United are pushing for a breakthrough in their contract stand-off with David De Gea before the summer to avoid fielding cut-price bids for the goalkeeper during the transfer window, sources have told ESPN FC.

United have been negotiating with the Spain international over the terms of a new five-year deal for more than a year and there are fears that if the stalemate stretches into the last 12 months of his contract, due to expire in 2020, offers from Europe’s heavyweight clubs could further complicate the situation.

Juventus, Paris Saint-Germain and Real Madrid have all been linked with a move for Spain’s No.1 and bids in the summer -- likely to be below De Gea’s market value -- would force United to choose between cashing in on a big asset or risk losing one of the world’s best goalkeepers on a free transfer a year later.

Sources have told ESPN FC that De Gea, who has made more than 350 appearances since arriving from Atletico Madrid in 2011, is keen to stay but only if the club can come up with a wage packet that reflects his importance at Old Trafford. He has won United’s player of the year award in four of the last five seasons and, at 28, is reaching his peak years.

(Source: ESPN)

‘We are teenagers in this competition’: Pep Guardiola

Pep Guardiola revealed Manchester City feel like ‘teenagers’ in the Champions League - and claimed the club’s supporters are beginning to enjoy the competition.

City should progress to the quarter finals this week, heading into Tuesday’s home second leg against Schalke with a 3-2 lead.

But Guardiola believes the Premier League champions remain way behind some of their continental rivals who boast a long, successful history in Europe.

‘I think to compare (us) with those teams - one (trophy) doesn’t change it - we are teenagers in this competition,’ Guardiola said.

‘That’s what I feel. We could win, we could make another step. You need 20 or 30 years. Of course we cannot deny that arriving in the last stages is being able to make another step forward.

‘This is not excuses. We want to win it. We push ourselves. The best way is to feel this kind of pressure. If we don’t make the latter stages, to think ‘nothing happened’ just because of our history is not the way. You have to dream and point as high as possible.

‘But we have to accept there are other teams thinking the same with a lot of talent. We want to compete against the best. We spoke many times with the players about the desire to compete with the best in Europe.’

(Source: Daily Mail)

USA’s Kelly Catlin, three-time cycling world champion, dies aged 23

One of America’s finest and most remarkable cyclists, Kelly Catlin, has died at the age of 23, USA Cycling confirmed on Sunday.

Catlin helped a dominant US team to three consecutive world titles in the pursuit between 2016 and 2018. She also won a silver medal in the team pursuit at the 2016 Olympics.

Catlin was a force in the individual pursuit too, winning bronze at the World Track Championships in 2017 and 2018. On the road, she competed for Rally UHC Cycling.

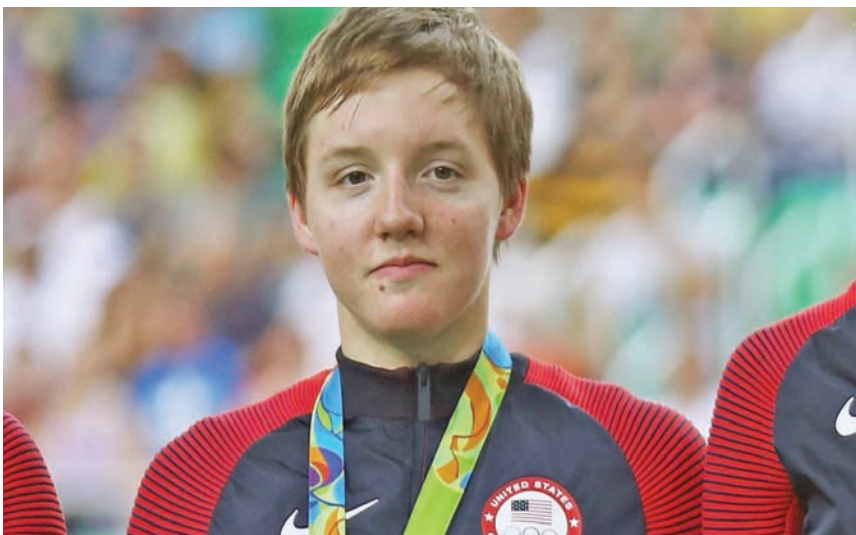
“We are deeply saddened by Kelly’s passing,” said the USA Cycling president and chief executive, Rob DeMartini.

“We will all miss her dearly. Kelly was more than an athlete to us and she will always be part of the USA Cycling family. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Catlin family. This is an incredibly difficult time and we want to respect their privacy.”

Catlin’s father, Mark, said his daughter had taken her own life.

“There isn’t a minute that goes by that we don’t think of her and think of the wonderful life she could have lived,” Mark Catlin told Velo News. “There isn’t a second in which we wouldn’t freely give our lives in exchange for hers. The hurt is unbelievable.”

Catlin was studying for a graduate de-



gree in computational and mathematical engineering at Stanford, after competing an undergraduate degree in mathematics and Chinese. She was also a talented violinist and artist.

Last month on Velo News, Catlin wrote about balancing her athletic and academic career.

IAAF maintains ban on Russian athletics over doping scandal



World athletics governing body IAAF has decided not to lift a ban on Russia’s athletics federation over doping, saying on Monday it was still waiting to receive data collected from Moscow and financial compensation for its investigations.

Russia’s athletics federation (RUSAF) has been suspended since 2015 following a World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) report that found evidence of widespread doping in the sport. The IAAF’s governing council discussed the possibility of lifting the ban at a meeting in Doha on Sunday and Monday.

But Rune Andersen, chair of the IAAF’s Russia Taskforce, said Moscow had yet to meet two conditions.

“Logistical” issues had held up financial compensation, including for the taskforce’s costs and legal costs in cases Russia had brought to the courts, he said, adding that the IAAF had also not yet received analytical data and samples from a Moscow lab, which are still being assessed by WADA.

“Those (issues) need to be resolved. As soon as we have everything we need... we will seriously reconsider and recommend to the IAAF council for reinstatement (of Russia),” Andersen said.

Russian authorities have denied their doping programme was state-sponsored but have

accepted that senior officials were involved in providing banned substances to athletes, interfering with anti-doping procedures or covering up positive tests.

The IAAF also said the Taskforce had noted comments made to German television network ARD over the weekend that some coaches, with links to the doping affair, were involved again with coaching Russian national team athletes.

“This runs counter to assurances the Taskforce has previously received from RUSAF that it is disassociating itself from the old regime,” the IAAF said.

“The Taskforce will be asking RUSAF for urgent clarification.”

Russia’s reinstatement has been rejected several times by the IAAF over the past three years. The athletics body is the only other major sports organisation to keep Russia banned for at least the coming months.

Both WADA and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) have revoked their suspensions of Russia while the International Paralympic Committee has said it will reinstate Russia by March 15.

“Of course, we have worked and are working to finding sources of funding to pay the debt,”

(Source: Reuters)

Spanish tax authorities investigating Neymar: report



Spain’s tax authorities are investigating the bonus Neymar earned when he extended his contract with Barcelona as well as his world-record transfer to Paris Saint-Germain, daily newspaper El Mundo reported Monday.

The authorities are looking into whether the Brazilian paid tax in Spain related to the two deals, the newspaper said.

Contacted by AFP, the tax office refused to comment on the report.

Neymar was a tax resident in Spain in 2017, the year he transferred from Barcelona to Paris Saint-Germain on a five-year deal for a world record 222 million euros (\$249 million).

The 27-year-old Brazilian international and Barcelona are already battling in court over a bonus the player was paid when in 2016 he signed a new five-year deal with the Catalan giants just nine months before joining PSG.

A hearing over that case is scheduled for March 21 at a Barcelona labour court.

The tax authorities have asked the labour court for all the information it has regarding this case, El Mundo said. The court declined to comment.

After Neymar agreed to move to the French side, Barcelona refused to pay the

you’re expecting a nice, encouraging slogan like, ‘Being a student only makes me a better athlete!’ After all, I somehow make everything work, right? Sure. Yeah, that’s somewhat accurate.

“But the truth is that most of the time, I don’t make everything work.”

In an email sent to the Stanford student community on Friday, Vice Provost for Student Affairs Susie Brubaker-Cole wrote that an unnamed graduate student had been found dead in her on-campus residence by her roommate, but there were no signs of foul play, according to a report on The Stanford Daily website.

“It is wrenching to have to report this news to you, even more so following the deaths of other members of our community who have passed away recently,” Brubaker-Cole wrote to students, according to The Stanford Daily. “Our thoughts and hearts are with the family and friends of the student who passed away last night.”

Catlin’s Brother, Colin, posted on his Facebook account Friday evening about his sister’s death. “My sister Kelly committed suicide last night,” he wrote. “She’s the one person I had shared almost my entire life with, and I shall miss her terribly.”

(Source: Guardian)

Shearer warns lives could be at risk after spate of pitch invasions

Former England striker Alan Shearer has warned that players’ lives could be at risk unless urgent action is taken to prevent pitch invaders as the Professional Footballers’ Association called for a full inquiry.

Aston Villa captain Jack Grealish was punched by a Birmingham fan and Manchester United defender Chris Smalling was confronted on the pitch by an Arsenal supporter in two separate incidents on Sunday.

It followed an episode on Friday in which Rangers captain James Tavernier was challenged by a pitch-invading Hibernian fan in his side’s stormy Scottish Premiership draw.

“It is absolutely disgusting and if we don’t stamp it out now, next time it could be a knife,” Shearer said in his column in the Sun newspaper.

“It’s that serious. Where are we in at football when some thug thinks that is what he is going to do?”

Grealish was assaulted at St Andrew’s by Birmingham fan Paul Mitchell, 27, who was later charged with invading the pitch and assault, while Smalling was confronted in United’s 2-0 defeat to Arsenal at the Emirates Stadium.

“The football authorities have to be seen to nail Birmingham for the behaviour of their fan,” Shearer said.

“If that means docking them points, playing in an empty stadium, so be it. There cannot be a strong enough punishment.”

In a statement read out by the prosecutor at Mitchell’s Birmingham Magistrates’ Court appearance, Grealish said he was fortunate not to have been seriously harmed.

“I cannot help but feel how lucky I was in this incident,” Grealish said.

“It could have been so much worse had the supporter



had some sort of weapon.”

Pub worker Mitchell pleaded guilty to assaulting Grealish and also admitted a charge of invading the pitch.

“He cannot explain what came over him yesterday morning. His initial foolish intention was to just go onto the pitch and whip up the crowd,” Mitchell’s solicitor told the court. Birmingham said Mitchell would be banned for life from St Andrew’s and Arsenal later pledged the same punishment would be imposed on the pitch invader at their match.

Former Aston Villa midfielder Lee Hendrie said the incident at St Andrew’s was the worst of its kind that he had seen and backed Shearer’s calls for urgent action.

■ Knife risk

Hendrie told BBC Radio: “It could have been someone running on with a knife -- how are you meant to stop this? “It’s going to take something, that’s going to cause a

big, big scene in football, that’s going to make people really stand up.”

Professional Footballers’ Association chief executive Gordon Taylor said the attack on boyhood Villa fan Grealish, who scored the winning goal against Birmingham, was “disgraceful, cowardly and criminal”.

“We have seen an increase in such behaviour at clubs this season. It’s been racist abuse, it’s been anti-Semitism and now it’s real fear for the safety of players,” Taylor told Sky Sports News.

When asked about what sanctions could be implemented, Taylor said: “There’s a combination you can consider -- fines, ground closures, playing games behind closed doors and points deductions.”

United defender Smalling took to Twitter on Monday, remarking on the incident at the Emirates.

He said: “Commenting would only add to the attention he craved... Disappointed with yesterday’s result but we’ll learn from it. Looking ahead. Have a good start to the week everyone!”

Rangers manager Steven Gerrard called on fans to take responsibility for their actions after Tavernier became embroiled in a shoving match with a Hibernian fan who jumped out of the stands to kick the ball away.

“It is a huge concern. For the image of the game, it’s not right at all,” said the former England player.

“Fans have to take responsibility and think before they do these type of things, because if it continues someone is going to get hurt and hurt badly, and no one wants it to get to that stage.”

(Source: AFP)

Winfried Schaefer calls for Esteghlal's fans to support them against Al Ain

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Esteghlal coach Winfried Schaefer has called on to the fans to provide excellent atmosphere to help them to beat Al Ain of the UAE.

Esteghlal will host the Emirati football team on Tuesday in Tehran's Azadi Stadium in matchday two of the 2019 AFC Champions League Group C.

Esteghlal and Al Ain had most recently clashed in the 2017 edition in the round of 16. Back then, Kaveh Rezaei gave the Iranian side a 1-0 win in Tehran, but an Omar Abdulrahman masterclass inspired the Emiratis to a 6-1 thumping in the return leg in Al Ain.

Since then, Rezaei and Abdulrahman have both left for pastures new. Esteghlal reached the quarter-final in 2018, while Al Ain exited at the round of 16 last year.

"First, I request the Esteghlal fans to



respect our opponents. They should not use laser pen and don't throw objects onto the field during the match. I know that our fans are the best and should be role model for anyone," the German coach said.

"We need our fans to support us against Al Ain. The fans are our 12th man on the pitch," he declared.

"Everybody knows that how strong Al Ain are. They finished in the second place in the FIFA Club World Cup UAE 2018 a couple months ago.

I watched their match against Real Madrid at the Zayed Sports City Stadium in Abu Dhabi," the Esteghlal coach added.

"We can beat Al Ain if we play them with full concentration. In my opinion, Al Ain played well against Al Hilal despite suffering a loss but we are capable of beating them in our home," Schaefer concluded.

Al Sadd stronger than Qatar national team: Branko Ivankovic

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Persepolis football team head coach Branko Ivankovic believes that Al Sadd are even stronger than current AFC Asian Cup champions Qatar.

The AFC Champions League finalists will meet the Qatari giants in Group D at Jassim bin Hamad Stadium on Tuesday.

Al Sadd will be desperate to avenge last year's semi-final defeat to Persepolis.

The Qatari side were edged out 2-1 on aggregate in the 2018 ACL semi-final after the teams had also shared a win apiece in the group stage.

"First, I would like to congratulate

the Qataris over winning the Asian Cup title. And, I think Al Sadd are even stronger than Qatar since the team take full advantage of super midfielders like Xavi Hernandez, Gabi Fernandez and the Qatari international players as well," Ivankovic said in the pre-match news conference.

"Persepolis also are a strong team and I am proud of my team and my players. We are determined to show our best form against Al Sadd. We want to show an acceptable performance against our opponents, that's why we are here," the Persepolis coach added.

"Persepolis are drawn in a difficult

group as we were held by Uzbekistan's Pakhtakor at our home last week. Also, Al Ahli of Saudi Arabia defeated strong Al Sadd 2-0. Persepolis and Al Sadd, as the last year's finalists of West Asia, failed to win their first matches and it shows how difficult our group is," Ivankovic stated.

"Persepolis are a big team in Asia and we are supported by tens of millions of fans. Al Sadd also are a great team with a great coach. I watched the match between Al Sadd and Al Ahli and I have to say the Qataris were the better team despite suffering an away defeat," Ivankovic concluded.



Al Sadd ready for revenge on Persepolis: Jesualdo Ferreira

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Al Sadd coach Jesualdo Ferreira says that they will have a difficult task against Persepolis but they want to revenge against them.

Al Sadd will host the AFC Champions League finalists in Group D at Jassim bin Hamad Stadium on Tuesday.

The Qatari giants will be desperate to avenge last year's semi-final defeat to Persepolis, where they were edged out 2-1 on aggregate in the 2018 ACL semi-final after the teams had also shared a win apiece in the group stage.

"We know that we have a difficult task against Persepolis. After suffering a defeat to Al Ahli of Saudi Arabia, we look to get back on track. It will be tough match but we are ready to win the game," Ferreira said in the pre-match news conference.

"Al Sadd have no suspended or injured players for this match. However, we have to wait for the match and will see what happens," the Portuguese coach added.

"We lost to Persepolis in the last year's semis and now are motivated to beat them. We expect our fans to help us against Persepolis," Ferreira sated.

Preview - Group C: Esteghlal FC (IRN) v Al Ain FC (UAE)



Islamic Republic of Iran's Esteghlal welcome UAE's Al Ain to Azadi Stadium as the two wounded sides look to make amends in matchday two of the 2019 AFC Champions League Group C.

Esteghlal and Al Ain had most recently clashed in the 2017 edition in the round of 16. Back then, Kaveh Rezaei gave the Iranian side a 1-0 win in Tehran, but an Omar Abdulrahman masterclass inspired the Emiratis to a 6-1 thumping in the return leg in Al Ain.

Since then, Rezaei and Abdulrahman have both left for pastures new.

Esteghlal reached the quarter-finals in 2018, while Al Ain exited at the round of 16 last year.

This campaign, both side got off to a disappointing start; Esteghlal suffered a humbling 3-0 defeat to Al Duhail in Doha, while Al Ain were beaten in front of their own crowd by Al Hilal 1-0.

Al Ain are without their captain Ismail Ahmed was sent-off in the previous match, and key men Mohammed Abdulrahman and Caio have both not travelled with the team to Tehran due to injuries.

(Source: the-afc)

Preview - Group D: Al Sadd SC (QAT) v Persepolis FC (IRN)



Doha: Al Sadd will be desperate to avenge last year's AFC Champions League semi-final defeat to Persepolis when the sides meet once more in Group D at Jassim bin Hamad Stadium on Tuesday.

The Qatari side were edged out 2-1 on aggregate in the 2018 semi-final after the teams had also shared a win apiece in the group stage. Despite their strong domestic form of late — Al Sadd sit top of the Qatar Stars League — the Doha club got off to a poor start on the continent as they lost 2-0 to Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli last week, and they will be desperate

to get points on the board in what is a tough-looking group.

Normally formidable at home, Persepolis will have been disappointed with their opening game as they played out a 1-1 draw with Uzbekistan's Pakhtakor, with Mario Budimir scoring on his AFC Champions League debut.

The Tehran side also drew 1-1 with Nassaji Mazandaran on Friday as they edged a point clear at the top of the Iranian Pro League to maintain their bid for a third successive league title.

(Source: the-afc)

Iran runners-up at Sabre World Cup



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran finished in second place at the International Fencing Federation (FIE) men's Sabre World Cup in Padoue in Italy on Sunday.

Team Melli, consisting of Ali Pakdaman, Mojtaba Abedini, Mohammad Fotouhi and Mohammad Rahbari, lost to reigning world champions South Korea 45-28 in the final match.

On their way to the final match, Iran defeated Spain 45-16 and Canada 45-27 to reach quarterfinals.

Peyman Fakhri's team beat Hungary 45-37 to book a place in the semis, where they edged silver medalists and hosts Italy 45-43. Italy finished in third place after defeating Romania.

Iran to participate at FIG Artistic Gymnastics World Cup

Tasnim — Iran will take part at the FIG Artistic Gymnastics Individual Apparatus World Cup in Baku, Azerbaijan.

The competition will be held at the National Gymnastics Arena from March 14 to 17.

The World Cup will serve as qualification for the 2020 Summer Olympic Games.

Some 44 countries have already registered to participate in this competition qualifying for the Games.

About 121 male and 49 female gymnasts are expected to compete for the medals and qualification scores.

Saeed Reza Keikha, Mohammad Reza Khosronejad, Mahdi Ahmad Kohani and Mahdi Olfati will represent Iran in the prestigious competition.

ACL: Esteghlal winger Ghafouri doubt for Al Ain match

Tasnim — Iran's Esteghlal football team winger Voria Ghafouri will likely be absent in the match against Al Ain of the UAE.

On Tuesday, the Iranian team will host Al Ain in Matchday Two of the 2019 AFC Champions League Group C in Tehran's Azadi Stadium. Ghafouri has suffered a foot injury and was absent in the match against Naft Masjed Soleyman in Iran league. He will likely miss the match against the Emirati team.

Esteghlal defender Khosro Heydari will also miss the match due to injury.

Esteghlal started the ACL new season with a 3-0 defeat to Al Duhail of Qatar last week.

UAE handed heavy fines for fans' unruly behavior during semifinal

The United Arab Emirates FA have been fined \$150,000 and will have to play one match behind closed doors as a punishment for their fans' unsporting behavior during the Asian Cup 2019 semifinal against Qatar.

The UAE fans at the Mohammed Bin Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi threw everything from water bottles to shoes and even jewelry at the Qatar players while they were celebrating their goals. The eventual winners of the tournament, Qatar, defeated UAE 4-0 in the semifinal.

An AFC spokesperson had announced in January earlier this year that a thorough investigation would be carried out in the case.

"The AFC is conducting a thorough investigation into events at the (semifinal). Once the investigation has been completed, the AFC will decide on the appropriate steps," the spokesperson said. (Source: Fox Sports)

Fan jailed for 14 weeks for assaulting Aston Villa midfielder

A Birmingham City fan who punched Aston Villa captain Jack Grealish on the jaw after invading the pitch has been jailed for 14 weeks. Paul Mitchell, who pleaded guilty to assault and pitch encroachment, blew kisses to Blues fans as he was led away by stewards following the attack in the ninth minute of Sunday's Birmingham Derby.

The 27-year-old pub worker and father-of-one, from Rubery, Birmingham, has been banned from attending matches for life by Birmingham City.

Passing sentence, magistrate Alison Fisher told Mitchell: "This type of behaviour is completely unacceptable - a view shared by your own football club.

"Mr Grealish has stated that he was shocked and scared and feels lucky that it wasn't worse. Players such as Mr Grealish are entitled to protection. We have therefore gone outside of our guidelines in the interests of justice."

(Source: Irishexaminer)

Nike launches 14 national kits in women's World Cup push

Nike Inc launched soccer strips on Monday for 14 national teams ahead of this year's Women's World Cup in France and said it had signed a three-year promotion deal with UEFA Women's Football, part of its growing focus on women's sport.

The United States, Canada, France, England and Australia were among the teams whose kits were released at an event in Paris, graced by 28 of the world's top women footballers.

Olympic gymnast Simone Biles, champion fencer Ibtihaj Muhammad and two-time Grand Slam winner Li Na also attended.

The Women's World Cup will be held from June 7 to July 7. "We're seeing incredible momentum in women's sports right now," Nike official Amy Montagne told Reuters ahead

of the launch. "We see this as the next chapter to support, celebrate and elevate female athletes."

The company declined to give any details of the financial terms of the deal with European governing body UEFA, or the value of the individual national kit sponsorship deals.

Both, however, are the latest sign of the growing financial power of women's sport for sports goods makers like Nike, Adidas and Under Armour.

In the second quarter of the 2019 financial year, women's footwear and apparel alone counted for nearly a quarter of Nike's total revenue and it has said the women's footwear and apparel market is now 1.5 times bigger than that for men.

Wall Street brokerage Bernstein calculates women's

sporting gear pulled in \$7 billion for Nike last year.

Nike's announcement of a partnership with UEFA comes three months after Visa signed a seven-year deal with European soccer's governing body to sponsor the women's game at all levels. It also comes at a time when UEFA plans to increase its funding for women's soccer development projects across Europe by 50 percent from 2020.

Global governing body FIFA, which has made women's football a top priority, last year said it would look to double the number of female players to 60 million by 2026.

It also said it would raise the prize money for this year's World Cup from \$15 million to \$30 million.

(Source: Reuters)

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He who knows something and denies it, is disliked by people and left alone and annihilated at last.

Imam Ali (AS)

Mashhad library to display docs on Naqarekhaneh at shrine of Imam Reza (AS)

A R T **d e s k** **TEHRAN** – A collection of documents related to the Naqarekhaneh of the holy shrine of Imam Reza (AS) will be showcased at the Astan-e Qods Razavi Museum and Library in Mashhad on Tuesday.



Naqareh players perform at the naqarekhaneh of the holy shrine of Imam Reza (AS) on March 26, 2015. (Fars/Mehdi Bolurian)

Naqarekhaneh is a tower situated in parallel with the minarets of the holy shrine of Imam Reza (AS), where a group of musicians performs naqareh, a wind instrument, and tabl, a percussion instrument, for 20 minutes before sunrise and sunset, and during the religious celebrations.

The collection includes over 2,000 documents from the Safavid era to modern times, the library announced in a press release on Monday.

The documents include information about the employees of the naqarekhaneh, their salaries and the instruments kept in there.

The financial documents of the museum are also included in the exhibit.

The library, which is adjacent to the holy shrine of Imam Reza (AS), is home to many rare documents and books.

Iran Music Association launches databank

A R T **d e s k** **TEHRAN** – The Iran Music Association in Tehran has launched a music databank providing information about the veteran musicians of the country.

The users can search more detailed information about the musicians at the website www.nay.ir, which was officially introduced during a ceremony at the Music Office of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance on Monday.

The ceremony was attended by Ali Torabi, the director of the Music Office and Ali Sabetnia, the director of the association.

Speaking at the ceremony, Sabetnia said that some provinces have good and comprehensive information about the regional musicians, and expressed his hope that the veterans cooperate in providing more data.

Torabi also said that all the data have been collected and preserved at the office, and the website can gradually be completed with the information.

Project advisor Keivan Farzin also said that information about music managers both from the public and private sectors is available in the database.

NEWS IN BRIEF



“Midnight at the Bright Ideas Bookstore” published in Persian

A R T **d e s k** **TEHRAN** – American writer Matthew Sullivan’s novel “Midnight at the Bright Ideas Bookstore” has recently been published in Persian by Markaz Publications in Tehran.

Translated by Hassan Afshar, the 2017 book is about Lydia Smith, a bookstore clerk, who lives her life hiding in plain sight until the day Joey Molina, the owner of the bookstore, commits suicide in the bookstore’s upper room.

Sullivan’s short stories have been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and other awards, and have won the Florida Review Editor’s Prize and the Robert Olen Butler Fiction Prize.

“A Vital Killing” writer completes new collection “War Celebration”

A R T **d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Ahmad Dehqan, the writer of the acclaimed short story collection “A Vital Killing”, has completed his new collection titled “War Celebration”.

The new collection, like other works by Dehqan, is about the repercussions of the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

“This collection of ten short stories has been created based on ideas that have popped into my head over the past three years,” he told the Persian service of MNA on Sunday.

“I’m satisfied with ‘War Celebration’ and I feel it repeats the pleasure I had with my previous works,” he added.

“The ambience of the stories in the new collection has not changed so much. I’ve remained as the same writer of ‘A Vital Killing’,” he stated.

“A Vital Killing” is inspired by actual events from the war. One of the stories from the collection is about Akbar, a war veteran who goes in search of the father of his fellow combatant, Yahya, to tell him his dark secret that he was forced to suffocate the badly injured Yahya under water during an operation in order to avoid the operation to be uncovered by his groans.

“The stories of ‘War Celebration’ are sometimes set in the war and sometimes occur in the aftermath of the war, but in all of them, the fates of people are very important for me,” Dehqan said.

“In comparison with my previous works, I’ve been quite frank about the stories in this new collection... Like Arabian coffee, a war story should be so strong that you feel pleasure with it. In addition, a war writer should have something new to tell; a story about war is successful that can draw the readers to the alleys and back lanes of the subject. Otherwise, people have already seen its streets and main roads,” he mentioned.

“I have many ordinary ideas to write about, but I’ve been a war writer and will remain a war writer,” noted Dehqan, who is also the writer of “Bearing 270 Degrees”, which was translated into English by American Persian literature scholar



Writer Ahmad Dehqan attends an interview with MNA on March 3, 2019. (Mehr/Majid Haqdoost)

Paul Sprachman.

Caroline Crockery, the American translator of a number of works from contemporary Persian literature, has rendered “A Vital Killing”, and based upon which Iranian director Maziar Miri made the acclaimed movie “The Reward of

Silence” in 2007.

She also translated his story “Wandering in a Strange Land”, in which a group of Iranian soldiers organize an operation to save some Kurdish people captured by Iraqi forces.

National Commission for UNESCO names “23 Individuals” best film of the year

A R T **d e s k** **TEHRAN** – The Iranian National Commission for UNESCO has selected “23 Individuals” as best film of the year for its promotion of peace and sacrifice.

The films cast and crew were honored during a ceremony that took place at Tehran’s Book Garden Cineplex on Sunday.

Directed by Mehdi Jafari, the acclaimed movie is about 23 young Iranian volunteers who were captives during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

At the ceremony, the director of the commission, Hojjatollah Ayyubi, said that nothing better than art and cinema can act as the representative of the people of Iran.

Ayyubi, who is the former director of the Cinema Organization of Iran, called cinema the great achievement of Iran, and added that Iran is as good as many countries in different branches of art. However, only a few countries can compete with Iran’s cinema.

The commission annually selects one film out of the movies competing in the Fajr Film



“23 Individuals” cast and crew as well the organizers pose after the movie was honored as best film of the year by the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO at Tehran’s Book Garden Cineplex on March 10, 2019. (Tasnim/Hassan Aslani)

Festival and honors it for its promotion of human values and culture of dialogue.

Ayyubi noted that the commission is planning to screen one feature film, several shorts and one documentary as Iran’s ambassadors in several other countries.

“We are happy that the project will be launched by screening the great film ‘23 Individuals’, a film which enjoys a great screenplay and acting, while it portrays the high glory of the Iranian nation,” he asserted.

“23 Individuals” is based on “Those 23 Individuals”, the memoirs of Ahmad Yusefzadeh, one of the 23 volunteers who were held captive for a long period of time in Iraq.

The book tells of the early months of the volunteers’ captivity and the events they confronted, and later their visit with Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

At that time, Iraq tried to manipulate the volunteers in its propaganda campaign against Iran. However, all their attempts failed miserably, thwarted by magical tricks done by the volunteers.

Turkish pop singer Ilyas Yalcintas to dedicate song to Iran’s Tractor Sazi



Turkish pop singer Ilyas Yalcintas performs in an undated photo.

A R T **d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Turkish pop singer Ilyas Yalcintas has said that he plans to record a song dedicated to Tractor Sazi, a popular football team in Tabriz that also has ardent fans in other northwestern Iranian cities.

“I follow Tractor Sazi’s matches and I want to dedicate the song named ‘Bilmece’ (Puzzle) to the passionate fans of the team,” he told Turkey’s Anadolu News Agency

on Wednesday.

He also talked about his interest in learning the Persian language and added that he is eager to perform a joint concert with Iranian singers in Persian.

Yalcintas, who is popular in Iran for songs like “Icimdeki Duman”, “Yagmur” and “Gel Be Gökyüzüm” performed concerts on Kish Island last July, which was well-received by Iranian audiences.

“Cold Sweat” actor Baran Kowsari honored at Irish festival



Baran Kowsari acts in a scene from “Cold Sweat” by Iranian director Soheil Beiraghi.

A R T **d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Iranian actress Baran Kowsari won the jury prize at the Dublin Film Critics Circle Awards for her role in Soheil Beiraghi’s drama “Cold Sweat”, also known as “Permission”, the organizers announced last week.

The film tells the story of Iran’s national women’s futsal team that makes the Asian Games final in Malaysia. But

at the airport on departure day, the team captain finds her husband hasn’t signed the document to permit her to exit from the country.

The Dublin Film Critics Circle Awards are presented to the best performances from the participants in the Virgin Media Dublin International Film Festival, which was held in the Irish capital from February 20 to March 3.

“Simpsons” producers pull iconic Michael Jackson episode

LOS ANGELES (AP) – The producers of “The Simpsons” are removing a classic episode that featured the voice of Michael Jackson after HBO aired a documentary in which two men claim they were abused by the singer when they were younger.

“It feels like the only choice to make,” executive producer James L. Brooks told The Wall Street Journal on Thursday.

Fellow executive producers Matt Groening and Al Jean are “of one mind on this,” Brooks said.

The action follows HBO’s broadcast of the documentary “Leaving Neverland.”

Jackson’s family has denounced the program, saying

it’s full of falsehoods. His estate is suing HBO.

In the 1991 “Stark Raving Dad” episode, Jackson voiced a character who claims to be Jackson and who meets Homer Simpson in a mental institution. The singer is listed in credits as John Jay Smith.

The episode will be removed from streaming services and future DVD sets.

Also, organizers say an online petition calling for the end of the Las Vegas Cirque du Soleil show “Michael Jackson: One” had gotten several thousand signatures by Friday. Cirque du Soleil representatives declined comment.



This Nov. 7, 2001 file photo, Michael Jackson waves to crowds gathered to see him at his first ever in-store appearance in New York. (AP/Suzanne Plunkett)