



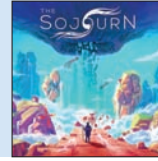
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## Iraqi dignitaries meet Rouhani in Baghdad

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### Iran, Iraq take new steps to expand trade ties

**TEHRAN** — In the first day of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani’s high profile visit to Iraq, an Iran-Iraq business forum was held in the capital city of Baghdad.

According to a report by the portal of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA), the event was attended by several senior officials from both sides including President Rouhani, Iraqi Prime Minister

Adil Abdul-Mahdi as well as the two countries foreign ministers along with heads of the two countries chambers of commerce and representatives of private companies.

During the event, the two sides called for further expansion of the trade ties between the two countries and President Rouhani and Adil Abdul-Mahdi delivered speeches addressing various trade related issues. **→4**

### First Iranian water-fuelled engine system to be commercialized

**TEHRAN** — The first Iranian homegrown water-fuelled engine will be commercialized by the next six months, the inventor Alaeddin Jassemi Zargani announced, Tasnim reported on Monday.

Jassemi Zargani, who invented the first water-fuelled system for car engines in Iran, said he has negotiated for obtaining necessary standards for the past year.

“I have already obtained some licenses from related ministries and some others are to be obtained,” he said.

He said that he has received European standards for the engine, however, national standards should be obtained.

There are hydrogen fuel cars in other countries, however, it is not imported to Iran yet, he said. **→10**

### 2018 deadliest year for children in Syria: UNICEF

The United Nations children’s agency (UNICEF) says more than 1,100 Syrian children were killed in 2018, making it the deadliest year since 2011, when foreign-sponsored militancy began in the Arab country.

In a statement on Monday, UNICEF said it had been able to verify 1,106 child deaths from the conflict last year, warn-

ing that the true figure was likely to be even higher.

“Today, there exists an alarming misconception that the conflict in Syria is drawing quickly to a close; it is not,” executive director Henrietta Fore said. “Children in parts of the country remain in as much danger as at any other time during the eight-year conflict.” **→13**

### An exploration into the life of American-Iranian who fell in love with Islam

**EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW**  
By Maryam Qarehgozlou

**TEHRAN** — Laleh Bakhtiar, an Iranian-American Islamic scholar, is the first woman to present a critical translation of the Quran in any language.

Dr. Bakhtiar has a B.A. in History from Chatham College in Pennsylvania, an M.A. in Philosophy, an M.A. in Counseling Psychology and a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology. She is a certified psychotherapist and has been practicing Islam for over 60 years.

She is the author of many books on Islamic unity, architecture, psychology, psychoethics, and moral healing through the Erfan Enneagram and the 99 Most Beautiful Names of God. Dr. Bakhtiar has translated over 30 books on Islam and Islamic beliefs into English. Her vocation as a practicing Muslim, psychologist, book publisher, and editor and scholar gives her an indispensable role in the Muslim community.

Born on July 29, 1938 in Tehran, she was taken to the U.S. by her American mother, Helen

Jeffreys. Helen was the first American to marry an Iranian and migrate to Iran (1931) as well as the first American trained nurse in Iran. Helen traveled with Laleh when she was six months old with her two older sisters, who had been born in America, back to America in 1939. Reza Shah (Shah of Iran from 1925 to 1941) at that time was siding with the Germans. The American Embassy wrote to the few Americans who were in Iran that they needed to leave the country because it wasn’t safe for them. **→6**

### Cuba condemns the terrorist sabotage against the power supply system in Venezuela

**HAVANA (March 11, 2019)** — The Revolutionary Government strongly condemns the sabotage perpetrated against the power supply system in Venezuela, which is a terrorist action intended to harm the defenseless population of an entire nation and turn it into a hostage of the non-conventional war launched by the government of the United States against the legitimate government headed by comrade Nicolás Maduro Moros

and the civic and military union of the Bolivarian and Chavista people.

Several U.S. politicians have rushed to celebrate an action that deprives the population from an essential basic service; leaves hospitals without the power they require to work; disrupts other basic services which are indispensable in the everyday-life of people, such as food, water supply, transportation, communications, public safety,

trade, bank transactions and payments using credit cards. Such an action affects work in general and the proper functioning of schools and universities.

The sequence and modality of these actions remind us of the sabotage perpetrated against the oil industry back in 2002 by a U.S. company that owned and operated the automated system that controlled the production, refining, transportation and distribution of hydrocarbons. **→7**

### A dozen children were killed in Yemen strikes during a two-day period: UN

Strikes in Yemen killed 22 people during a 48-hour period early this week, including a dozen children, according to the UN.

In a statement, the office of the UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for the war-ravaged country said as many as 30 others were reportedly injured, among them 14 children aged between 1 and 18, in the northwest province of Hajjah.

“We condemn these deaths and injuries

unequivocally,” said Lise Grande, Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen. “And we share our deep condolences with the families of the victims.”

On Monday Press TV reported 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.



© khamenei.ir

### Ayatollah Khamenei awards General Soleimani Order of Zolfaqr

**TEHRAN** - Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Monday awarded General Qassem Soleimani, commander of the IRGC Quds Force, the Order of Zolfaqr.

“What is offered to you in return for jihad in the way of God and what Allah the Exalted grants in return for laying down your life and offering your possessions is paradise and divine satisfaction. What we grant— including our verbal and non-verbal gratitude, and the medals of honor, orders and epaulets that we grant— are things which are noteworthy on the basis of worldly calculations, but on the basis of spiritual and divine calculations, they are not noteworthy,” the Leader said, according to the Khamenei.ir.



**ARTICLE**  
**Martin Love**  
Political analyst from North Carolina

### A wild theory about Trump is a sign of natural despair and desperation

Donald Trump is more than halfway through his first term and (insha’Allah) last term as U.S. President and by most sane accounts he’s been a looming disaster so far -- a disaster that remains mostly prospective because of things already done and decided and which await some kind of unpleasant denouement.

The U.S. economy is doing well, relative to most others, and unemployment is low even if most jobs are menial and most Americans are eyeballs deep in debt. But this is almost certainly because of a dump of Stirlions in printed money in to the economy and nearly zero interest rates by the Federal Reserve Bank. This was supposed to be “temporary” and the Fed was supposed to “normalize” policy... but found last autumn it cannot when asset prices plummeted. This Fed’s latest action is akin to keeping a sick patient alive with daily injections of high-grade heroin. Somewhere down the road the entire monetary system will likely crash and have to be replaced with something new. The entire world will be suffering a depression in the transition.

Trump has warped U.S. foreign policy more than any recent President, trashing agreements and treaties right and left (such as the JCPOA and the INF and the Paris Accords on climate). The Trump administration has given green lights to apartheid Israel to do as it pleases, and also to the Saudis. It has sanctioned and threatened allies and alleged foes alike over a host of issues. It is going for overt regime change and resource theft in Venezuela and has largely supported right-wing dictators, not proponents of democracy, everywhere.

The accounts of malfeasance and ill-advised moves could run for pages, and to boot, Trump is a proven liar, a con artist, a tax cheat, a womanizer of the worst kind, a poor businessman, a real estate grifter and a slob (all by his own admission intended or not) and he probably ought to be in prison, but oddly enough his “base” of support in the U.S. happens to be evangelical Christians (and far right wing lunatics and white supremacists) who, in truth, are anything but “Christian” and give the entire “faith” a bad name. **→7**

**PERSPECTIVE**  
**M.A.Saki**  
Deputy editor-in-chief

### Iranians and Iraqis are inseparable

The two nations of Iran and Iraq are bonded together by geography and more importantly religion, especially in the form of Shia Islam.

The religious bonds that have linked the Iranian and Iraqi people are quite clear in rituals marking Arbæen during which millions of Iranians pour into Iraq to visit the shrine of Imam Hussein (AS) in Karbala. The great march of Iranians toward Karbala during the Arbæen pilgrimage is now famous in the world.

Add to this millions of Iraqi pilgrims who visit the shrines of Imam Reza (AS) and Hazrat Masumeh (SA) inside Iran and hundreds of thousands of Iranians who frequently visit the shrine cities of Karbala, Najaf, and Samarra, Kadhimiya in northern Baghdad.

The love for Shia imams has been so strong that even repeated terrorist attacks on pilgrims when Iraq was not in a good shape in terms of security could not deter Iranians from visiting the shrines in Iraq.

Also, Iranian and Iraqi Kurds are linked together in terms of ethnicity and language. Even Lurs in western Iran, who see themselves linguistically and ethnically close to the Kurds, have strengthened this sense of solidarity between Iranians and Iraqis. Similarly, ethnic Arabs in the southwestern province of Khuzestan also cherish Iraq.

No official in Washington, no matter how much mad he might be, can deny this strong feeling between Iranians and Iraqis.

It is for this reason that in his talks with President Hassan Rouhani in Baghdad on Monday, President Barham Salih, an ethnic Kurd, said, “I consider the Iranian nation as our family and consider Iran as our second homeland.”

Iran was home to some former and current Iraqi leaders, both Kurds and Shias, who led struggles against Saddam Hussein during his ruthless reign of Iraq. Even some religious leaders like Ayatollah Ali Sistani, who is considered a very wise figure and played a key role in defusing sectarian violence in Iraq, is originally Iranian.

Let’s cite a memory. An Iranian photojournalist, who had travelled to Iraq to make a documentary, said he went to a small shop to buy cigarettes. He said when he started to speak in English with the salesclerk he was immediately told to speak in Farsi. **→13**



MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Raisi elected deputy head of the Assembly of Experts

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Hojatolislam Ebrahim Raisi **d e s k** was elected on Tuesday as deputy chief of the Assembly of Experts, the body responsible for choosing the Islamic Republic's Leader.

43 members of the Assembly of Experts voted for Raisi, while the runner-up, Ayatollah Sadeq Amoli Larijani received 27 votes and 5 votes were cast for Ayatollah Fazel Golpayegani, Mehr reported.

The post was vacant ever since Ayatollah Seyyed Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi passed away in December 2018.

Last week, Raeisi was appointed by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as Judiciary chief, replacing Amoli Larijani.



U.S. to regret Iran sanctions, general predicts

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Washington will regret its **d e s k** sanctions against Iran as the embargoes only strengthen the Islamic Republic, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Deputy Coordinator Ali Fadavi said on Tuesday.

"Like in the past, they will regret their actions in the future because they just push us not to rely on foreigners for resolving the problems, but to try to solve them by relying on domestic capabilities," Brigadier General Fadavi said, ISNA reported.

He also pointed to the 33-day Israeli war against Lebanon with the U.S. support in 2006, saying, "They were afraid of the formation of Hezbollah right beside the occupied Palestinian lands, but after the 33-day war, 20 Hezbollah groups were formed at their borders."



Iran-Iraq ties don't concern others: Tehran to Washington

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Tehran has responded to the **d e s k** the meddlesome comments by U.S. Special Representative for Iran Brian Hook, saying ties between Iran and Iraq is based on good neighborliness and strategic relations and do not concern others.

Hook said on Monday that President Rouhani's trip to Iraq is not in the interest of the Iraqi people, adding that the U.S. will sanction "sanctionable activities" anywhere in the world.

In response, Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said on Tuesday that Hook's anger is not surprising because despite spending billions of dollars in the Middle East, the U.S. has not been able to secure a favorable position among the regional nations, Mehr reported.



Iranian, INSTEX officials meet on U.S. sanctions

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Meetings have been kicked **d e s k** off in Tehran between Iranian experts and senior directors of the Instrument for Supporting Trade Exchanges (INSTEX), a new transaction channel that will allow companies to continue trading with Iran despite U.S. sanctions.

IRNA reported on Tuesday that representatives of related governmental bodies, including the central bank and several ministries, have attended the meetings.

In the meetings, the Iranian side's expectations of INSTEX are outlined in detail and the parties hold technical and expert discussions on possible solutions to the problems caused by U.S. sanctions against Tehran, it added.



Navy's 60th flotilla docks at Port Sultan Qaboos

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Navy's 60th flotilla **d e s k** docked at Port Sultan Qaboos in Muscat, Oman, on Saturday and was expected to leave the port on Tuesday, Mehr reported.

The 60th flotilla encompasses Bayandar destroyer as well as Lavan and Bushehr logistic warships.

Speaking at a ceremony held on the deck of Lavan warship, Iranian Ambassador to Oman Nouri Shahroudi highlighted the cultural, religious, and geographical commonalities between Iran and Oman, saying the bilateral relations have been improving.

"These relations are also being pursued in military and defense sectors through the establishment of a joint military friendship committee," he added.



Poland will soon name new ambassador to Tehran: diplomat

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Poland will soon have a new **d e s k** ambassador in Iran, the country's chargé d'affaires said on Tuesday, IRNA reported.

"Poland's new ambassador will soon travel to Iran in a bid to develop and expand political, economic and cultural ties between the two countries," Wojciech Unolt told Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh, chief of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee.

Unolt stressed that "Iran holds a special place in Poland's foreign policy", adding that the Polish government pursues friendly relations with Iran in various sectors.

Relations between Iran and Poland turned sour after the latter co-hosted a conference with the U.S. aimed at curbing Iran's regional influence.

# Iraqi dignitaries meet Rouhani in Baghdad



Maliki



Abadi

He also said, "Development of ties cooperation between Iran and Iraq will pave the ground for great events in the region."

The Iraqi security chief also said cultural, scientific and social cooperation would help strengthen mutual relationship and also the progress of the two countries.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Alfayyadh said Iraq sees itself as a defender of Iran and "is proud of the political, economic, regional and international progresses of Iran as a brotherly neighbor."

■ **'Iran ready to take steps to resolve regional problems'**

In a meeting with Leader of the National Wisdom Movement of Iraq Ammar al-Hakim, Rouhani said that Iran is ready to take steps in line with expanding interaction and dialogue with regional countries.

"Like the past, the Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to take steps in line with resolving regional problems and establish dialogue between regional countries," the president noted.

Hakim said that Iraq has been able to

**Rouhani says Iran prepared for expanding interaction and dialogue with regional countries.**



Hakim

**Iraqi National Security chief Fali Alfayyadh says his country is proud of different progresses by the brotherly and neighboring country of Iran.**

overcome serious challenges and start the process for rebuilding the country.

■ **'It is our duty to resist excessive demands against Iran'**

He also called for expanding relations with Iran said, "We consider it our duty to withstand excessive demands and widespread propaganda of arrogant powers against the Islamic Republic."

■ **Rouhani calls for expanding scientific, cultural ties with Iraq**

During a meeting with representatives from various Iraqi political factions on Monday, Rouhani called for expanding scientific and cultural ties between the two countries.

He said that efforts should be made to expand cultural, scientific, political and economic relations, because terrorism cannot be countered just militarily.

He noted that the two countries should stand beside each other and counter the U.S. excessive demands.

■ **'Western powers have played no role in annihilating terrorists'**

During a meeting with a number of Iraqi



Halbousi



*President Rouhani visits the shrine of Imam Hussein (AS) in Karbala*

intellectuals and religious leaders, Rouhani said that Western powers have played no role in annihilating terrorists.

"We did not let hegemonic powers introduce themselves as savior of the region. All are aware that the Western powers played no role in annihilating terrorists," he stated.

The president noted that the Iraqis and Syrians succeeded to foil all the plots and proved that terrorists are not real Muslims.

The regional people showed that the global hegemony has been actual sponsor of the terrorists, he remarked.

■ **'We want to form a great power with Iraq in the region that would not be against others'**

Elsewhere in his remarks, Rouhani said, "We want an Iraq on the side of Iran and an Iran on the side of Iraq. And we want, along with each other, to build a great power in the region that will not be against another country. Rather we want, through unity, to attract other friendly countries in the region and these two powers (Iran and Iraq) would soon become three, four and five powers along each other."

Rouhani also visited Karbala on Tuesday and made pilgrimage to the holy shrines of Imam Hussein (PBUH) and Abbas ibn Ali (PBUH).

## Iran and Iraq stress commitment to the 1975 Algiers Treaty

### Zarif: Another vestige of Saddam war removed

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iran and Iraq issued a **d e s k** joint statement on Tuesday stressing commitment to the 1975 Algiers Treaty which delineates the border river between Iran and Iraq.

Former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein tore up the Algiers agreement prior to ordering his army to invade Iran on September 22, 1980. Saddam said he did recognize the treaty.

In a tweet on Tuesday, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, who is accompanying President Rouhani in the visit to Iraq, said Tehran and Baghdad removed "another vestige" of Saddam's war against Iran, an open reference to commitment to the Algiers Treaty by the Iraqi side.

The foreign minister said the commitment was made during the dinner that Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul

Mahdi hosted for President Rouhani on Monday night.

Following is the text of Zarif's tweet:

"Last night, PM hosted dinner w/ unprecedented guest list—a who's who of Iraqi politics: All Iraqis are our friends; Today leaders issued historic joint declaration: -Commitment to implement 1975 Treaty -Expeditious dredging of border river: Removed another vestige of Saddam war."

## Former American generals, diplomats urge Trump to return to Iran nuclear deal

More than 50 retired American generals and diplomats have called on the administration of President Donald Trump to return to the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, now that Tehran remains fully compliant with its end of the bargain.

In a statement released on Monday, the ex-officials said Washington's withdrawal from the agreement, officially named the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), put Tehran's continued compliance and the benefits from the deal at risk.

They also stressed that Iran is honoring its side of the bargain as repeatedly confirmed by the UN nuclear watchdog.

"Iran is complying with the agreement. In a recent report, the International Atomic Energy Agency confirmed Iran's compliance to the 2015 nuclear deal, despite the United States' withdrawal from the deal and re-imposition of economic sanctions. Tehran's continued adherence to the agreement demonstrates the Iranian government's commitment to its initial pledge," they said.

The retired American officials further highlighted the "firm" commitment of Washington's European allies in the JCPOA — France, Britain and Germany -- to keeping the deal in place in defiance of U.S. calls for them to leave it.

"In a recent statement, the Council of the European Union expressed 'resolute commitment to and continued support' for the Iran deal, which they consider 'a key element of the global nuclear non-proliferation architecture and an achievement of multilateral

diplomacy,'" they added.

They also emphasized that Washington's return to the nuclear deal "advances the United States' national interests" and enables it "to work more closely" with its European allies.

"Re-entry into the nuclear deal will contribute to establishing a broader U.S. national strategy for the Middle East," the statement read. "Reentering the agreement and lifting the sanctions will greatly enhance the United States' ability to negotiate improvements and enable us to address our concerns with the existing agreement."

The statement was organized by the American College of National Security Leaders, a network of retired admirals, generals, ambassadors, and government executives.

Last year, Trump unilaterally pulled the U.S. out of the JCPOA and unleashed the "toughest ever" sanctions against Iran despite international objections.

Since then, the U.S. has been trying to coerce the Europeans into following its lead and scrapping the nuclear accord.

However, the remaining signatories to the JCPOA have vowed efforts to compensate for Washington's absence and make sure Iran will be able to collect its economic dividends of the deal, among them selling oil freely.

Iran's European partners in the JCPOA have recently unveiled a non-dollar direct payment channel, known as INSTEX, with the aim of protecting their companies against U.S. bans and enabling them to continue trade with Iran.

(Source: Press TV)

## Iraqis were never asked to choose Iran: Zarif

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iran's **d e s k** Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that the Iraqis were never asked to choose Iran as their close friend.

"We have never asked the Iraqis to choose us," the senior diplomat said. "It is the United States, which is pressuring Iraqis to choose (between Iran and the U.S.)," Zarif told BBC Arabic on Monday while in Baghdad accompanying President Hassan Rouhani on an official trip.

He further stressed that the United States cannot "stop" Iran and Iraq's mutual relations, stressing that Tehran is not after competing with Washington in Iraq either.

"We have good relations with Iraq. Iraq is our neighbor," the Iranian foreign minister said, adding that not even former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hossein's 1980-88 war on the Islamic Republic managed to separate the two nations, ending the historical, geographical, and even family ties between the two countries.

Commenting on the nature of the visit, Zarif said, "I do not believe that we are here either to take a measure against any country [or] to seek intervention on behalf of Iran with any country." "Our positions have been very clear, and we called for dialogue."

He asserted that the Islamic Republic maintains a regional strategy called "a stronger region rather than strong countries or strong men in this region." "We have had enough of strong men, we need a strong region," he noted.

Separately in the interview, Zarif commented on a payment mechanism that European countries have announced to safeguard trade with Iran.

The UK, France, and Germany, three of the European signatories to the 2015 nuclear agreement, issued a joint statement on January 31, announcing the launch of the long-awaited direct non-dollar payment mechanism meant to protect their trade ties with the country in the face of the United States sanctions.

The U.S. left the agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), last May, defying the fact that it had been ratified in the form of a United Nations Security Council resolution. Washington afterwards returned the sanctions that it had lifted under the accord.

Zarif said the European mechanism alone "does not solve all of Iran's problems." Nor does it realize all of Europe's commitments as a partner to the JCPOA, he added.

He also commented on tensions between the Islamic Republic and Saudi Arabia, saying, "We are prepared for cooperation with Saudi Arabia, but they should acknowledge that their security is tied to ours and our security is tied to theirs."

Saudi Arabia broke off its diplomatic ties with Iran in early 2016 after protests in front of its Iran-based diplomatic missions against Riyadh's earlier execution of Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, a prominent pro-democracy Saudi Shia cleric.



# Tensions ratchet up between Venezuela, U.S.

## U.S. to withdraw all remaining diplomatic personnel from Venezuela

The United States will be withdrawing all its remaining diplomatic personnel from Venezuela, amid an economic and political crisis that President Nicolas Maduro sees as part of President Donald Trump's "demonic" plot to destroy his oil-rich country.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo wrote in a Twitter post on Monday night that the Trump administration had decided to bring home all its personnel from the embassy in Caracas this week.

Warning of "the deteriorating situation in Venezuela," he said the presence of U.S. diplomatic personnel in the Latin American country has become "a constraint on U.S. policy."

Washington had already ordered all "non-emergency U.S. government employees to depart Venezuela."

Tensions between Washington and Caracas rose as the Trump administration recognized a self-proclamation by Venezuelan opposition figure Juan Guaido, who declared himself "interim president" of the Latin American country earlier this year. Maduro announced in response that he was severing diplomatic ties with Washington, expelling all U.S. diplomats and recalling Venezuelan ones from Washington.

The State Department had also urged "U.S. citizens not to travel to Venezuela due to crime, civil unrest, poor health infrastructure, and arbitrary arrest and detention of U.S. citizens." It said any U.S. citizens in Venezuela had to



"strongly consider departing."

The U.S. has repeatedly said that "the military option" remains on the table to oust Maduro.

In separate remarks from the State Department briefing room on Monday, Pompeo said Maduro had to be held responsible for recent power outages, food and medicine shortages, inflation, and poverty in Venezuela.

"The United States did not do that," he said, rejecting accusations that the U.S. was involved in acts of sabotage against the Latin American country.

Maduro has repeatedly accused Washington of masterminding a "coup" against his government and said the U.S. is to blame for the economic crisis in Venezuela.

The U.S. has imposed economic sanctions on Venezuela and has confiscated state oil assets based in the U.S. to channel them to Guaido.

U.S. 'demonic' plot led to crippling blackout: Maduro

On Monday, Maduro accused the U.S. of masterminding a "demonic" plot to destroy his country and force him from power by

waging an "electromagnetic attack," which he said had left the country in a crippling blackout for days.

Venezuela's minister of electrical power, Luis Motta Dominguez, said the blackout affected 23 of the country's 24 states on Thursday after an attack on the Guri Dam, a large hydroelectric facility in east Venezuela.

"The United States' imperialist government ordered this attack," Maduro said in a televised address.

"They came with a strategy of war of the kind that only these criminals — who have been to war and have destroyed the people of Iraq, of Libya, of Afghanistan, and of Syria — think up," he said.

Maduro also said that Washington had conducted the attack in cooperation with "puppets and clowns" from the Venezuelan opposition in an attempt to create "a state of despair, of widespread want and of conflict" that would justify a foreign intervention in and occupation of Venezuela.

The president said two saboteurs had been arrested on charges of attempting to take down the power grid, adding he could prove that the attack had been staged by the U.S.

Meanwhile, on Monday, Guaido called for protests against the government. He called on the military and security forces to "refrain from preventing or hindering" the protests, which he said were planned for Tuesday.

(Source: agencies)

## N. Korea diplomacy 'very much alive,' but it's watching rocket site: U.S.

The chief U.S. envoy for North Korea said that "diplomacy is still very much alive" with Pyongyang despite a failed summit last month, but cautioned that Washington was closely watching activity at a North Korean rocket site and did not know if it might be planning a new launch.

Stephen Biegun told a conference in Washington that although U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un parted on good terms after their Feb. 27-28 summit in Hanoi, big gaps remained between the two sides and North Korea needed to show it was fully committed to giving up its nuclear weapons.

Biegun, the U.S. special representative for North Korea, stressed that U.S.-led sanctions, which Pyongyang wants dropped, would stay in place until North Korea completed denuclearization. He rejected an incremental approach sought by Pyongyang, and said that easing sanctions for partial steps would amount to subsidizing North Korea's weapons programs.

As Biegun spoke at the Carnegie Nuclear Conference, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) think tank issued a new report on activity at North Korea's Sohae rocket launch site, in which satellite images from Friday showed possible preparations for a launch.

In the course of nearly a year of diplomatic engagement with the United States, North Korea has maintained a freeze on missile and nuclear tests and space rocket launches in place since 2017. Trump has repeatedly stressed this as a positive outcome of the diplomacy.

Biegun said Washington did not know what the activity spotted in North Korea meant. He said the Trump administration took it "very seriously" but cautioned against drawing any snap conclusions.

"What Kim Jong Un will ultimately decide to do may very much be his decision and his decision alone," Biegun said, adding that Trump had made clear last week he would be "very disappointed" if North Korea were to resume testing.

An authoritative U.S. government source familiar with U.S. intelligence assessments said they did not conclude that a launch was imminent, given North Korea's apparent desire

to keep negotiations going with the United States. However, the source said Pyongyang appeared to want to make clear it retained the capability to resume launches at any moment.

"Diplomacy is still very much alive," Biegun said. He offered no specifics on when new talks might be held and did not say whether any talks had taken place since the summit, which collapsed over differences on U.S. demands for Pyongyang's denuclearization and North Korea's demand for sanctions relief.

"It's certainly our expectation that we will be able to continue our close engagement," Biegun said.

The State Department has declined to say whether there has been any direct engagement between the two sides since the summit.

A national security adviser to South Korean President Moon Jae-in said on Tuesday the United States should seek the gradual denuclearization of North Korea because an "all-or-nothing" strategy will not help break the impasse in talks.

To bridge the gap, Moon could pursue an unofficial inter-Korean summit as he did last year before the first summit between Trump and Kim, and then visit Washington, the adviser said.

Trump has said he remains open to more talks with Kim. U.S. Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Andrea Thompson told the Washington conference she thought there would be another summit.

Asked if there would be a third meeting, she said Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Trump had "been very clear that they remain open to the dialogue. They haven't got a date on the calendar but our teams continue to work towards that."

Thompson said it was "incredibly important" that all countries continued to maintain U.N. sanctions on North Korea until it gave up its nuclear weapons.

"We are not letting the foot off the gas. We are going to continue with the pressure campaign," she said.

At the White House on Monday, spokesperson Sarah Sanders scoffed at reports that China was wary of holding a summit with Trump on trade after he walked out of his meeting with Kim without a deal.



"We'll see what happens with North Korea the same way we're going to see what happens in the negotiations with China. They're ongoing," she said.

Trump on Friday stressed again his belief in his personal rapport with Kim.

The CSIS report said commercial satellite images acquired last Wednesday and Friday showed North Korea had continued preparations on the launch pad at its Sohae launch facility and at the engine testing stand there.

"Based on past practices, these activities could be consistent with preparations for the delivery of a rocket to the launch pad or engine to the test stand; or they could be North Korean coercive bargain tactics," it said.

Trump said after his first summit with Kim in Singapore last June that Kim had promised to dismantle the test stand, a pledge the North Korean leader reiterated and expanded on at a summit with Moon in September.

Pyongyang has used Sohae to launch satellites into space since 2011, and Washington says its work there has helped develop missile technology. A satellite launch in April 2012 killed off an Obama administration deal for a freeze in North Korean nuclear and missile testing reached weeks earlier.

to Trump after a string of bankruptcies at his hotel and casino businesses during the 1990s.

The newspaper said the new civil investigation into Deutsche was prompted by congressional testimony last month of Trump's former personal attorney Michael Cohen.

Cohen testified that Trump inflated the stated worth of his assets in financial statements. The former attorney submitted copies of statements he said had been provided to Deutsche.

Investors Bank was subpoenaed for records relating to Trump Park Avenue, a project it had backed, the Times reported.

Neither the New York attorney general's office nor Trump representatives were available for comment early Tuesday. Neither Deutsche Bank nor Investors Bank representatives could be immediately reached.

(Source: agencies)

## New York attorney general is investigating Trump projects

The New York attorney general's office is looking into ties between Deutsche Bank and Investors Bank and several Trump Organization projects, the New York Times reported late Monday.

The attorney general's office issued subpoenas late Monday to the banks, which opens an additional line of inquiry into Deutsche Bank's dealings with Trump, the newspaper reported, citing one unnamed source.

The Democratic-controlled Intelligence Committee and Financial Services Committee in Congress have been exploring the finances of the Republican president and his businesses including his ties to Deutsche, one of the world's largest financial institutions.

Deutsche Bank has lent Trump Organization hundreds of millions of dollars for real estate ventures and is one of the few major lenders that has given large amounts of credit



## Kremlin shrugs off possible U.S. boycott of forum over investor's arrest

The Kremlin Tuesday shrugged off talk of a possible boycott by U.S. companies of Russia's showcase International Economic Forum over the arrest of prominent U.S. investor Michael Calvey, saying such boycotts had come to nothing in the past.

Calvey's detention last month on embezzlement charges, which he denies, has rattled some foreign investors in Russia

who are worried about the business climate and has stoked talk of a possible U.S. boycott of the annual economic forum in June which is attended by President Vladimir Putin.

Asked about a possible boycott, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said Russia remained committed to attracting foreign investment, had noted interest from U.S. firms in attending, and was expecting normal par-

ticipation in the event.

He said chief executives of companies were not always able to attend for various reasons, but were replaced by heads of other companies who could.

"It's a question of supply and demand," Peskov told reporters.

(Source: RT)

## EU adopts new tax-haven blacklist, adds UAE, Bermuda, Aruba

European Union governments adopted a broadened blacklist of tax havens on Tuesday, the EU commission said in a statement.

Ten jurisdictions were added to the list. It had previously included five.

Aruba, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, Fiji, Marshall Islands, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Vanuatu and Dominica are added to the list.

The additions are the largest review of the list since the EU adopted it in December 2017. It was drawn up after revelations of widespread tax-avoidance schemes used by corporations and wealthy individuals to lower their tax bills.

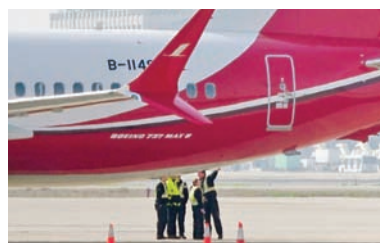
Jurisdictions are added to the list if their tax rules enable tax evasion in other states. They are removed if they commit to reforms.

Blacklisted jurisdictions face stricter controls on transactions with the EU, although no sanctions have yet been agreed by EU states.

(Source: Reuters)

## UK suspends Boeing 737 MAX from airspace after crash

Britain Tuesday joined a growing number of nations to suspend flights by Boeing 737 MAX aircraft over their territory, after an Ethiopia Airlines plane of that model crashed on Sunday killing 157 people.



"The UK Civil Aviation Authority has been closely monitoring the situation, however, as we do not currently have sufficient information from the flight data recorder we have, as a precautionary measure, issued instructions to stop any commercial passenger flights from any operator arriving, departing or overflying UK airspace," a spokesperson said in a statement.

"The UK Civil Aviation Authority's safety directive will be in place until further notice."

Oman, Malaysia and Australia also Tuesday suspended Boeing 737 MAX 8 planes from their airspace.

Oman's Public Authority for Civil Aviation "is temporarily suspending operations of Boeing 737 MAX aircraft into and out of all Omani airports until further notice," it said in a statement on Twitter.

"The Civil Aviation Authority of Malaysia with immediate effect is suspending the operations of the Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft flying to or from Malaysia and transiting in Malaysia until further notice," said a statement from the regulator's chief executive Ahmad Nizar Zolfakar.

Earlier Tuesday, Australia barred Boeing 737 MAX planes from its airspace.

"This is a temporary suspension while we wait for more information to review the safety risks of continued operations of the Boeing 737 MAX to and from Australia," Shane Carmody, CEO of Australia's Civil Aviation Safety Authority, said in a statement. "CASA regrets any inconvenience to passengers but believes it is important to always put safety first."

Fiji Airways is the only 737 MAX operator affected by the Australian ban, according to CASA. Singapore-based SilkAir used the planes for flights to Australia, but those were already suspended after the city-state barred the model from its airspace.

(source: Daily Star)

## Pakistan committed to easing tensions with India: Bolton

White House national security adviser John Bolton said Monday Pakistan's foreign minister has assured him Islamabad is committed to de-escalating tensions with India and dealing "firmly" with terrorists.

Bolton's comments follow a Feb. 14 suicide bombing, claimed by Pakistan-based militants, which killed at least 40 Indian paramilitary police.

"Spoke with Pakistani FM [Shah Mehmood] Qureshi to encourage meaningful steps against JeM [Jaish-e-Mohammed] and other terrorist groups operating from Pakistan," Bolton said on Twitter.

"The FM assured me that Pakistan would deal firmly with all terrorists and will continue steps to deescalate tensions with India," Bolton added.

Pakistan, which denies Indian accusations of aiding militant groups, last week announced a crackdown against all proscribed outfits.

Pakistan's foreign ministry late on Monday said Qureshi informed Bolton "about the de-escalatory measures taken by Pakistan" in the wake of the aerial bombing missions carried out by both countries in late February.

Qureshi told Bolton that Pakistan's strike in Kashmir on Feb. 27 was in self-defense and retaliation to India's raid on its territory a day earlier. New Delhi said it hit a JeM training camp in Pakistan, but Islamabad denies any such camp exists.

The two countries fought an aerial dogfight over Kashmir on Feb. 27, and a couple of days later Pakistan returned a downed Indian pilot in a gesture that appeared to de-escalate the crisis.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, in a joint conference with Qureshi, commended Pakistan on Tuesday for returning the pilot and offering talks with India. But he also urged Islamabad to stamp out militant groups which attack neighboring countries.

"We both agreed that cross-border terrorism has to be permanently stopped and there too there have been positive signs in the past few days that we welcome very much," Maas said. "Ultimately it's about fighting any kind of terrorism and extremism."

(Source: Daily Star)



STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	167909.7
IFX	2090.57

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,285 rials
GBP	55,470 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$66.88/b
WTI	\$57.00/b
OPEC Basket	\$64.78/b
Gold	\$1,297.50/oz
Silver	\$15.45/oz
Platinum	\$835.70/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Why ‘Japanification’ looms for the sluggish Eurozone

Confronted with slowing economic growth, uncertain politics and wobbly markets the European Central Bank reliably came to the rescue last week with new stimulus measures and a deferral of the start to any normalization of interest rates. Yet, despite the soothing medicine, equity markets were initially unsettled.

This was partly because of the sharpness of the ECB’s downgrade to this year’s growth forecast from 1.7 percent to 1.1 percent. But it was also a response to the downbeat rhetoric of ECB president Mario Draghi, who described the Eurozone as being in “a period of continued weakness and pervasive uncertainty”. That lends topicality to a recent report by economists at ING who point out that a low-growth, low-inflation environment in the Eurozone, along with a negative deposit rate and ample central bank liquidity, bears a striking resemblance to post-bubble Japan. Is the zone, they ask, heading for “Japanification”?

To answer this question they created a model based on research by Takatoshi Ito of Columbia University, which aims to depict the main symptoms of the Japanese “disease”. The model takes into account such factors as the output gap, inflation, policy interest rates and demographic change. Matching the behavior of the two economies leads to the conclusion that over the past two years the Eurozone economy has left its “normal” growth path following the global financial crisis and has dipped into the Japanification territory that has characterized that country for the past quarter century.

The continental Europeans have not, admittedly, been afflicted with Japanese-style deflation and while Japan’s gross public sector debt stands at close to 240 percent of gross domestic product, Eurozone public debt is down to 86 percent from almost 92 percent five years ago. Yet the demographic comparison is interesting. Japan is the world’s oldest country. Its population shrank by 1m between 2012 and 2017, an amount equivalent to the population of Stockholm, and is forecast to shrink by 25 percent in the next 40 years.

The Eurozone is now moving in the same direction, with a working age population that started to shrink in 2009. Shrinkage is expected to continue notwithstanding continuing immigration.

The difficulty with the comparison, it seems to me, is that the Eurozone is not a homogeneous bloc. Southern Europe, especially Italy and Greece, is very different from the north and has arguably performed far worse than Japan. In addition, perceptions of Japanese stagnation have been distorted by demography.

Note, too, that the Japanese suffered a far greater loss of wealth than anything seen in Europe after the great financial crisis. Richard Koo, of the Nomura Research Institute, has calculated that the cumulative loss of wealth on shares and real estate between 1990 and 2015 was equivalent to three times the loss of wealth in relation to gross domestic product that the U.S. incurred in the 1930s slump. Yet in per capita terms, Japanese GDP growth since the bursting of its bubble in 1990 compares quite respectably with the U.S. over the period.

Compare and contrast with Italy, where public sector debt looks uncomfortably high at about 130 percent of GDP and where in the 20 years to 2017 the Italian economy grew in per capita terms by scarcely more than zero. As for the labor market, at no time since 1990 has Japanese unemployment exceeded 5.5 percent. There is, of course, hidden unemployment in large Japanese corporations. Even so, there is not the widespread immiseration that afflicts so many unemployed people in southern Europe.

The most striking difference arises from Japan’s unique structural bind, whereby the country has been dependent on huge government deficits to offset the deflationary impetus of excessive private sector savings and so sustain domestic demand. Because of worries about excessive government debt policymakers embark on periodic consumption tax grabs to improve the fiscal position — another is due later this year — which makes the economy’s growth trajectory bumpy. And in the long run this unbalanced flow of funds is fundamentally unstable.

Yet it could equally be argued that the Eurozone has its own version of this syndrome. The bloc runs a large current account surplus reflecting northern Europe’s tendency to save more than it invests. It also has a flawed monetary union that delivers an over-competitive exchange rate to Germany and other northern Europeans. Their fiscal conservatism militates against any attempt to address the north-south imbalance that results from these ramshackle monetary arrangements.

The conclusions: the Eurozone will continue to be overdependent on the rest of the world for demand stimulus; Japanification will become a more familiar word in the European vocabulary; populism will advance; and the ING authors may be right in arguing that interest rates will remain lower for much longer than most people now expect.

(Source: Financial Times)

Iran, Iraq take new steps to expand trade ties

**1→** In his speech, the Iranian president assessed the talks between the two sides positively, saying that a series of desirable agreements have been reached which can provide a good basis for future cooperation between the two countries’ private sectors.

He mentioned some of the Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) which were signed between the two sides, including an agreement on building a cross-border railway, and one on easing travel conditions.

On Monday, the two sides inked five MOUs aimed at the expansion of bilateral cooperation in various sectors.

The documents were signed by senior officials of the two countries in the presence of President Rouhani and Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi in Baghdad.

Facilitating travel and tourism

Underlining an MOU on facilitating the travel conditions between the two countries, Rouhani said “It was decided that the visa issuance will remain mandatory but it will be free of charge.”

“This protocol will first be implemented by the Islamic Republic of Iran and soon after Iraq will announce officially conform to the agreement.” The president added.

Rouhani once again expressed Iran’s readiness for developing relations with Iraq in various sectors, including energy, and connecting the two countries’ railways, which he believed could be a major step in



developing economic and tourism relations between the two sides.

The MOU in this regard will lay the groundwork for the construction of a 35-kilometer cross-border railroad that connects Iranian town of Shalamche to the Iraqi city of Basra.

Boosting the trade turnover to \$20b

Elsewhere in his remarks, the president noted that “Iranian companies are ready to enter Iraq’s market and to supply the country with its needs in order to achieve

an acceptable level of trade between the two countries.”

Stressing the fact that Iran is determined to increase the value of trade with Iraq from the current \$12 billion to \$20 billion, he said, “Facilitating banking relations and implementing the agreements that are reached in this regard could be a great opportunity for both sides.”

Further in the event, the Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi for his part expressed satisfaction with the positive

negotiations and agreements reached between the two sides, saying, “We are determined to develop all-out relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran. In this regard, we support the presence and cooperation of the businessmen and investors of the two countries.”

22 agreements reached in industry, trade sectors

On the sidelines of the event the Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani who is accompanying the president in his visit to the neighboring country, also held meetings with the Iraqi ministers of industry and trade.

As reported by Shata, during these meetings the two sides reached 22 agreements in various areas of trade and industry cooperation.

Part of Iraq’s dues to Iran settled

On the sidelines of the Iranian delegation’s high profile visit to Iraq, The Governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Abdolnaser Hemmati also held talks with his Iraqi counterpart Ali al-Allaq on Monday to discuss ways of implementing a mutual agreement reached by the two sides on February 5.

In the meeting, the two sides also discussed ways of facilitating banking cooperation, launching Iranian bank branches in Iraq and using local currencies instead of dollar in trade exchanges.

In a report, the CBI also announced on Monday that Iraq has settled first part of Iran’s claim for exports to the country.

‘Refinery of South Pars phase 13 ready for official inauguration’

**E N E R G Y** **TEHRAN** — The refinery **d e s k** of South Pars gas field’s phase 13 of development is ready for the official inauguration, the operator of phase 13 stressed.

In an interview with Shana, Payam Motamed said this refinery is completely ready for the official inauguration by the president, and put the daily refining capacity of the refinery at 56.6 million cubic meters (mcm) of gas.

He said some \$5 billion has been invested for phase 13 and put the daily worth of this

phase’s products at \$5 million.

Production and storage of gas condensate began in the refinery of phase 13 in late January.

Putting all four platforms of phase 13 into operation, the refinery of this phase will produce about 75,000 barrels of gas condensate per day, Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC), which is in charge of implementing development phases of South Pars, published on its website at the time.

Gas produced in platform 13B was injected into the offshore refinery of phase 13 in mid-January.

Nearly \$15.5b worth of non-oil goods exported from Bushehr in 11 months

**E C O N O M Y** **TEHRAN** — Some \$15.478 **d e s k** billion worth of non-oil products was exported from Iran’s southwestern province of Bushehr during the eleven-month period from March 21, 2018 to February 19, 2019, according to the director general of the province’s customs administration.

In an interview with IRNA, Mansour Bazyar said the figure shows 16 percent rise compared to that of the same period of time in the previous year.

He also put the weight of exported products at 26.31 million tons, with 23 percent fall compared to the same time span of the past year.

He mentioned China, United Arab Emirates, South Korea, India, Japan, Indonesia, Kuwait, Thailand, and Taiwan as the major export destinations of the products.

Iran’s non-oil trade with other countries registered a \$1.5-billion positive balance in the first eleven months of the current Iranian calendar year, Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejpasand has recently announced.

The minister put the value of non-oil exports at \$40 billion and that of the imports at \$38.5 billion in the mentioned period of time.

Iran, Russia confer about 15th meeting of Joint Economic Committee

Iran’s Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian had a phone conversation with Russia’s Minister of Energy Alexander Novak for further coordination of the 15th Iranian-Russian Joint Economic Committee meeting.

According to the Russian Energy Ministry, the ministers addressed several matters, including the 15th Iranian-Russian Joint Economic Committee meeting during their phone talk.

They also explored ways to boost bilateral relations between the two countries in the field of economy and shed light on stronger cooperation in energy, industry, transit and agriculture sectors.

Tehran is set to host the 15th round of the meeting. The date of the event will be announced later.

During the 14th meeting of the committee, which was held in Moscow in March 2018, the two sides signed 14 Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) on cooperation in the fields of electricity, nuclear energy, transportation, industry, trade, customs, and banking transactions.

(Source: Mehr News Agency)

Second 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



# OPEC may need to extend the cuts into the next decade, IEA says

Staff & Agencies

In its latest medium term market report called Oil 2019, IEA poured cold water on all OPEC+ efforts by saying that the group may need to continue the cuts up into 2024.

According to the Paris-based agency, the U.S. shale is going to thrive even more in the years to come to make the U.S. the dominant power in the oil market.

"Following the unprecedented expansion seen in 2018, when total liquids production increased by a record 2.2 million barrels per day (mbpd), the United States will account for 70 percent of the increase in global production capacity until 2024," the report read.

IEA estimates the U.S. shale to add near four million barrels of oil to the nation's production capacity, making it capable of exporting nine million barrels of oil per day.

This means the U.S.'s export capacity is going to exceed that of Russia by 2024 to go shoulder to shoulder with world's current biggest exporter Saudi Arabia, the agency said.

Consequently, with the U.S. oil pouring into the market, it is estimated that the demand for OPEC oil is going to decrease significantly.

According to IEA, by 2024, the demand for OPEC oil will be still less than the group's



output before the production cuts started. This entails that the 14-member cartel will need to extend the current output cuts into the next decade.

This could ring the warning bells for the market, signaling that considering the

current worries about the weak demand in the upcoming years, the U.S. shale could be a heavy weigh on the supply side making it even harder for the OPEC+ to balance the market.

However, there are still some supporting

factors which continue to keep the traders' hope alive. Recently OPEC related Argus Media reported that "Venezuela's main oil export terminal and heavy crude processing complex in Jose are shut down as a historic blackout persists across much of the country."

The U.S. sanctions on Iran and Venezuela and the determination and compliance seen in OPEC+ members to stick with the cuts as well as the cooling of the U.S.-China trade war to some extent, all are factors which are supporting the oil prices.

On the other hand, IEA sees the global oil demand experiencing an annual increase of 1.2 million barrels a day, or 1.1 percent, through to 2024 which could be considered yet another supporting factor.

The oil prices have been following a steady trend supported by the output cuts led by OPEC+, however the market has been constantly shadowed by the worries over gloomy global economy and the ongoing surge in U.S. supply.

As reported by Reuters, on Tuesday, U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude oil futures were at \$56.92 per barrel, up 13 cents, or 0.2 percent, from their last settlement while Brent crude futures were at \$66.65 per barrel, up 7 cents, or 0.1 percent.

## Trafigura shipping about 1m barrels of Asian gasoline, blendstocks to S.America



Commodity trader Trafigura is shipping gasoline and gasoline blendstocks to South America from Asia in a crude tanker, according to trade sources, with one of them saying the cargo was around 1 million barrels.

The unusual move comes at a time when gasoline supply is tightening in the destination region due to maintenance at refineries in places such as the United States and Europe.

Ship tracking data from Refinitiv shows the newly-built 'Marlin Swan' crude Suezmax vessel is en route to Balboa in Panama from Yeosu in South Korea.

The five sources, who closely track gasoline shipments, said the vessel was sent by Trafigura. The global oil trader declined to comment on the issue.

New tankers can transport gasoline as long as they have never been loaded with crude. Once crude is put in, they are not typically used to carry cleaner fuels such as gasoline, gasoil or jet fuel as crude is a 'dirtier' product.

Some of the sources said that Trafigura has been storing low-sulfur gasoline and blending components, sourced from different parts of Asia, in South Korea for more than two months, and that it has

gasoline tanks in the Americas.

Gasoline markets had been unusually weak across Europe, the United States and Asia in the weeks up to late-February due to oversupply, with Singapore's gasoline margins to Brent crude mostly languishing at discounts.

But the tide changed in late February partly due to maintenance at refineries in the United States, Europe and Asia.

Asia's gasoline crack, or profit-margin, neared a five-month peak of \$5.48 a barrel on Monday, while NYMEX gasoline futures in the United States settled at their highest since Oct. 23 at \$1.826 a gallon.

"The strength of gasoline in Asia, the talking point now due to demand in Asia, and gasoline going to Panama could play a role," said an oil products trader.

However, analysts were not optimistic that the current strong market for gasoline would last.

"There is still a big question mark over whether this is sustainable or is simply another temporary cycle; we would lean towards the latter ... as estimated maintenance numbers have declined," consulting firm JBC said in a note last week.

(Source: Reuters)

## IEA: fierce global refining competition may lead to closures



The global refining industry faces a wave of new capacity additions to 2024 that would greatly exceed demand growth for refined products, and this may result in refinery closures to rebalance the market, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said in its Oil 2019 annual report on Monday.

Refiners around the world are expected to add 9 million bpd of new capacity through 2024, the Paris-based agency said in its report, noting that China is expected to overtake the United States as the world's leader in installed refining capacity.

"Given that these new additions far exceed the increase in demand for refined products, plant closures might be necessary to rebalance the market, though questions remain as to where and when that will happen," the IEA noted.

In its monthly Oil Market Report in January this year, the IEA said refiners face a challenging year in 2019, with processing capacity set to increase by 2.6 million bpd, the biggest growth in four decades, "while margins are already pressured by low gasoline cracks due to oversupply and weak demand."

Apart from a surge in planned refinery capacity, the downstream sector globally is

on the cusp of "one of the biggest shakeups ever," the IEA said, referring to the new sulfur content regulations by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) as of January 1, 2020.

The IEA estimates in today's report that demand for high sulfur fuel oil (HSFO), the main vessel fuel since the 1960s, will plunge to 1.4 million bpd from 3.5 million bpd in just one year, and that there will be 4,000 scrubbers installed on large vessels by the end of 2020, consuming 700,000 bpd of fuel oil.

The drop in fuel oil demand and the rise of petrochemicals over the next few years will benefit the U.S. oil producers whose typical crude products are lighter, the IEA said.

"[T]he average global product barrel is getting lighter as fuel oil demand falls and petrochemicals grow in importance," according to the IEA.

"As a result, the United States will be in prime position as a supplier of light types of crude oil that are in growing demand. Shale oil will also help meet the new IMO requirements and provide the quantities of naphtha required for the petrochemicals industry," the agency said.

(Source: oilprice.com)

## Venezuelan oil operations halted, blackout persists

Venezuela's main oil export terminal and heavy crude processing complex in Jose are shut down as a historic blackout persists across much of the country today.

Crude exports were already backed up because of U.S. oil sanctions before the record power outage darkened nearly all of Venezuela on 7 March. Around 14 million barrels of crude are backed up in tankers anchored offshore.

Three heavy crude upgraders and a blending operation that national oil company PdV operates with foreign minority partners, as well as petrochemical plants run by Pequiven in Jose, are suspended, PdV officials tell Argus.

The halted upgraders are PetroPiar with Chevron, PetroMonagas with Russia's Rosneft and PetroCedeño with Total and Equinor. The three plants have nameplate synthetic crude production capacity of around 450,000 bpd.

Also affected is the 160,000 bpd blending facility Sinovensa that PdV runs with China's CNPC.

Other oil and gas operations are suspended as a precaution.

PdV has been working since yesterday to restore the Barbacoa-Jose power transmission line that services the strategic industrial complex in Anzoategui state, but multiple tests failed yesterday. The company is testing the line again today after cleaning the Jose substation.

The blackout originated in the 10GW Guri hydroelectric complex and a 765kW trans-



mission line that supplies central Venezuela. Thermoelectric plants that would have compensated for Guri's breakdown are mostly out of service for lack of investment and maintenance.

Electricity service is returning in some parts of Caracas and other areas of the country today, but many Venezuelans have been without power and associated water supply for more than 70 hours. Looting and intimidation by paramilitary gangs were reported overnight. Among the areas that have power is the neighborhood around the 190,000 bpd Puerto La Cruz refinery.

Venezuela's main airport in Maiquetia is mostly shut down.

Venezuela's president Nicolas Maduro and senior government officials have said the blackout was caused by a cyberattack perpetrated by the U.S. Critics say such an attack is impossible.

Juan Guaidó, the opposition leader that most Western countries recognize as interim president, called the blackout a long-foreseen "catastrophe" that will require international help to address problems across generation plants, transmission lines and substations after years of corruption.

Speaking across a halting internet signal from outside the National Assembly that he presides over, Guaidó said lawmakers will meet in an emergency session tomorrow to declare a "state of national alarm" and blamed Maduro for the crisis. "We need to address this catastrophe immediately," he said, urging Venezuelans to sustain anti-government protests.

"You have every right to be very angry, but now is the time to take action," he told supporters. "We all know who is responsible and we need to find solutions. We need to take action together in the street."

Some of Guaidó's supporters are urging him to invoke Article 187 of Venezuela's 1999 constitution that allows the assembly to authorize military intervention from abroad. Yesterday Guaidó said the opposition should be prepared to invoke Article 187 "when the time comes."

The U.S. and allies in Latin America have pledged to support a political transition but rule out armed intervention.

Guaidó said 17 people have died as a result of the blackout, including 15 patients in a hospital in Maturin in eastern Venezuela. Julio Castro, a physician accompanying Guaidó today, said many others are at risk, including newborns, diabetics and dialysis patients.

The lack of water is also raising alarm bells over the further spread of diseases such as malaria and dengue.

(Source: Argus Media)

## Solar energy: panel engineers move over to the dark side

When the UK's largest subsidy-free solar farm opens later this year, there will be something a bit different about its panels: unlike traditional panels that absorb energy on only one side, these panels will be absorbing sunlight from both sides.

The new solar farm in York, developed by Gridserve, uses "bifacial" modules, a technology that has become one of the fastest-growing trends in solar because it helps solar panels generate more electricity.

The 35-megawatt plant will generate enough power for 10,000 homes. "Bifacial panels are a no-brainer," says Toddington Harper, chief executive of Gridserve. "In our opinion, they will be the panel of choice for the utility-scale market." He estimates the solar farm will generate 20 percent more energy due to its combination of bifacial solar panels and trackers that enable each panel to follow the sun, compared with traditional static photovoltaic panels.

Solar has become the world's biggest source of new electricity — it is bigger than wind, gas, or coal in terms of new installed capacity each year, according to S&P Global. Last year some \$131bn was invested in solar, in spite of decreasing government subsidies, according to Bloomberg.

However the solar sector has been relatively slow to innovate on the traditional photovoltaic panel, which is now seen as a low-margin, commoditized product. While the price of solar panels has fallen dramatically in the last decade, the improvement in the physical performance of standard panels has not changed nearly as much.

That could shift though, as subsidies for renewable decline, according to solar executives and analysts. In the absence of subsidies, projects that are more efficient and perform better have a greater economic advantage, they say.

"There is a lot of room for further performance improvements [in solar]," says Cedric Philibert, senior renewables analyst at the International Energy Agency. In addition to bifacial modules, he says that technologies combining different types of substrate material into panels to capture more of the light spectrum also offer potential to grow.

"Bifacial technology captures more light, and it is not very much more expensive, so it makes sense," he says. The first large-scale bifacial projects are only one or two years old, he points out, adding that the technology started to take off "only very recently". In a bifacial panel, the back of the panel is replaced with glass, allowing energy to be absorbed from both directions. To date only about 1GW of bifacial projects have been built globally — representing less than 1 percent of all solar projects — but that figure is expected to grow.

Bifacial panels could be more than a third of the solar panel market by 2028, according to an estimate in a recent academic paper in Energy and Environment Science. Bifacial modules were a core element of one of the lowest solar bids recorded — at just 1.79 cents per kilowatt-hour for a 300MW project in Saudi Arabia, the 2017 bid was the cheapest solar project ever proposed up to that point. However Saudi Arabia's government, which awarded the project, instead awarded the contract to developers using traditional one-sided panels despite their higher price. The government did not give a reason for its decision; analysts however attribute it to a view prevalent two years ago that the technology was too unproven for such a big project.

Oliver Davies, renewables performance manager at Rina, a certification consultancy, says uncertainty about how the new design will perform has slowed its adoption. "One of the biggest barriers on utility scale projects is getting that comfort and reducing those risks for investors," he says. It is hard accurately to model how much sunlight will be reflected off the ground and on to the back of a bifacial panel. This varies depending on whether the ground is covered with dirt or plants and can also vary from season to season.

"A key focus is looking at the 'albedo' of the ground, which is essentially the reflection of the ground," says Davies. This allows for an accurate prediction for how much power bifacial panels will be able to generate on a specific site. He says a typical gain is 5-15 percent. "The good thing about bifacial technology is that it is more of an evolutionary step, rather than a completely different technology," he adds. "It is considered as an easy gain."

Harper of Gridserve points out that bifacial panels like those to be used at their new solar farm in York cost nearly the same as regular one-sided panels. Bifacial made a "huge difference" to the economics of the project, which does not have a feed-in-tariff subsidy, he adds. "I knew that fundamentally we should be able to make it work without subsidies," he says. "A key piece of that is to try to generate as much value as possible from a project, without increasing the costs."

(Source: Financial Times)

## Germany's Uniper 2018 EBIT falls

German energy group Uniper on Tuesday posted 22 percent drop in 2018 operating profit and said it could fall by more than a third this year, partly due to a suspension of capacity payments in Britain.

In 2018, the group's adjusted earnings before interest and tax (EBIT) fell by 22 percent to 865 million euros (\$973.73 million), missing the \$79 million average forecast in a Reuters poll.

Adjusted EBIT is expected to come in between 550 million euros and 850 million euros this year, the company said in a statement, while analysts in a Reuters poll had expected an average of 796 million euros.

"The forecast for the 2019 fiscal year continues to be significantly influenced by the difficult conditions in the energy industry and political environment and the associated volatile development of prices in all the European electricity markets," Uniper said.

An EU court ruled last year that Britain must halt a back-up power scheme, effectively paying providers for making supplies available at short notice, pending a further investigation by European Union regulators.

The move caused peer SSE to cut its full-year profit forecast last month. Uniper said that if the scheme would be reinstated it would increase its profit outlook by up to 120 million euros.

Despite the expected profit drop, Uniper said it plans to propose a dividend payment of 390 million euros for 2019, an increase of 18.5 percent on the 329 million, or 0.90 euros per share, it has proposed for 2018.

(Source: Reuters)



# An exploration into the life of American-Iranian who fell in love with Islam

## Quran had taught me to be a critical thinker: Laleh Bakhtiar



**In addition, coming from Christianity to Islam I realized I did not have to give up my love for Jesus and, in addition, I gained Muhammad (PBUH)."**

"So my husband and I wrote the book *The Sense of Unity: The Sufi Tradition in Persian Architecture* together which has been translated into Persian.

"This was how I became interested in writing. Another publisher called Thames & Hudson, a London/New York publisher, asked me to write an introductory book on Sufism, so I wrote the book: *Sufi: Expressions of the Mystic Quest*. I had suddenly become a writer, something I had never thought about before. As we say: We have our plan and God has His!

"Several years later, when I was divorced, I had to look for a career and I thought to myself: The thing I know how to do is to write books. So I became a writer and a translator. The first book I ever translated was *Fateme'h is Fateme'h*, a book written by Ali Shariati. I translated several of Shariati's books, and Morteza Motahhari's books and worked on English translations with some of the different Islamic Organizations."

### ■ The path to translate the Quran

"I was looking for a job when I finished my Ph.D. I was introduced to the oldest Muslim publisher in North America (founded in 1972), Kazi Publications, an independent Muslim publisher in Chicago that publishes books on Shism and Sufism. They had book distribution, but they did not have book production. They hired me, as writing and book production was my specialty. They asked me to write a book on the life of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) for high school students. I wrote the book. A very famous American professor had written a foreword to the book and it had been reviewed. It was finished and ready to go to the printers. One day I looked at the book and said to myself: How can I write the life of the prophet without the whole of the Quran in his life story? When you write a one volume work on the life of the prophet, which is important to have, however, and there are many, you just have some of the verses but you don't give the overall picture of all the Quran that was revealed to him.

"Of course, when you want to include the whole of the Quran in the life of the prophet then you will have many volumes which I was prepared to do. I studied English translations of the Quran like Abdullah Yusuf Ali's [Translation and Commentary (1934)], Muhammad [Marmaduke] Pickthall's [The Meaning of the Glorious Koran (1930)] and Muhammad Asad's [The Message of the Qur'an (1980)]. I found many problems with them.

"For example in Muhammad Asad's translation, which many people like in English, you cannot put the Arabic next to his translation because there is so much extra English. So it is a 'tafsir', a commentary, and not a translation. Or, Yusuf Ali's translation, which is maybe closer to the Arabic, but it includes all these footnotes. So you go down to the footnotes and start reading them forgetting what the Quran had said.

"I found this very disturbing. I felt there needed to be a translation without any parenthesis and without any extra indications or footnotes, etc. but so straight forward so that you could mirror the Arabic with the English and you would be able to learn Quranic Arabic.

"The other thing that was important to me was what is called consistency and reliability. None of the translations had that. As I had translated books before, I knew that when I start from the beginning and I go to the end, in the middle I forget what translation I used for a particular word, so I would continue to add synonyms. This makes it more difficult for a person to learn the meaning of an Arabic word. As I had studied educational psychology where you learn about testing, consistency, and reliability. I wanted to make sure that if the context allows, I use the same English word in translation. "One word in the Quran, if the context allows of course, suddenly has 10 meanings in English, how is one supposed to learn that word in Arabic when it has 10 different English equivalents? It should be the same if the context allows.

"So I thought the way to do it was to start with the words, not from the beginning to the end.

Bakhtiar went on to say that "I was not sure this method would work. I called a Muslim convert friend of mine who lives in Arizona and whose father had been a minister. I explained that I was using this method and said: 'I'm not sure if this is going to work.' He said: "That is how they translated the King James version of the Bible in the 17th century. They began with the words and not the sentences." I was relieved to realize that this method will work.

"Some people say: In order to prepare the English translation of the King James version of the Bible, 50 to 55 men were working on it, but you are only one person, so how can you think you are equal to that? I say: I have a computer."

"Using this method, then, also laid the basis for an English "al-Mujim al-mufahris" which I called *The Concordance of the Sublime Quran*."

*The Concordance of the Sublime Quran serves the need of those who do not know the Arabic language but want to understand the Quran. This work is a translation and transliteration of the Arabic Concordance known as al-Mujim al-mufahris. This all-English work shows the semantic structure of the Arabic vocabulary in order to arrive at the multiple meanings of Arabic three and four-letter roots and their derivatives. Divided into three parts, Part 1: Contents lists the 3673 transliterated Arabic derivatives of all verbs, nouns and some particles in the Quran. Part 2: Text lists the transliterated derivatives, their grammatical structure and English translation followed by the verses in which the word appears in The Sublime Quran. Part 3: Index lists the 6000+ words used in the translation followed by a reference to the derivative found in both Part 1: Contents and Part 2: Text.*

### ■ Controversies surrounding Sublime Quran translation

Bakhtiar's translation of the Sublime Quran is different from other English translations in many ways. For example, she used the word "ungrateful" for "kafirun" where the context allows. Or in Chapter 4, Verse 34, a hotly debated verse, that has been interpreted to say that a rebellious woman should first be admonished, then abandoned in bed, and ultimately "beaten" — the most common translation for the Arabic word "daraba" — unless her behavior improves. However, Bakhtiar chose to translate the word daraba as "go away."

"I realized that if you wanted an inclusive translation then 'kafir' has to be translated as 'ungrateful' if the context allows. If the word appears with 'iman' meaning 'faith' then you have to translate it into 'disbeliever' but if it does not appear with that, then you can understand it as meaning 'ungrateful' because we know plenty of Muslims who are 'kafirs' in the sense that they are ungrateful to God. Not that they don't believe in God, but they are ungrateful to God and they don't show their gratitude towards Him.

"Or, for instance, it is not common to use thee, thy or thou in English for the second person singular. Yet, when we use 'you' instead of 'thou', we are referring to the second person plural, making God plural which is an unforgivable sin in Islam. So, when the original was thee or thou, I put the pronoun in bold so the reader knows that the original was singular.

"In regard to masculine or feminine pronouns which exist in Arabic, sometimes they are not clear in English when the Arabic refers to the third person plural, 'them'. I found several verses in the Quran where a distinction has to be made between a third person plural pronoun being masculine or feminine. For example verse al-Nur, 24:33 on forcing women into prostitution. It says: *Compel not your spiritual warriors (fatah) against their will to prostitution when they wanted chastity, that you be looking for the advantage of this present life. Whoever compels them to it against their will, yet after their compulsion, God will be of them, Forgiving, Compassionate.* (Q24:33) When you read this in English, the plural pronouns need further explanation.

"The third person plural pronoun, 'them', in this case is feminine. That is, it is the women who will be forgiven. But this doesn't come across in even a Persian translation. So for important pronouns like this, I put 'f' in parentheses to indicate this is a feminine pronoun.

"And then, of course, I came to 4:34 and the Arabic word 'daraba'. I realized that the God that I love is not going to allow anyone to beat anyone. So I did research. The Arabic word, 'daraba' has 26 meanings. One of them is 'to go away' instead of 'beat them'. There is a disagreement about this as not everyone agrees that it says that. However, having it as an alternative understanding in the entire translation of the Quran indicates a difference of opinion.

"As an example, there was a child custody case in New York. An Indian Muslim physician-husband wanted to get custody of his four children from his Polish-convert-to-Islam wife even though he had beaten his wife. He took the stand before the judge and showed him the Marmaduke Pickthall translation of the Quran where it says: "scourge them". Scourge is an even stronger punishment than beat! The judge was confused, thinking: American law forbids beating, but this man's religion says he can beat his wife so which way do I decide. Then, the wife took the stand. She opened the Sublime Quran to chapter Nisa: 4:34 and said that the verse says the husband after admonishing his wife and leaving her bed, he should "go away". The judge then realized that there is a difference of opinion in regard to 4:34 and was then able to decide for the wife. He gave her custody of the children.

"It took me seven years to complete the English translation of the Sublime Quran. It was published in 2007. I can't speak Arabic. I can pronounce the Quran, but to myself, because I don't pronounce it correctly. However, it is important to recognize that we receive spiritual reward by listening to the Arabic recitation of the Quran, whether we are able to recite it correctly ourselves or not, and not from reading a translation. Translation does not give you that but it gives you meaning which is also very important."

### ■ Critical Thinking and the Chronological Quran in the Life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

"After finishing the translation of the Quran, I realized that the Quran had taught me to be a critical thinker. As a result, I was able to do a series of thirty books entitled *Critical Thinking and the Chronological Quran in the Life of Prophet Muhammad*. Twenty-four of the books are focused on the 23 years and some months of the revelation of the Quran to the Prophet. Four other volumes are the verses about the other prophets. Each lesson begins with a critical thinking element.

"One of the most important elements of critical thinking is to ask questions. One-sixth of the Quran, over 1,000 verses, are questions: Will you not be reasonable? Will you not wake up? Why haven't you done this? Why aren't you listening? So when the Quran itself is teaching me to be a critical thinker, so this has a beautiful message in it that I need to understand.

*Books entitled Book Year 1 to Book Year 24 consist of one book for each year of the revelation to the death of the Prophet. Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets, Messengers, and Ones Who Are Sent in order of their dates. The last two are: Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation and Book 30: Teachers Manual. The last, Book 30 has been prepared for the teachers Lesson Plans.*

She added, "The series are educational books as well. They are being taught in five states in America in Sunday schools to teach Muslim students about the Quran because they are learning both critical thinking and the Quran.

"The book that I began on the life of the Prophet was never published. Maybe I will finish it one day, but I just thought because it didn't have the whole Quran in it I found that I was denigrating the Prophet. I was not giving the full message of his life and why God had chosen him for the revelation."

### ■ A women-friendly translation of Quran

While Bakhtiar's translation of Quran is cited to be a women-friendly translation, she says she doesn't call herself a feminist.

"Before me, Ms. Saffarzadeh, God rest her soul in peace, who was a friend of mine, had been the first woman to do an English translation of the Quran. However, if you read her English translation of the Quran it is just like Yusuf Ali's translation. She translated the Quran the same way a man would. She did not look at it from a woman's point of view."

*Tahereh Saffarzadeh (1936-2008) published her bilingual translation of the Qur'an in Persian and English in 2001, which is the first bilingual translation of the Qur'an, and the first translation of the Qur'an into English by a woman. She was an Iranian poet, writer, translator and prominent university professor.*

"My translation is the first translation of the Quran by a woman from a woman's point of view, but I'm definitely not a feminist. You can call me a Muslim-feminist or a Muslim-activist if you want but 'Muslim' has to be there because feminism ideology began as a rejection of men. While translating 4:34 and the Arabic word 'daraba' I found out that there are as many men who agree with me that you cannot beat anyone. However, some women, particularly in the Arab world, say women are supposed to be beaten. Therefore, it

is a human rights issue and not a question of being a feminist."

### ■ 'Hijab has a great psychological effect on you'

Speaking about the mandatory Hijab in Iran, she explained: "Wherever you live, you have to follow the laws of that country. If you don't like a law, then you vote for a different law. There are many laws in America I do not agree with, but I have to go along with the law. You change it through your vote, but you don't change it by saying I don't like it or I don't want to do it. It's like stopping at a red light. Mandatory hijab makes sense in the culture of Iran, but it doesn't mean that all cultures have to do that. I also believe that in another culture, like in America, where it is not a law, it is up to a woman to decide if she likes it or not and everyone should accept her decision.

"I loved wearing the Hijab because it kept down my ego. It has a great psychological effect on you in the sense that in your home you are free to wear whatever you want to wear, but when you go out to society you cover because you don't want to corrupt the society. This makes perfect sense. But in America women wear the worst looking clothes at home and are the least attractive at home, but when they go out they get all these beautiful clothes. That is the complete reverse of what the idea of Hijab is. Here, women's egos are trained to want to draw attention of everybody to them, and what for?"

"I still practice the hijab, but I do not wear a headscarf in the U.S. When 9/11 happened, I stopped wearing a headscarf. I have three children and eight grandchildren. They live in three different states, so I'm the one who travels. I have to get travel alone. I found when I got on an airplane and I was wearing a scarf as I walked down the aisle, I put everyone I passed in a state of fear. I thought to myself: This is not the Hijab because you are supposed to not call attention to yourself. That is the whole idea of it, but here, in this culture, I am calling attention to myself.

"I live in this culture where it is not normal to wear a head scarf. People are not used to seeing others wearing it. In addition, I eventually became 65 years old and the Quran has a verse that says older women do not need to be as careful."

### ■ 'Islam gives women rights that they don't even know about'

Commenting on gender equality in Islam, Bakhtiar explained that Islam gives women rights that they don't even know about because they are not educated in women's rights.

"There are an amazing number of rights that a woman is given. There are logical reasons for whatever rights a woman has or does not have. For example, the Quran says two women witnesses to one man witness. In the first place, that's an economic contract and it's very easy to intimidate women. If she has a friend, she is not going to be as closely intimidated as if she were by herself. It makes perfect sense. Or why men get twice as much inheritance? In the first place, you can write your own will and not follow that. This is for those who do not have a will. A man is supposed to support his mother and sisters, while whatever a woman earns is her own.

"Some say women cannot be judges. I believe this will change with time because women are the best judges when it comes to women's issues. How are men going to be able to judge women's issues.

"And then women are supposed to go to a women dentist or a women gynecologist, so this gives opportunities to women that they wouldn't have if it were not because of Islam.

"And then the movies and cinema. Iranian movies are unbelievable, they are winning awards all around the world. The writers, directors and actors follow the "Sharia" [the Islamic law]. It is so creative in how they do it. So Islam is not something inhibitive. If you use your creative and critical thinking skills you can come up with unbelievable, wonderful ways of expressing human relationships in a way that Persian movies do.

### ■ God spirit is with us all the time; even with the development of the world

Bakhtiar opposes the view that today's human beings are dissimilarly different from their ancestors due progress in technology and a view shared by certain people that today religion cannot be responsive to the current needs of our societies.

"I disagree that human beings are dissimilarly different from their ancestors. We still exhibit the same virtues and vices. However, there are changes of other kinds. From the steam engine, we went to the car. But the most important message of life to me is to know yourself. Who are you? Where did you come from? Where are you going? Well, you can't know that if you don't know God. And how could you know God as Existence if you don't have some kind of faith or some kind of religious belief? It is also a good distinction to make between the spiritual and the religious. So some people only believe in the religious side of things or a formal religion but others believe in the spiritual. God's spirit is within all of us, in giving us our very existence. Even with the development of the world with televisions, computers, and smartphones, God is still around us and is still a part of us.

"Maybe in our minds, we might want to separate it from our lives, but we can't really because if we want to know ourselves we have to know that God has given us all these things. Everything came from God.



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**6 →** If you define religion as the belief in God, the presence and existence of God is what caused everything to happen to be. It's just that our minds have doubts so that some say science is more important, or evolution is more important or power is more important or control or money like in the West where religion is replaced with money.

"They go hours and hours talking about the stock market and about what's going up and down while in the past we used to talk about God and religion like that. Now it is all about money. Yes, things have changed, but that's also God's will about how things should happen.

However, we are free to do what we want to do. There is no compulsion in believing in God, but there is a consequence either way."

**■ What is right and what is wrong**  
The 21st century has seen an ideological shift; religion is now interpreted by different groups who manipulated it to meet their needs. Given this, there is confusion as to what is right and what is not.

To elaborate on this, Bakhtiar said, "When somebody from a religious perspective tells us what is right or wrong, it's up to us to use our mind to determine and say 'yes', this does make sense or 'no', it does not and decide whether we follow that or not. One of the most important guidelines in Islam is 'taqlid' [an Islamic terminology denoting the conformity of one person to the teaching of another] and that's for religious issues like when do I pray? If I miss the noon prayer do I first pray the noon prayer? Taqlid relates to questions about specific religious practices.

"Then, there is '*taḥqiq*' [meaning verification, seeing things as they are in themselves through immediate perception without intermediaries]. It means using my mind to understand things. So the great civilization of Islam, when it was its most powerful was when people used '*taḥqiq*' for things other than religion. '*Taqlid*' was there but only for religious issues such as prayer, Hajj, fasting, etc. but it wasn't in other things that had nothing to do with the 'Sharia'. The emphasis was on creativity. How do I learn something and this come from '*taḥqiq*', recognizing things for myself. What does this mean to me? When we do that, we eventually come to spiritual birth. There is no way you cannot get there, but it takes time. I mean it may take a whole lifetime, and that is what the whole 'Jihad-e-Akbar' (The Greater Struggle) is about: to know yourself.

"I believe that having faith in God and the Day of Judgment is the only thing that is giving meaning to our lives."

**■ Presenting the true face of Islam**  
There are different interpretations of the Quran. For example, the Taliban has its own interpretation, Al-Qaeda has its own. Some argue these are puritanical views of Islam; then another group called ISIS presents a stricter version of Islam. The way they are representing Islam is distorting the true image of it.

But Bakhtiar said there is a difference between the literal interpretation of the Quran and understanding the meaning of the Quran.

"To present the true face of Islam you need education so people learn the difference between the literal interpretation of the Quran and understanding the meaning of the Quran. The Wahhabi perspective or the ISIS perspective or those puritanical and ultraconservative views is that the word you are reading is exactly what you are reading and there is no meaning behind that. It's just whatever that word says.

"But the point of view of other perspectives which is more of an 'Erfan' kind of perspective is that every word has meaning because it came from God so that it has a meaning behind it. The spirit of a word is the meaning behind it. So when we say cat, for instance, what is the meaning of a cat? We look for the meaning of it. When we say the prophet or when we say charity, what is the meaning of that? But

the Wahhabi or the ultraconservatives just say charity only means this and you give it at this time and that's it. It's a very sterile kind of life. It's like the Puritans who first founded America. They were literalists. They left England because they were being persecuted for being literalists.

"They said whatever it says in the Bible is exactly what it is. You don't look for the meaning of the things. That's why they burnt women at the stake calling them witches because they were not looking at the meaning behind whatever they had done. You can say we have the law and the spirit of the law. For instance, if someone is hungry and they steal a chicken, based on the law, stealing is punishable by cutting off hands, but when you look at the spirit of the law, you say: Wait a minute. The person did that because they are hungry. So whose fault is it that they are hungry? It is the government's fault that they didn't give that person food. They then had to go and steal something. So there is a spirit behind the law but not for ISIS or the Wahhabi. For

is about money.

"One of the major differences that has rarely been pointed out is the main difference between Sunni and Shia—or as I say, the Ja'fari, Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i and Hanbali schools of law—when you talk about martyrdom, for the Ja'faris it's going to war where, if you are killed, you become a martyr for your country or God as Imam Hossein did. But in the view of the extremists, martyrdom is associated with blowing up innocent people. We don't have that concept in Iran and that's a big difference that the West doesn't point out at all because the Ja'faris are in the minority and don't get as much press as them which has fueled Islamophobia in America. It's targeting the Muslims and it's a very difficult time."

**■ Islam and democracy**

On a belief among certain scholars that Islam, or generally religion, is not in conformity with democracy and that these two are not reconcilable, she said, "There is no compulsion in religion. That's an aspect of



**Most of the people who haven't been brainwashed would come to the determination that to think of the spirit of the law and meaning would be a better way of understanding the world.**

them, it's just the law.

"I had an experience in Chicago. One day someone rang my doorbell. He was in a hurry looking for somewhere to offer his daily prayer. Once he finished, he said only twice in his lifetime had he been late for his daily prayer. I thought that he must be a very pious person. Then I found out that he beats his wife. She was in the hospital because he had beaten her so badly. Why? Because for him there is no meaning in the law. It is just the form. The form says you offer prayer at 12 noon or exactly at noon. This has nothing to do with how you relate to your wife or children or friends. If that exact time doesn't work for you because your baby is crying, do you take care of the baby or do you just say: Ok, let the baby cry because I have to pray exactly at noon? You either look for the meaning or you say there is no meaning. So it is education that teaches people the difference. Most of the people who haven't been brainwashed would come to the determination that to think of the spirit of the law and meaning would be a better way of understanding the world.

"The Western media is just reporting about the extremists. Most Muslims are good people and not interested in beating someone or killing someone. However, their stories are less often reported because who is going to buy a story about them? Everything

democracy. You don't want to believe in it, don't. If you want to believe in it, then do. This is a democratic process where it is up to an individual to decide one way or the other. You have a choice. It's not that the religion is forcing people so if you don't have a religion you have democracy. They are not separate things. It does not mean that if you have a religion you cannot be democratic. You have just as much right to be religious and democratic as to not having a religion and having democracy. Democracy doesn't mean you don't have religion, it means that you are free to vote for whoever you want no matter what you believe in. This is basically what democracy is. Also, America is not a democracy. It is a republic. It never has been a democracy although we talk about it as if it is. When you vote in a presidential election in America, you do not vote directly for the person of your choice. You vote for a person from the Electoral College who can change the vote. We have much more of a direct vote here in Iran.

**■ Other books and works of translation**

"I think one of my most important works of translation and editing is Ibn Sina's *The Canon of Medicine*, a five-volume work of 5,000 pages. It took 1,000 years to translate it into English. I spent 10 years with Kazi Publications completing it.

"The other book is *The Sufi Enneagram*:

*The Secrets of the Symbol Unveiled*. It's a nine-point personality theory which we can call 'Erfanic psychology' and this is how I came to know Dr. Mahshid Razavi.

**■ A quest**

Mahshid Razavi Rezvani, a cultural resource manager and policy analyst, also talked to the Tehran Times during the interview.

Razavi, a Ph.D., is the Managing Director at Mahshid-e-Kherad Institute of Art and Culture. She first met Laleh Bakhtiar in 2016 in her quest for learning about the Enneagram.

Razavi conducts research in the field of culture and personality using the Enneagram approach, specifically, the Sufi Enneagram discovered by Dr. Bakhtiar. Razavi is a Professional Member of IEA (International Enneagram Association), Accredited Professional at IEA (International Enneagram Association), and Representative of ITP (Dr. Bakhtiar's Institute of Traditional Psychology) from Chicago.

"As a counselor, it was important for me to provide counseling from an Islamic point of view as generally counseling theories and approaches lack an Islamic perspective," Razavi explained.

"Ten years ago I read about the Enneagram and found out that it originated with 'Erfan' (mysticism) and Sufism. Five years ago Dr. Bakhtiar's book *The Sufi Enneagram: The Secrets of the Symbol Unveiled*, which my office has translated into Persian, entitled *Noh Ganeh Irani*, came out and answered my question.

*The Enneagram (pronounced any-a-gram; ennea is Greek for nine, and gram means drawing) and has its roots in the Middle East in ancient spiritual traditions and research suggests dates as far back as Plato. As we know it today, the Enneagram is a vital link between Eastern spirituality and Western psychology.*

*The Enneagram of Personality, or simply the Enneagram is a model of the human psyche which is principally understood and taught as a typology of nine interconnected personality types. Although the origins and history of many of the ideas and theories associated with the Enneagram of Personality are a matter of dispute, contemporary Enneagram claims are principally derived from the teachings of Oscar Ichazo and Claudio Naranjo. Naranjo's theories were partly influenced by some earlier teachings of George Gurdjieff. As a typology, the Enneagram defines nine personality types (sometimes called "enneatypes"), which are represented by the points of a geometric figure called an enneagram, which indicate connections between the types.*

However, Razavi explained, monotheism was missing in the kind of Enneagram presented in the West as it does not correspond with the Islamic viewpoint.

"It was important to me to reintroduce the Sufi Enneagram or the Iranian Enneagram to Iranians as well as the world once again," she said, adding the kind of Enneagram being practiced in the U.S. was first introduced by Persian polymath Nasir al-Din al-Tusi.

"Dr. Bakhtiar has also researched the Enneagram roots among Iranian polymaths as well in her book," she added.

"The Enneagram practiced in the West is mostly affected by seven deadly sins [the capital vices or cardinal sins, which is a grouping and classification of vices within Christian teachings], however, the Iranian Enneagram is based on moral issues and monotheism," she highlighted, "adding that, the human being's personality is dynamic and can change by avoiding extreme behaviors; the 9 Points Iranian's (Noh Ganeh Irani) ultimate purpose it to teach us to be fair and just and promote the practice of 'spiritual chivalry' (futuwwah, javanmardi) in society.

"The Iranian Enneagram (Noh Ganeh Irani) can introduce Iran and the true face of Islam to the world," she concluded.

## Cuba condemns the terrorist sabotage against the power supply system in Venezuela

**1 →** This adds to the ruthless economic and financial warfare imposed on Venezuela with the clear intention to subjugate, through shortages and deprivations, the political and sovereign will of a people that has not been brought to its knees.

This is an escalation of a non-conventional war led by the US government against that sister nation, which is taking place after the failed provocation orchestrated on February 23 with the intention of carrying by force an alleged humanitarian aid into Venezuela, thus challenging the legitimate authorities of that country and violating International Law and the principles and norms of the United Nations Charter, with the purpose of causing widespread death and violence as a pretext for a "humanitarian intervention."

The experience of Cuba's own history and the history of other countries in the region show that these actions are a prelude of violent acts of a larger scope, as was the case of the armed invasion through Bay of Pigs in 1961. The international community has accumulated sufficient evidence to be on the alert.

The usurper and self-proclaimed "president" made in the U.S. has publicly said that, when the time comes, he would invoke Article 187 of the Constitution to authorize the use of foreign military missions in the country; and has repeated exactly the same phrase used by his American mentors: "All options are on the table."

He just needs to receive an order from Washington, since it is known that, during his tour around South America, he already asked certain governments to support a military intervention in his country.

The offensive launched against Venezuela has been accompanied by a ferocious campaign of McCarthyist propaganda and lies coordinated by the National Security Advisor of that country, John Bolton, as a pretext to apply by force the Monroe Doctrine, for which he has counted on the active participation of the anti-Cuban Senator Marco Rubio, who has frantically resorted to social networks, thus evidencing his interest and personal and conspiratorial involvement in the maneuvers perpetrated against Venezuela.

One of the most relentless and shameless statements made has been the slanderous assertion that Cuba has "between 20 and 25 thousand troops in Venezuela" which "exercise control" on that sister and sovereign nation and "keep" the members of the glorious and combative National Bolivarian Armed Forces "under threat". Cuba categorically rejects that lie and equally strongly refutes any insinuation that there is some level of political subordination by Venezuela to Cuba or by Cuba to Venezuela.

John Bolton is a well-known liar, whose trajectory goes back a long way. He was the U.S. government official who, back in 2002, accused Cuba of having a program to develop biological weapons, a fallacy that was publicly denied by former Secretary of State Colin Powell, who was his superior back then; and by Ex-President James Carter. This falsehood also forced Bolton to undergo a U.S. Congress investigation.

Back in 2003, Bolton was also among those who disseminated the lie that the government of Iraq had weapons of mass destruction and a program to develop them. Such a lie, after being repeated at every level of the U.S. government and magnified by the big media, served as a pretext for the aggression and military occupation of that Middle East country by the United States at a cost of almost one million deadly casualties and millions of displaced Iraqis, plus thousands of U.S. soldiers killed and wounded during a military campaign whose goal was also oil.

As has been publicly announced and is known by the honest and well-informed persons, the bilateral relations between Cuba and Venezuela are based on mutual respect, true solidarity; a shared commitment, based on the ideas of Bolívar, Martí, Fidel and Chavez, with the integration of an independent and sovereign "Our America"; the willingness to practice complementary cooperation among all the peoples of the South and the common effort to implement and defend the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace.

The projects contained in the Comprehensive Cooperation Agreement that was signed between both countries involve the participation of a little more than 20 000 Cubans, most of them women. Ninety six per cent of them are devoted to the provision of health services to the population. Others work in other sectors such as education, culture, sports and agro-food production.

Just to mention some figures, the historical impact of that cooperation in Venezuela has been reflected in the 1 473 117 human lives that have been saved; the 717 029 310 medical diagnoses made; the medical assistance received by 62 031 309 persons suffering from eye problems; the 12 915 648 vaccines against measles and tuberculosis administered to people; and the 3 095 564 persons who have been taught to read and write.

It is absolutely not true that Cuba is taking part in operations carried out by the National Bolivarian Armed Forces or the security services. This is a slanderous rumor deliberately disseminated by the government of the United States. When Bolton as well as other politicians and officials of the U.S. government rely on such rumors, they are deliberately lying to pursue aggressive political purposes. They have sufficient data and information and know the truth.

Cuba does not interfere in the internal affairs of Venezuela, just as Venezuela does not interfere in Cuba's internal affairs.

Unlike the United States, which has about 80 military bases in Latin America and the Caribbean, including the one that is usurping the Cuban territory in Guantánamo; and around 800 in the entire planet, with more than 250 000 quartered troops, Cuba does not have any base in any country; or specialists in torture and police repression; or secret prisons; or naval or air forces prowling around the coasts or the immediate air space of sovereign States; or satellites watching every single detail.

It was through the use of lies that imperialism promoted the bloody coup d'état of Augusto Pinochet in Chile and many other coups and repressive dictatorships in the region. It was through the use of lies that more than 10 000 defenseless citizens were assassinated during the military invasion against Panama in December of 1989. It was through the use of lies that the military aggression and destabilization of Libya was perpetrated.

It was with lies that the United States and other powers fully supported, all the way until the very last minute, the opprobrious apartheid regime in South Africa.

The Revolutionary Government warns and denounces that the tendency of the government of the United States to lie without any limit or restraint whatsoever has already had dangerous consequences in the past that could replicate in the present.

## A wild theory about Trump is a sign of natural despair and desperation

**1 →** As horrified as many Democrats are by Trump, they lack credibility but for a few brave, outstanding voices in Congress that include Rep. Ilhan Omar and 2020 Presidential candidate Rep. Tulsi Gabbard of Hawaii.

The Democratic Party leaders may be just as corrupted as the Republicans under Trump, and Nancy Pelosi, House Majority Speaker, claims any attempt to impeach Trump is misguided because Trump is "not worth the effort". This of course makes no sense at all, for if Trump is worthless, then he surely ought to be impeached as fast as possible.

Never before in the history of the United States has the country been in such potentially dire straits longer term, been governed so badly, and had such senseless and destructive and baldly desperate foreign policies – ones based on greed, hubris, insecurity, paranoia, xenophobia and, worst of all, abysmal ignorance. Countries seem to get the governments and leaders they deserve. The U.S. is a glaring example of this, it seems.

**■ But is there something else afoot with Trump?**

One indication of how desperate some relatively thoughtful Americans are for good news and positive directions (who are outside of government) is that they think Trump is far more of a master tactician – which is unlikely although the

presumption is based on some reasonable policy postures he had during his campaign for the White House in 2016.

It has been anyway put forth that Trump has figured out that the sole way to "Make America Great Again", assuming it ever was, is to disentangle from perpetual wars that have done nothing for U.S. security, have virtually bankrupted the country, bolstered a useless system of costly alliances and demonized Russia, which is not an enemy of the U.S.

However, Trump, the theory goes, realized he could do little to change any of this because the notion that the U.S. is "indispensable" and "exceptional" has been so deeply embedded in government and has prevailed against all rational odds particularly overseas. Thus, he has, the theory advances, had to adopt a back-door approach to force change by OFFENDING just about everyone on the planet to force them to unilaterally disengage from the U.S. (One example of Trump offense among others is his recent demand that allies pay for the maintenance of U.S. troops and "protection" on their own soil.)

But still, nothing has really happened yet.

America's European allies have not yet quit the U.S., but are charting some mildly independent courses including a clear aversion to Trump's and the Zionists' and

Saudis' dreams of attacking Iran. And the JCPOA remains alive and the signatories (aside from the U.S.) seem to be honoring it if not doing everything they can to ensure their trade with Iran is not eliminated by U.S. sanctions. (This despite Mike Pence's exhortation to U.S. allies to quit the JCPOA in Warsaw, which fell flat.) And no one has so far pulled out of useless NATO, too. Thus, what has occurred so far is only that some obvious cracks are growing between U.S. and allies and according to some theorists, this is a SUCCESS for Trump's alleged schemes to reorder and reorient U.S. priorities more to domestic problems and concerns.

At any rate, desperation even for those who want to believe in positive change (and that Trump is not insane) has become as thick as polar ice, and this is natural, too. But anyone who thinks Donald Trump really understands what he is doing, and has some wildly complicated master plan to impose or transform some decent campaign promises he made in 2016 into real policy, is sadly mistaken. Any President who chooses Mike Pompeo or John Bolton or Elliott Abrams for top positions, all three of them despicable sadists, can't possibly be thinking of anything but their own survival and the deployment of brute force.



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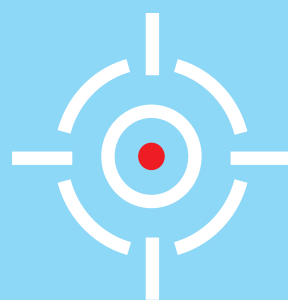
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# Kish to host World Health Summit Regional Meeting 2019

**HEALTH** TEHRAN — The 7th World Health Summit Regional Meeting will be held on April 29-30 in the Persian Gulf island of Kish, IRNA reported on Monday.

Hosted by Tehran University of Medical Sciences, this year, the event topics include health in uncertain situations, global health in a transitional world, sustainable health development, non-communicable diseases and mental health, planetary health, and medical education.

Ali Jafarian, international president of World Health Summit 2019, said that it is the first regional meeting in West Asia and North Africa to host 700 participants, including 150 foreign guests.

Pointing out that playing host to the event is an important opportunity for the country, he added that over 100 health experts from different countries have expressed readiness to attend the meeting.

The event is co-organized by Ministry of Health and Medical Education, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kish Free Zone Organization, Science and Technology Vice-Presidency,



## WORLD HEALTH SUMMIT

National Institute of Health Research, and World Health Summit.

It aims to improve health all over the world through collaboration and open dialogue, as well as improving research, education, healthcare, and policy outcomes.

It brings together researchers, physicians, key government officials, and representatives of health related industries, NGOs and health-care systems all over the world to address

the most pressing issues facing every facet of healthcare and medicine in the upcoming decade and beyond.

### ■ World Health Summit

Since it was launched in 2009, the World Health Summit has brought together stakeholders and decision-makers from every field in the healthcare spectrum, providing the perfect forum for exchange with experts from academia, industry, politics and civil society.

Now attracting 2,400 participants and a wide range of stakeholder groups from all over the world, the event takes place annually in the German capital Berlin.

The World Health Summit traditionally enjoys the High Patronage of the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, the President of the French Republic and the President of the European Commission.

Held annually in spring, the World Health Summit Regional Meeting is organized by the Co-President of each respective year. The first Regional Meeting was held in Singapore in 2013. In 2019, the Regional Meeting will take place in Kish Island (Iran), and the 2020 Regional Meeting will be hosted by Makerere University in Kampala (Uganda).

By choosing the World Health Summit as its central platform, the M8 Alliance of Academic Health Centers, Universities and National Academies has provided the summit with an excellent academic foundation. The alliance is an international collaboration between leading academic institutions aimed at using academic excellence to improve global health.

## Air pollution responsible for more deaths than smoking, study says

The number of people dying as a result of air pollution may exceed the number killed by smoking, a major new study suggests.

German researchers estimate that as many as 8.8 million deaths per year globally can be attributed to dirty air.

In Europe alone they estimate there are more than 790,000 additional deaths as a result – double the previous estimate which did not properly account for the additional rates of cardiovascular disease.

“To put this into perspective, this means that air pollution causes more extra deaths a year than tobacco smoking, which the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates was responsible for an extra 7.2 million deaths in 2015,” said Professor Thomas Munzel, one of the authors from the University Medical Centre Mainz.

“Smoking is avoidable but air pollution is not.”

Fine sooty particles and nitrogen oxides (NOx) pumped out by car exhausts, factories and power plants can form a damaging cocktail which significantly increase rates of heart attacks, strokes and severe asthma attacks.

Regulators are looking to crack down on diesel cars in major cities as they are major producers of microscopic “PM2.5” particulates. These can contain heavy metals and other fuel chemicals which lodge in the lungs and enter the blood stream.

The study, published in the European Heart Journal, used computer simulations of interacting natural and man-made chemicals combined with new information about population density, disease risk factors, and causes of death.

Air pollution was thought to have caused 64,000 deaths in the UK in 2015, including 17,000 fatal cases of heart and artery disease.

More than 29,000 other British deaths linked to air pollution were due to a range of conditions such as cancer, diabetes and chronic lung disease.

This amounted to a reduction in average life expectancy of about 1.5 years in the UK – however some of their European neighbors are much harder hit.

Co-author Professor Jos Lelieveld, from the Max-Planck Institute for Chemistry in Mainz, said: “The high number of extra deaths caused by air pollution in Europe is explained by the combination of poor air quality and dense population, which leads to exposure that is among the highest in the world.”

In Germany, air pollution was said to have been responsible for an extra 124,000 deaths in 2015 and 2.4 years of lost life expectancy. While an estimated 81,000 people were killed by air pollution in Italy.

They called on the European Union to adopt tougher safety limits for PM2.5 set by the WHO – as current air pollution levels in Europe are double the safe level set by the health body.

“Many other countries, such as Canada, the USA and Australia, use the WHO guideline,” said Professor Munzel. “The EU is lagging a long way behind in this respect.”

(Source: The Independent)

## New drug limits damage to heart muscle from heart attack

An experimental drug has shown great promise in limiting the damage that a heart attack can inflict on the heart. It targets a protein that plays a central role in the death of heart muscle cells.

New experiments in mice find that a small molecule can restrict the damage to heart muscle that a heart attack can cause. Tests on mice have revealed that the drug could markedly reduce heart injury from a heart attack.

The small-molecule drug blocks the protein MAP4K4, which relays the oxidative stress signals that cause the death of heart muscle cells and damage to tissue.

“There are no existing therapies,” says lead investigator Dr. Michael D. Schneider, from Imperial College London in the United Kingdom, “that directly address the problem of muscle cell death, and this would be a revolution in the treatment of heart attacks.”

Schneider and the team report their findings in a paper that now appears in the journal Cell Stem Cell.

There, they also describe how they grew heart tissue from human stem cells and developed a way of modeling a “heart attack in a dish” for testing the drug.

### ■ Reducing cell death from oxidative stress

The stress signals that a heart attack induces in heart

muscle also occur following blood flow restoration.

So, while it is crucial to restore blood flow following a heart attack, there is also a need to add treatments that limit this “reperfusion injury.” Scientists have been searching for such treatments for some time.

Dr. Schneider and his team are the first to uncover the role of MAP4K4 in the process through which a heart attack, by inducing oxidative stress, kills heart muscle cells.

In their investigation, they revealed that MAP4K4 is active in heart tissue of people with heart failure, and also in mice, following a heart attack.

They then devised a number of “highly selective” small-molecule blockers of MAP4K4 and demonstrated that their use can effectively protect human heart muscle cells from “lethal experimental injury.”

They used chemicals to induce oxidative stress in heart cells and human heart muscle tissue that they had grown from human induced pluripotent stem cells.

The team observed how oxidative stress activated MAP4K4 and how raising levels of the protein also made heart muscle cells more sensitive to it. Blocking the protein, on the other hand, protected the cells from stress-induced death.

### ■ First to test drug on human cells

Following the cell experiments, the scientists selected one candidate small molecule and took it forward “into further proof-of-concept studies in mice.”

The team found that giving mice the drug 1 hour after restoring blood flow to the heart reduced reperfusion injury “by more than 50 percent.”

The researchers hope that their findings will lead to an injection that doctors can give to people about to undergo balloon angioplasty to open a blocked artery following a heart attack.

Another possibility is that such a drug could also help limit heart muscle damage from heart attacks in regions with no rapid access to treatments that restore blood flow.

The team believes that, because they tested the drug in a model that they had developed using human stem cells, it should stand a good chance of succeeding in human clinical trials.

“One reason why many heart drugs have failed in clinical trials may be that they have not been tested in human cells before the clinic. Using both human cells and animals allows us to be more confident about the molecules we take forward.”

(Source: Medical News Today)

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## First Iranian water-fuelled engine system to be commercialized

**1 →** The hydrogen fuel cars increase fuel efficiency nationwide and also enhance air quality, he explained. He said that the water-fuelled engine system can be installed in



all the cars and there is no need for any change in the cars, he said. The water-fuelled engine system can also be used in factories and plant houses, he added.

On November 27, 2016, Jasemi Zargani unveiled his modified vehicle, a car that can be supposedly powered by using potassium hydroxide and distilled water, Financial Tribune reported.

The locally produced Peugeot 405 usually runs on Compressed Natural Gas and gasoline.

He said that a liter (0.26 gallons) of water can reportedly generate some 96 megajoules of energy while a liter of gasoline produces only 29 MJ of energy.

Jasemi Zargani has said a car run by this modified engine could run on 60 liters of water and able to travel up to 900 km.

The hydrogen fuel cell works in the form of electrolysis when one applies a voltage to electrodes inside a closed tank of distilled water; the H<sub>2</sub>O molecules split into hydrogen and oxygen.

According to scientificamerican.com, researchers today put more focus on using hydrogen to power fuel cells, which can replace internal combustion engines to power cars and emit only water from the tailpipe. And though hydrogen is combustible and can power an internal combustion engine, to use hydrogen in that way would squander its best potential: to power a fuel cell.

Hydrogen fuel cell cars are gaining traction, but commercialization of hydrogen fuel has not yet been accomplished. The electrolysis process could be viable in saving energy if a renewable, non-polluting energy source such as solar or wind could be harnessed to power it, although capturing enough of that energy source on board the car would be another hurdle.

## Job creation plans launched for knowledge-based companies

**TECHNOLOGY DESK** **TEHRAN** — The vice presidency for science and technology has launched job creation plans for knowledge-based companies in the field of water management, IRNA reported on Monday.

The vice presidency assessed the technological plans for job creation received from knowledge-based companies and selected six private sector companies to receive facilities from the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare.

Four knowledge-based companies developed rural job creation plans in the field of aquaculture and environment and the other two proposed comprehensive plans for the development of water management through technological methods, said Nader-Qoli Ebrahimi, an official with the vice presidency.

The plans are introduced after passing pilot stage performed by the knowledge-based companies to the labor ministry, he said.

Animal feed production, cage system in fish farming and water desalination supply chain are the plans introduced by labor ministry, he explained.

The cage system in the fish farming plan will be performed in Mazandaran, Gilan and Sistan-Baluchestan provinces with fishing cooperative societies and knowledge-based companies with the support of Iran Fisheries Organization and vice presidency for science and technology, he explained.

## Researchers developing MRI waistcoat for better breast cancer detection

X-rays and MRIs can be very effective ways to detect breast cancer in its early stages, but given the commonness of the disease scientists are always looking at ways to improve diagnostic methods any way they can. Researchers in Vienna are making some promising progress in this area, developing a new method that revolves around a waistcoat packed with flexible radio frequency coils.

MRIs have advantages over X-rays as a diagnostic technique, namely because they don't involve the use of potentially harmful ionizing radiation. They also offer greater sensitivity and higher resolution imagery, though this comes with a higher cost and longer procedure times. In a bid to tackle these shortcomings and make MRIs more accessible, a new research project backed by the Austrian Science Fund and involving scientists from France is making some tweaks to the technology.

MRI produces 3D images of the human body by exposing it to a strong magnetic field along with a radio waves. The current stimulates the nuclei of hydrogen atoms within the body, a reaction which can then be picked up with a radio antenna and translated into detailed anatomical images by a computer.

When used for mammography purposes, the patient enters the MRI scanner tube facing downwards with their breasts placed in a pair of one-size-fits-all cups, which house radio frequency coils used to record the image. This current approach has its pitfalls, according to the researchers.

"This does not work equally well for all women and all breast sizes, because the coils are more efficient and give better results depending on whether they are a good fit for the respective body shape," explains Elmar Laistler from the Medical University of Vienna, member of the research team.

"At the end of the project, we expect there to be a complete hard- and software package for MRI breast examinations," says Laistler.

(Source: New Atlas)

# Some 350,000 iPhones turned off in Iran in past five days: minister

**TECHNOLOGY DESK** **TEHRAN** — About 70,000 iPhones were turned off in Iran per day during the past five days, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi announced, Mehr reported on Tuesday.

Iranian users of iOS systems do not have access to some of their applications which they have installed from other sources than App Store since February 27, which includes Iranian online banks services, online payments as well as ride-hailing and food delivery services.

The Apple users have access to apps through App Store, which is not applicable for Iranian developer during past years due to U.S. sanctions and Apple blocks the enterprise programs due to copyright infringe and violating privacy policy.

According to the statistics released by the Communication Regulatory Authority of Iran, before Apple's blocking, 7000 iPhones are registered daily in Iran, Azari Jahromi said.

However, after that, 350,000 iPhones are turned off, which indicate the development of Iranian apps and shows that Apple loses the Iranian market.

In an opinion editorial written in Financial Tribune on March 3, 2019, Amir Nazemi, the head of Iran Information Technology Organization, noted that "Three factors have caused the recent banishment of Iranian iOS



## 350,000 iPhones are turned off, which indicate the development of Iranian apps and shows that Apple loses the Iranian market

apps: U.S.-imposed sanctions against Iran, a change in Apple's policy in regards to enterprise developer certificates, and a recently published report listing Iranian startups that circumvented US sanctions by using enterprise developer certificates which called on the US firm to take action.'

It is believed that the Apple enterprise program block in Iran was the result of the

essay by Nariman Gharib the presenter at the UK-based Manoto TV channel, which is officially viewed as an enemy of the Islamic Revolution.

In his essay, which appeared on February 1, 2019, on medium.com, he provides a list of Iranian banks, which use the iOS developer enterprise certificate program in Iran.

Apple does not have an App Store in Iran,

## Startup accelerators can promote biotechnology achievements: official



**TECHNOLOGY DESK** **TEHRAN** — Startup accelerators can promote biotechnology achievements in Iran, Mostafa Qanei, secretary of biotech development center (BioDC) at science and technology vice-presidency said, Mehr reported on Monday.

"We should expand biotechnological accelerators in the country in order to save biotechnology," he said.

Through the development of biotechnology, we can save money and boost the national economy, he said.

In February 2019, Qanei said development of biotechnology can save \$200-300 million annually in coming years.

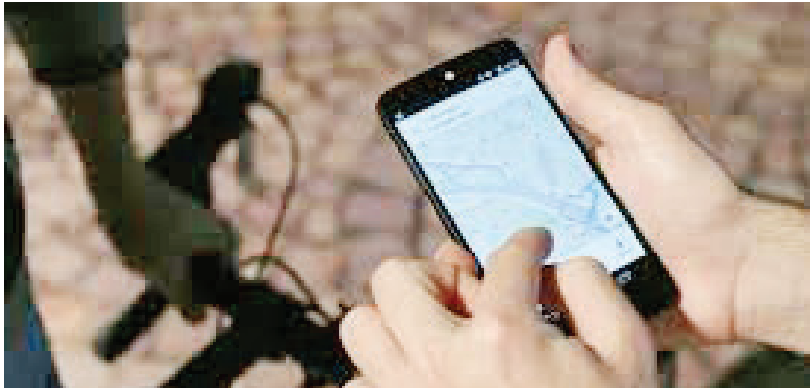
The center plans to support innovative and technological ideas of young generation with venture capital model, he said.

In January 2019, it was announced that BioDC aims to support the production of 30 new biologic drugs in the country.

In July 2018, Qanei announced that Iran has developed 13 methods of pharmaceutical technology in less than one year.

Startup accelerators are fixed-term, cohort-based programs that include seed investment, connections, mentorship, educational components, and culminate in a public pitch event or demo day to accelerate growth.

## Space-based startups to compete at ICT festival



**TECHNOLOGY DESK** **TEHRAN** — For the first time, startups providing space-based technologies and services, will compete at the 8th Information and Communication Technology (ICT) festival, which will be held on May 17.

The startups which provide their products and services based on space-based technologies can compete during the event.

The space-based startups active in different fields of agriculture, insurance, oil, healthcare, energy, crisis management, environment, urban and rural management can compete at the space-based section of the festival.

The applicants that use GPS, communication bandwidth and remote sensing satellites as well as producing and designing space technologies will be competing at the space-based section of the festival.

The Iranian Space Agency (ISA) promotes space-based businesses as one of the main factors for the development of the country. It encourages entrepreneurs to provide space-based creative solutions for challenges and problems Iran deals with.

The ISA provides necessary data as well as some ideas for entrepreneurs to start their business for solving problems.

## ‘You can track everything’: the parents who digitize their babies’ lives

There is a small, fragile window when a child has no compulsion towards digital technology. Jenny, zero, has no idea what a phone is. Jenny is a baby. More than 1m neural connections are being made in her brain each second, but, at 10 weeks old, she can't yet see the full color spectrum or distinguish objects in perspective.

Yet her cocooned life has been substantially mediated by technology. A few weeks before Jenny was born, her mother, Aoife, downloaded a free "breastfeeding and baby tracker" app called Feed Baby and began playing around with it. The developer, Penguin Apps, describes it as "the only app you will need to care for your little one". It has been downloaded more than 1m times.

Before she had recognized her mother's scent or gripped her finger, Jenny was emitting a rich stream of data. "It's really, really simple," Aoife explains from her home in County Kilkenny, Ireland. "You set up your baby, you say when your due date was and when they were born. You can track when you've fed. If you're breastfeeding, what side you've breastfed on and for how long. If you're bottle feeding, how much formula they took. You can track a nappy, what was in the nappy. You can track sleep. If you're giving medicine, how much medicine you give. You can track growth, you can track length and weight, teeth, baths. You can track everything."

Jenny is part of a generation whose entire lives will be quantified – sometimes all the way from conception, thanks to fertility tracking apps such as Kindara and Clue. Aoife has graphs that show her how long Jenny has slept and how regular her "nappy events" were. She used Feed Baby compulsively –



following its cues, ignoring its ads – until one day in January, when she had a revelation. "I was using this app so I would stop being so anxious, but the level of information it was giving me was making me way more anxious. As soon as I stopped using it, my confidence in my parenting abilities increased drastically."

Babytech is not something that people without babies think much about, but that doesn't mean tech people aren't thinking about it: the app stores are full of products with names such as Baby Manager and Glow Baby Newborn Tracker. At the Baby Show (the UK's leading baby and pregnancy expo, which takes places in London and Birmingham), tech companies that specialize in tracking devices and wearable vie for space with more traditional brands such as the bottle manufacturer Tommee Tippee.

The event's manager, Susanne Rau-

berger, argues that technology not only helps parents feel "as connected to their baby as possible", but also provides "reassurance and peace of mind". "Whereas previously we would have got this more from family and friends, we are using whatever tech we can," she says. "It's incredible to see how fast it has developed over the past five years."

Among the products on show this year is Bluebell, a waterproof monitor that was developed by two former healthcare management consultants and a former NHS data analyst. It relays information (temperature, heart rate and so on) to a small screen that a parent wears on their wrist, alerting the wearer if the baby's breathing rate falls, or if he or she rolls on to their front. It will go on sale for £299.

Also exhibiting is the latest version of Owlet, a baby sock that measures temperature, heart rate, oxygen saturation and

movement. It has already become a must-have item among Hollywood parents: actor Jessica Alba has revealed that, before buying the stocking for her youngest child, she had been getting up to listen to his breathing as often as every hour.

"Technology has definitely become a major theme in parenting, everything from software to hardware to data to artificial intelligence," says Owlet's CEO, Utah-based father-of-three Kurt Workman. "Across the spectrum, investors are really keen to find companies that solve 'pain points'." Forbes included Owlet on its list of the next billion-dollar startups in 2016; Workman has raised about \$50m (£39m) in venture capital. Meanwhile, a Californian firm called Hatch Baby, which makes smart changing mats, has received an undisclosed investment from Amazon's Alexa fund (Amazon is the world's largest marketplace for baby products). Another "parenting solutions" company in the same state, Happiest Baby, has announced \$23m in funding for Snoo, a baby bed that claims to replicate conditions in the womb and promises to lull your baby into sleeping more.

It is a marketing truism that anxious people make great consumers – and there are few more anxious cohorts than new parents. "There is nothing more important to me than my children. And there is no more important role in society than parent," says Workman. "But you go through more training to get a driver's licence than you do to become a parent. Overnight, you're a doctor and a nurse and a sleep trainer and a teacher. On top of parents being undereducated for the task, you also have a lot of risk. That's an opportunity for technology."

(Source: The Guardian)



# Mystery solved -- biologists in Dresden explain the genetic origins of the saffron crocus

With a price tag of up to 30,000 euro per kilogram, saffron is the most expensive spice in the world. Sometimes it even exceeds the price of gold. Its typical aroma is produced by the apocarotenoid Safranal.

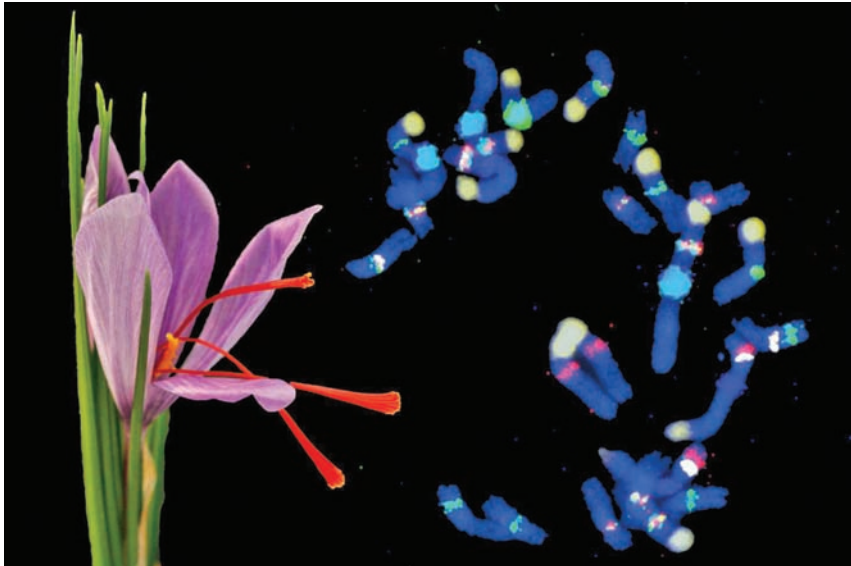
Saffron is harvested from the flowers of the saffron crocus (*Crocus sativus*), which blooms solely in autumn. In order to yield one kilogram of saffron - skilled pickers can collect 60 to 80 grams per day - 150,000 to 200,000 flowers must be harvested by hand. Subsequently, the three stigmas of each flower are also separated manually and dried. These threads then constitute the spice saffron. Approximately 200 tons of saffron threads are harvested worldwide each year.

For many farmers in Mediterranean countries, Kashmir, India, Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, the production of saffron is the main source of income, since the saffron crocus also thrives in soils that cannot be utilized for agriculture.

## Centuries-old interruption

Even in the vicinity of Dresden, the cultivation of saffron has been recently restored after a centuries-long interruption that began in 1570. These local growers swear by the excellent quality of German saffron. Frost makes the plants more robust and the filaments more fragrant.

Over the past millennia, saffron has been used as a spice, dye and as a medicine to treat rheumatism and alcohol addictions. For example, saffron was also used as a painkiller during childbirth and for "lady's malaise". According to Greek mythology, Zeus slept on



a bed of saffron. In the 14th century "Saffron War of Balsthal", Swiss merchants were even ambushed and robbed.

The saffron crocus is a triploid hybrid species, is sterile and cannot be bred. Al-

though it has been cultivated for more than 3,500 years, all plants cultivated worldwide originate only from daughter bulbs.

## Species of saffron crocus

For almost 100 years, there has been con-

**The saffron crocus is a triploid hybrid species, is sterile and cannot be bred. Although it has been cultivated for more than 3,500 years, all plants cultivated worldwide originate only from daughter bulbs.**

troversy as to the possible parent species of the saffron crocus are. If the parent species were known, changes could be inserted into the crocus genome by new breeding.

It is precisely this mystery that Dresden biologists have now solved. "We have managed to understand the origins of the saffron crocus and shed light on the parent species using molecular and cytogenetic methods," says Thomas Schmidt, Professor of Plant Cell and Molecular Biology at TU Dresden's Institute of Botany.

"Our paper Adding color to a century-old enigma: multi-color chromosome identification unravels the autotriploid nature of saffron (*Crocus sativus*) as a hybrid of wild *Crocus cartwrightianus* cytotypes was accepted for publication in the renowned journal New Phytologist. The paper is the title story for the April print issue and the source of the cover picture for the edition published on 8th May."

The saffron crocus therefore is descended from only one species, the wild species *Crocus cartwrightianus* that is found in Greece. Through saffron crocus genome sequencing and comparative chromosome analysis (Fluorescence in situ hybridization, FISH) of different crocus species, Dresden biologists were able to demonstrate that genomes of two *Crocus cartwrightianus* individuals with slight chromosomal differences are fused. These findings conclude the centuries-long search for the origins of this mythical plant.

(Source: eurekalert.org)

## Coal power stations disrupt rainfall, global study finds

Modern coal-fired power stations produce more ultrafine dust particles than road traffic and can even modify and redistribute rainfall patterns, a new 15-year international study shows.

The study indicates filtration systems on modern coal-fired power stations are the biggest source of ultrafine particles and can have considerable impacts on climate in several ways.

In urban areas, road traffic has long been considered the main source of small particle emissions which have the potential to adversely affect health and the environment.

However, long-term measurements carried out by two scientists, Professor Wolfgang Junkermann from the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) in Germany and Professor Jorg Hacker from Airborne Research Australia—who are affiliated with Flinders University—have revealed a source that particularly affects regional climate: modern coal-fired power stations.

In the Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society, the researchers report how coal-fired power stations clearly emit large amounts of ultrafine particles (UFP) through filtering technology of exhaust gas.

## With high concentrations

UFP can be transported in layers with high concentrations for hundreds of kilometers and then lead to localized "particle events" (dramatic spikes in short-term particle concentrations on the ground) far away from their source.

The flying laboratories are equipped with highly sensitive instruments and sensors measuring dust particles, trace gases, temperature, humidity, wind and energy balances.

"Our two research aircraft are particularly suitable to follow the plumes from the smoke stacks downwind for hundreds of kilometers and study their behavior in great detail," says Professor Hacker, who is based at Airborne Research Australia (ARA) in South Australia.

The scientists then linked these data with meteorological observations and used dispersion and transport models to trace back their origin.

"In this way, we found that fossil power stations have for many years become the strongest individual sources of ultrafine particles worldwide. They massively



influence meteorological processes and may cause extreme weather events, including intensive rain events.

"By redistributing rainfall events, this can lead to drier than usual conditions in some places and to unusually heavy and persistent strong rainfall elsewhere," Professor Hacker says.

With a diameter of less than 100 nm, UFP have an enormous impact on environmental processes, capable of influencing the properties of clouds and precipitation, the paper says.

Professor Wolfgang Junkermann, from the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology in Germany, has used a specially designed small research aircraft called a trike to take air quality measurement flights around Europe and even Mexico and Inner Mongolia.

## Chemical reactions

The "UFP offer surfaces for chemical reactions in the atmosphere or may influence the properties of clouds and precipitation," says Professor Junkermann.

To study the existence and distribution and transport processes of UFP, the researchers not only flew their instruments near to or downwind of coal-fired power stations but also over remote regions where very low UFP concentrations have been measured in the past at ground level.

Specifically, in regions with conspicuous precipitation trends such as inland Western Australia and Queensland, the researchers found that UFP concentrations have increased constantly and could be linked to emissions made by coal-fired power stations and refineries.

"Exhaust gas cleaning takes place under conditions that are optimal for the new formation of particles. Ammonia is added to the exhaust gases in order to convert nitrogen oxides into harmless water and nitrogen," Professor Junkermann says.

(Source: phys.org)

## Enormous solar storm hit Earth 2,600 years ago, suggests new evidence

Scientists have discovered evidence of one of the biggest solar storms ever recorded, when high-energy particles unleashed from the sun bombarded Earth just over 2,600 years ago. Should a similar event hit us today, it could have a devastating impact, potentially knocking out global communication systems, satellites, electrical grids and air traffic systems.

The sun is constantly sending a stream of charged particles toward Earth via the solar wind. However, when solar storms take place on the sun's surface, they can lead to a massive surge in these particles hitting Earth.

In 1859, a powerful geomagnetic storm — now known as the Carrington Event — caused by a coronal mass ejection hit Earth, causing widespread electrical disruptions and blackouts.

Evidence of solar storms hitting Earth in the past can be found in ice cores — samples of ice that formed over the past 100,000 years. Researchers are able to analyze the ice to find out when Earth was hit by an unusually high concentration of high-energy cosmic rays.

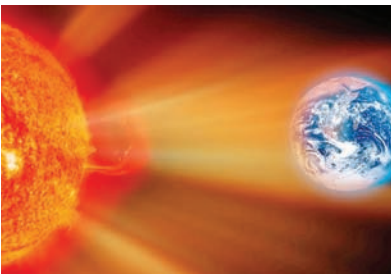
Previously, scientists have used this technique to find two other enormous solar storms — one in A.D. 775 and another in A.D. 994. The latter was, to date, the biggest solar event on record.

## Two ice cores from Greenland

In a study published in PNAS, Raimund Muscheler from Sweden's Lund University and colleagues found evidence of another huge solar storm on the same scale as the one that hit in A.D. 775 Using two ice cores from Greenland, the team found the "enormous" storm took place around 2,610 B.C. "Our event was about 10 times stronger than any high-energy event observed during the past 70 years," Muscheler said.

This is only the third major solar storm event to be documented. Researchers say the current findings could mean the frequency of these "potentially devastating" events has probably been underestimated.

The "first discovery of such an event was quite recent," Muscheler said. "I am sure these are recurring features of the sun, and with a systematic search we will certainly find more. We just



looked at the last 3,000 years, and we certainly can get good enough data for the past 12,000 years."

Explaining what this means for the risk posed, he said we now have three very big events taking place in the past 3,000 years. The researchers now plan to carry out a systematic search to better understand just how often big solar storms hit Earth, so we can be better prepared for them.

## A storm far bigger

Leon Golub from the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, who was not involved in the research, said the findings indicate a storm far bigger than the Carrington Event and hundreds of times larger than anything recorded during the space age.

"Our highly interconnected technological society has become vulnerable to disturbances from the sun," he told Newsweek. "Assets in space, including satellites and humans, need to be protected, and even systems on the ground are at risk from large solar events."

Matthew Owens, a professor of space physics at the U.K.'s University of Reading, who was also not involved in the study, told Newsweek the findings were interesting.

"Space weather is a potential threat to power systems, communication/GPS satellites and airline passengers and crew," he said. "Much of what we know about space weather is predicated on data from the space age."

Owens added, "This kind of work is vital to inform the engineering of space- and ground-based technologies in order that they are able to survive the worst-case space-weather scenario so that the sun doesn't catch us unprepared."

(Source: Newsweek)

## Researchers turn hard drives into covert listening devices

Spinning hard drives are no longer the backbone of the average computer thanks to the increasing affordability and capacity of solid-state NAND chips. However, the spinning drive is far from dead — if you need the most bang for your storage buck, traditional hard drives are still king. It turns out those spinning drives might have another trick up their sleeves.

Researchers from the University of Michigan Zhejiang University in China have shown that hard drives can also become eavesdropping devices.

Turning a hard drive into a listening device doesn't have anything to do with its data storage capabilities. Instead, the team leveraged the sensors that help control the position of the read head above the platters.

The head needs to be in precisely the right spot on the track to operate — even a few nanometers can be the difference between perfect functionality and a corrupted file.

The drive's internal sensors generate what's called a Positional Error Signal (PES), and this is how the researchers extracted sounds from the hard drive.

In a proof of concept experiment, the team installed modified firmware on the drives that could record the PES measurements. Using that data, the researchers created high-quality recordings of human voices.

In another test, the PES data was sufficient to reconstruct music playing near the hard drive. It was so accurate that the music ID app Shazam was able to identify the song.

Then, you need a package on the computer with internet access to send the PES data. It's not impossible — state actors have been known to intercept computers and implant bugs before sending them along to the target.

The other issue is the sounds near the hard drive need to be rather loud. For human speech, you're looking at 75dB minimum, which is like having an almost-argument within a few feet of a hard drive.

(Source: extremetech.com)

## Massive twin star discovered snuggling close to its stellar sibling

Astronomers have discovered a binary star system with the closest high-mass young stellar objects ever measured, providing a valuable 'laboratory' to test theories on high mass binary star formation.

An international team led by the University of Leeds has determined the distance between the massive young star PDS 27 and its orbiting stellar companion to be just 30 astronomical units away or 4.5 billion km. That is roughly the distance between our Sun and Neptune, making them the stellar companions with the closest proximity ever determined for young high mass stars in a binary system -- a star system with two stars in orbit around a center of mass.

Study lead author, Dr. Evgenia Koumpia, from the School of Physics and Astronomy at Leeds, said: "This is a very exciting discovery, observing and simulating massive binaries at the early stages of their formation is one of the main struggles of modern astronomy. With PDS 27 and its companion we have now found the closest, most massive young stellar objects in binaries resolved to date.

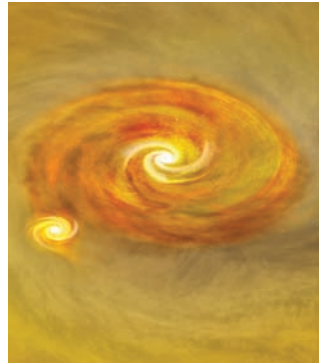
"There is a shortage of known young massive binary systems in charted space. High mass stars have comparatively short lifespans, burning out and exploding as supernovae in only a few million years, making them difficult to spot. This limits our ability to test the theories on how these stars form."

As part of their study the team has also identified a companion object for another young massive star referred to as PDS 37. The analysis revealed a distance between PDS 37 and its companion to be between 42 to 54 astronomical units - comparable to the distance between the Sun and Pluto. While further apart than PDS 27 and its companion, it is still a significant discovery given the need for confirmed massive young stellar binaries in astronomical research.

Dr. Koumpia continued: "How these binary systems form is quite a controversial question with several theories having been put forward. Observational studies of binaries in their early stages are crucial to verifying the theories of their formation.

"PDS 27 and PDS 37 are rare and important laboratories that can help inform and test the theories on the formation of high mass binaries."

(Source: sciencedaily.com)



## Deep beneath Earth's surface are clues to the history of our entire Solar System

When it comes to understanding the history of the Solar System, a whole lot of clues to its past lie in the geological records right here on Earth. New research stretches that link back some 200 million years using what scientists are calling a Geological Orrery.

You've probably seen an orrery before — it's one of those mechanical models of the Solar System where the Sun and the planets spin around like a clock — but in this case the calculations are being extended to the real Universe rather than a desktop model.

The aim of the new study is to piece together the movements of the planets going back hundreds of millions of years, using the records left in the rocks on Earth to judge planetary tilting, gravitational pull, and other aspects of the complex cosmic dance of our neighborhood.

The thinking is that geological data helps us be more specific in our measurements of how the Solar System looked millions of years ago — a way of cutting through the chaos, variability, and uncertainty involved in the maths of modelling the Solar System.

The "Geological Orrery is the opposite of an equation or model," says the leader of the team, geologist and paleontologist Paul Olsen from Columbia University in New York. "It's designed to provide a precise and accurate history of the Solar System."

"We get that history right here on Earth, from the history of our climates, which is recorded in the geological record, especially in large, long-lived lakes."

Underpinning this Geological Orrery is the idea that slight variations in the Solar System have an impact on every part of it. The orbit and axis orientation of Earth are always being slightly altered by the movements of our celestial neighbors — changes technically known as Milankovitch cycles.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

## Issuance of \$850mn Worth of Exports Insurance Policy: CEO

Managing Director Export Guarantee Fund of Iran (EGFI) Afrouz Bahrami revealed the issuance of \$850 million worth of exports insurance policy in the short-term and said, "with the coordination made in this regard, special packages would be presented to the exporters in sanctions period."

Speaking in weekly press briefing, he put the total volume of insurance and guaranteed coverage of Export Guarantee Fund of Iran in the current year (to end March 20, 2019) at \$2,200 million, showing a considerable 130 percent growth as compared to a year earlier."

As the sole exports credit insurance institute in the country, Export Guarantee Fund of Iran (EGFI) plays an important role in the promotion of export of non-oil commodities, he said, adding, "presently, many problems have been created in banking and insurance criteria



caused by the cruel sanctions imposed by US government against Iran, the issue of which has created unfavorable and unpleasant impact in our trade and business ties

with the international markets."

He reiterated, "according to a contract concluded with a consortium of the most famous and reliable reinsurance companies in the world, led by Munich Re Company, for the first time since 20 years ago, giant steps have been taken in this field."

Reinsurance contract is a contract concluded with the largest reinsurance companies in the world which means that all validation process and risks of the Fund have been confirmed by the mentioned companies, Bahrami added.

Famous and reliable companies in target countries have been identified and introduced to the exporters, so that new capabilities have been brought about for facilitating foreign trade with the cooperative institutions, the managing director of EGFI concluded.



## Job creation loans for the underprivileged up by 3-fold

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** – A total budget of 60 trillion rials (nearly \$1.5 billion) has been allocated for job creation of financially struggling individual for the next Iranian calendar year (starting on March 21), which has increased by 3 times the current year’s budget of 20 trillion rials (about \$480 million), Mehr reported on Tuesday.



The next year’s loans to each job seeker not having adequate income will increase up to 500 million rials (nearly \$12,000), Parviz Fattah, Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation director said. This is while, the loans have been 200 million rials (approximately \$5,000) for each of the individual under the Foundation’s coverage, he said, adding that so the amount per person also enhanced by 2.2 times. The total budget earmarked for job generation among those residing in deprived areas amounting to 60 trillion rials (around \$1.5 billion) for the next year, he noted, while we received 20 trillion rials (about \$480 million) in this regard this year. So, the budget has reached a 3-fold increase compared to the past years, Fattah concluded.

## Climate change: Pledge to cut emissions from dairy farms

A dairy firm is pledging to make its operations carbon-neutral from cow to supermarket by 2050, including more than 2,000 farms in the UK.

This will require “radical changes” over the coming decades, including developing new technologies, the dairy co-operative, Arla Foods, said.

It admitted the target was “ambitious”, but said it was achievable. However, the Vegan Society said there was no way to make dairy a climate-friendly product.

Gases which help to heat the atmosphere and contribute to climate change are a by-product of the dairy industry.

They include direct emissions of methane, a potent greenhouse gas, from cows, and carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide from the likes of packaging, transportation and fertilizers.

Arla, the largest farming co-operative in Europe, said it aimed to neutralize all the CO2 produced by the dairy farms of its 10,300 members.

This would involve improvements in the supply chain to off-set unavoidable emissions, it said.

“It’s an ambitious target, but if everyone works together then it’s possible,” said Kari Dunford, an Arla member, who dairy farms 250 cows in Somerset.

“There are 2,000 Arla farmers in the UK and if we all do our little bit then it’s all going to make a difference.”

The company said it had cut the amount of CO2 emissions from production and packaging by more than 20%.

It also said that, on farms, the CO2 emissions per kilo of milk have been reduced by almost a quarter over the last 20 years, and it was trialing new technologies for farms, such as producing clean energy from manure.

Commenting on the pledge, Joseph Poore of the University of Oxford said it was not clear what emissions would be included in the target.

“If it’s just carbon dioxide, this is a very minimal target,” he said. “If they are including methane, nitrous oxide, and feed production - which are dairy’s main emissions - as well as tackling dairy’s other environmental issues, then this is ambitious. Meeting it would set a new benchmark.”

Will Gildea of the Vegan Society said there was “no way to make dairy a climate-friendly product”.

“Cows produce large amounts of methane, a very damaging gas for our planet,” he said. “Methane emissions pack a huge punch and warm the planet in the near-term, meaning they could trigger runaway climate change.”

(Source: BBC)

## LEARN ENGLISH

### Buying A Suit

A: Hello sir, what can I do for you today?

B: Hi, I need a new suit. I have an important interview next week, so I really need to look **sharp**.

A: No problem! We have a **broad** selection of suits, all tailored made so that it will fit perfectly.

B: Great! I want a three-piece suit, **preferably** made from Italian cashmere or wool.

A: Very well sir. Would you like to have some shirts made also?

B: Sure. I'll also take some silver **cuff link** and a pair of silk ties.

A: Very good. Now, if you will **accompany** me, we can take your measurements and choose the patterns for your suit and shirts.

#### ■ Key vocabulary

**sharp:** stylish or fashionable

**broad:** wide; a lot

**preferably:** most wanted or preferred

**cuff:** the end of a sleeve

**cuff link:** a small piece of jewelry that a man can use to fasten his shirt cuffs

**accompany:** to go together with

#### ■ Supplementary vocabulary

**collar:** the cloth around the neckline of a shirt, that is folded over

**impression:** the first feeling you give when you encounter/meet someone

**custom made:** made according to your own speciation

**alteration:** a change (in length, width, fit) made to an item of clothing

**dry-clean:** a cleaning process that uses chemicals to clean clothes

**herringbone:** a type of pattern, common on suits, that resembles thin, “saw-like” lines

**garment:** an article of clothing

(Source: irlanguage.com)

# CITES seeking to ban rare spider-tailed horned viper trade

**ENVIRONMENT** **TEHRAN** – The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) has proposed to ban illegal trade of spider-tailed horned viper, a unique species of viper endemic to western Iran being pushed toward extinction through poaching, ISNA reported on Tuesday.

The spider-tailed horned viper discovered in 2006, has a unique tail that has a bulb-like end resembling a spider, which is used to lure insectivorous birds to within striking range.

Due to its extraordinary look, many amphibian collectors are interested in purchasing them while their rare population cannot bear poaching, Reza Faraji director for CITES office in Iran said.

Illegal trade of the rare species is driving its fragile population to the brink of extinction, many illegal dealers have been capturing them despite hurting the valuable species, he noted, regretting, one of them was seized while being smuggled to Germany.

There is no accurate statistics of spider-tailed horned viper population because no precise studies have been conducted to determine the number of species, he lament-



ed, adding, it is spotted in the province of Ilam and it is also found in the provinces of Kermanshah and Lorestan.

He further expressed hope that locals resist the illegal trading of the precious species, be vigilant and oppose the suggestions for

## \$2.8b government aid paid to quake-stricken Kermanshah

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** – The government has so far spent 120 trillion rials (about \$2.8 billion) to make up for the damages caused by earthquake in the western province of Kermanshah, Esmail Najjar, head of the National Disaster Management Organization has said.

“Over 104,000 residential units have been destroyed through the earthquake last year, 52,000 of which have been reconstructed,” he explained.

He went on to say that some 23,000 quake-affected houses in villages have been retrofitted and provided to the residents, and some 4,000 houses are being reconstructed for the families residing in rental houses.

The whole reconstruction and renovation measures have cost the government some 120 trillion rials (about \$2.8 billion), Najjar noted.

“Some non-repayable loans have been



granted to the families as retrofitting assistance,” he further concluded, Mehr reported on Monday.

On November 12, 2017, a destructive earthquake measuring 7.3 on the Richter scale hit Sarpol-e Zahab in Kermanshah. Some 90,000 houses were partly or completely damaged by the tremor. Sadly, the quake took over 660 lives and left more than 10,000 injured.

## 500,000 Afghan nationals studying in Iranian schools

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** – Currently, about 500,000 Afghan students are studying in Iranian schools free of charge, secretary general of the national commission on children's rights has announced.

Mahmood Abbasi made the remarks during a meeting with member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, juvenile judge Rinat Winter, on Monday.

Over the past four decades, Iran has hosted over 4 million foreign nationals, especially Afghans, he noted, IRNA reported.

Now, more than 500,000 Afghan children are receiving education in Iran completely free of charge, he concluded.

Gholamreza Karimi, head of the international affairs department of the Ministry of Education said that a total 88 percent



of the refugees’ children are studying in Iranian schools, it is anticipated that this rate increases to 90 percent in the elementary schools by the school year (September 2018).

The Ministry of Education has allocated 10 trillion rials (nearly \$240 million) for refugees’ education, while international donations constitute only 2-2.5 percent of this amount, he added.

## Toxic fumes from ships linked to thousands of UK deaths

The UK is one of the most vulnerable nations to the toxic fumes spewed out by ships, according to a new study.

Analysis by transport experts reveals more than 3,000 British deaths each year can be attributed to shipping emissions.

Pollution from boats is linked to early deaths as the toxic gases and particles in fumes trigger health problems including asthma, heart disease and cancer.

Despite efforts to clean up the sector, ships still rely on the filthiest fuels for power, resulting in huge volumes of emissions being pumped into the air around port cities.

Using data from 2015, the International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT) team showed Britain ranked fourth for the total number of people dying prematurely due to shipping fumes, just behind China, Japan and India.

The UK also comes fourth when judged on deaths per 100,000 people, this time ranking alongside other coastal nations such as Singapore and the Netherlands.

“Globally shipping was responsible for about 16 per cent of premature deaths due to [emissions from] transportation – but the UK was in the order of 40 per cent,” said Dr Daniel Rutherford, a marine transport expert at the ICCT.

Britain’s unfortunate position near the top of the charts is largely the result of its proximity to busy shipping lanes to Europe, but also the uneven laws governing pollution on the high seas.



“Critically, only one half of British shore is protected by an emission control area,” said Dr Rutherford.

Ships in the North and Baltic seas must slash sulphur levels in their fuel from 2.5 to 0.1 per cent, meaning they produce lower volumes of the sulphur oxides (SOx) linked to respiratory conditions.

But while the east coast of Britain is protected by this zone, on the other side of the country there are no such restrictions.

‘What are you picking on boats for?’ Londoners react to news that Thames traffic is exempt from low-emissions restrictions.

Dr Matt Loxham, a toxicologist at the University of Southampton, noted that besides gases like SOx ships also produce

“more than their fair share” of ultrafine particles, which can penetrate deep into human tissue.

“These very small particles contribute little to the mass [of pollution] but are thought to be associated with health effects in ways we haven’t quite got a handle on yet,” he said.

The ICCT suggested the UK could seek to establish a new control zone to curb pollution, as European nations are currently trying to do in the Mediterranean.

But while national governments can implement policies to cut pollution from cars, shipping is largely in the hands of the International Maritime Organization – a UN agency based in London.

“Even if you have very progressive stances from an individual government, it still needs to get into the IMO and be negotiated there,” said Dr Rutherford.

“There is a broader need to reform the IMO and get it moving in the right direction.”

A spokesperson from the IMO said new rules coming into force from 2020 will limit SOx even outside protected zones, which they predict will prevent more than half a million premature deaths around the world.

However, these regulations will still not be as tight as those currently in place in the North Sea, with sulphur in fuel oil cut to just 0.5 per cent instead of the 0.1 per cent allowed in such zones.

(Source: The Independent)

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ب

## Amirkabir university, NODET to expand scientific co-op

Amirkabir University of Technology and the National Organization for Development of Exceptional Talents (NODET) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to enhance scientific and research cooperation for the next three years, IRNA reported.

Fatemeh Mohajerani, head of NODET, and Ahmad Motamedi, the university’s chancellor, inked the MOU during a meeting held on Tuesday.

## PREFIX/SUFFIX

### “by-, bye-”

■ **Meaning:** near, secondary, or past

■ **For example:** I took a pleasant **byroad** which follows the coast.

## PHRASAL VERB

### Muddle through

■ **Meaning:** to succeed in doing something with difficulty, or not in a very satisfactory way

■ **For example:** There were some difficult questions but I managed to muddle through.

## IDIOM

### Crack down on something

■ **Explanation:** If the authorities crack down on something, they enforce the law by taking severe measures to restrict undesirable or criminal actions

■ **For example:** To reduce road accidents, it was decided to crack down on speeding.

## گسترش همکاری مرکز ملی پرورش استعدادهای درخشان با دانشگاه امیرکبیر

مرکز ملی پرورش استعدادهای درخشان و دانش پژوهان جوان و دانشگاه صنعتی امیر کبیر تفاهم نامه ای به منظور ایجاد و گسترش همکاری های آموزشی - پژوهشی طی دوره سه ساله منعقد و امضا کردند.

به گزارش روز سه شنبه گروه علمی ایرنا، رییس مرکز ملی پرورش استعدادهای درخشان و دانش پژوهان جوان فاطمه مهاجرانی و احمد معتمدی رئیس دانشگاه صنعتی امیرکبیر در مراسم امضا تفاهم نامه شرکت کردند.



# 2018 deadliest year for children in Syria: UNICEF

**1→** The UN body said unexploded ordnance caused the highest levels of casualties, with 434 deaths and injuries last year.

Fore further expressed concern about the intensification of violence in the north-western province of Idlib, where 59 children have been reported killed in recent weeks.

Idlib is the last terrorist stronghold in Syria. A myriad of militant outfits, including Turkey-backed armed groups and Takfiri al-Qaeda-linked terrorists, remain holed up in the province.

“UNICEF again reminds parties to the conflict and the global community that it is the country’s children who have suffered most and have the most to lose. Each day the conflict continues is another day stolen from their childhood,” said Fore.

According to the UN, about 60 children have died trying to get to al-Hol camp in Syria’s northeastern province of Hasakah, which is now home to more than 65,000 people fleeing Daesh terrorists.

Caroline Anning, spokeswoman for the charity Save the Children said, “Syria is still one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a child, with ongoing violence, insecurity and displacement.”



“Even where conflict has subsided, the risk from explosive remnants of war like landmines and cluster munitions is growing,” she said.

An armed conflict began in Syria in 2011. But the Syrian military, backed by Iran and Russia, has wrested back control of almost

all the areas that had been seized by militant and terrorist groups.

The Takfiri Daesh terror group lost its territorial rule in Syria in late 2017. Only pockets of Daesh terrorists remain in the village of Baghouz in the northeastern province of Dayr al-Zawr near the Iraqi border.

Syria and Russia have been working to secure the exit of civilians and refugees from Baghouz. They say the U.S. forces present in the region are hindering their efforts to evacuate the refugees.

Meanwhile, the U.S.-led coalition purportedly fighting Daesh frequently carries out air raids in eastern Syria, causing many civilian deaths.

Other militant groups, having faced defeat on the battle ground against the government, have been bused into Idlib Province under deals with Damascus.

Three guarantor countries for Syrian peace, namely Iran, Russia, and Turkey, are negotiating on behalf of the Syrian government and the opposition to decide the fate of the armed groups holed up in Idlib.

Last September, Russia and Turkey reached an agreement to create a demilitarized zone to reduce violence there amid their political efforts to find a way out of the Syria crisis.

In the wake of the deal, the Syrian army suspended a military operation to liberate the area in order to prevent bloodshed and protect civilian lives.

(Source: Press TV)

## Israeli forces shoot, kill Palestinian man over alleged stabbing attack

### Israeli settlers seal mosque in al-Quds

Israeli military forces have shot and killed a young Palestinian man in the southern part of the West Bank as tensions continue in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Israeli media outlets said the Palestinian, armed with a knife, entered the contentious Beit HaShalom building near the Kiryat Arba settlement in the southern occupied West Bank city of al-Khalil (Hebron), situated 30 kilometers (19 miles) south of Jerusalem al-Quds, on Tuesday, attempting to carry out a stabbing attack against Israeli soldiers.

A resident of the building saw the man and called Israeli forces to the scene, the reports said. No Israeli troops or settlers were injured in the attempted attack.

Local sources said he was left on the ground, bleeding as Palestinian ambulances were not allowed to help him.

The Palestinian man was later identified as 27-year-old Yasser al-Shweiki. Fawzi al-Shweiki, Yasser’s father, told Palestinian Ma’an news agency that his son was distributing notices from the Sharia Court across al-Khalil at the time.

The Israeli military regularly opens fatal fire on Palestinians, accusing them of seeking to stab its personnel.

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

The flashpoint city of al-Khalil has seen a sharp hike in violence over the past weeks after the Israeli regime decided in late January to expel an international observer mission – officially named the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH) – which was tasked with documenting Israeli human rights violations and safeguarding Palestinians.

The unarmed civilian mission had been established following an agreement reached between the Tel Aviv regime and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1994, when an Israeli settler killed 29 Palestinian worshippers at the Ibrahimi Mosque in al-Khalil.

Tensions have been running high in the West Bank and

the blockaded Gaza Strip since December 2017, when U.S. President Donald Trump decided to recognize Jerusalem al-Quds as Israel’s “capital” and move Washington’s embassy from Tel Aviv to the occupied Palestinian city.

On December 21, 2017, the United Nations General Assembly overwhelmingly voted in favor of a resolution that calls on the U.S. to withdraw its controversial policy shift vis-à-vis Jerusalem al-Quds.

Despite the vote, the U.S. went ahead with the embassy transfer on May 14 last year, triggering angry protests in the Palestinian territories and Muslim countries.

Israel’s crackdown in the Gaza Strip left over 60 protesters dead on that day alone.

#### ■ Israeli settlers seal mosque

Israeli settlers have sealed a mosque in the Old City of the occupied Jerusalem al-Quds, a month after a United Nations report revealed that violence and vandalism committed by Israelis against Palestinians and their property have increased since the beginning of this year.

According to a report by the Palestinian Ma’an news agency on Monday, Israeli settlers spread an adhesive substance mostly on the lock of the door of Sheikh Makki Mosque earlier in the day, virtually making the door sealed shut.

The report, citing those responsible for maintaining the mosque, said the police were immediately informed of the incident and later on the substance was removed with some effort and the door reopened before taking some pictures of what was described as an act of vandalism against Muslims.

Last month, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said in a report, which covered the period from January 29 to February 11 this year, showed a weekly average of seven Israeli attacks resulting in injuries or property damage compared to an average of five in the same period in 2018 and three in 2017.

It said that the Israeli settlers also attempted to torch a local mosque in Deir Dibwan Village in Ramallah during



the period.

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

Separately, Israeli settlers punctured the tires of 14 Palestinian-owned vehicles, spray-painted racist graffiti in al-Lubban al-Sharqiya and Huwwara villages, south of Nablus, and in al-Khalayleh, near the Jerusalem al-Quds district, the OCHA’s report further said.

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

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

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

(Source: agencies)

## Macron warns of Chinese risk to African sovereignty

French President Emmanuel Macron warned on Tuesday of risks to the sovereignty of African countries from China’s increasing economic presence as he began a visit to the east of the continent.

Macron arrived in Djibouti looking to reassert French influence in a former colony on the Horn of Africa where China has built a military base and invested billions of dollars in infrastructure.

The French leader, who will also visit Kenya and Ethiopia on his current tour, cautioned that conditions attached to Chinese loans could be dangerous in the long term.

“China is a great world power and has expanded its presence in many countries, especially in Africa, in recent years,” he said alongside Djibouti President Ismail mar Guelleh. “But what can look good in the short term ... can often end up being bad over the medium to long term.

“I wouldn’t want a new generation of international investments to encroach on our

historical partners’ sovereignty or weaken their economies,” Macron added.

China said in September last year it was helping Africa develop, not pile up debt, as the government pledged \$60 billion to African nations and rejected criticism it is loading the continent with an unsustainable burden.

Djibouti is strategically located at the southern entrance to the Red Sea on the route to the Suez Canal. It hosts France’s largest naval base in Africa with 1,400 French personnel used to train African troops and monitor the Horn of Africa and Yemen.

#### ■ Drifting apart

While Djibouti was regarded as a key French outpost in the past, Macron is only the second French leader to visit the tiny country of 1 million people in the last 20 years.

In a reminder of Beijing’s growing presence, Macron was received at Djibouti’s new

Chinese-built presidential palace.

“Business is business. The Chinese invest here, while the French aren’t competitive,” a Djibouti government official said. “The French are late, very late. And they have no money.”

Djibouti’s president accused France in 2015 of abandoning Djibouti and investing very little there.

Macron said French firms were ready to invest in Djibouti for the long term but a better business environment was needed to shore up the country’s attractiveness to investors.

No commercial deals were signed during his visit.

“France considered Djibouti for too long to be a territory that was won,” said a senior French diplomat based in the region. “But now the competition from China is fierce.”

Djibouti also has a U.S. military base used as a launchpad for operations against Islamist militants in Yemen and Somalia,

but in 2013 China opened its largest overseas military base in the country, rivaling those of Paris and Washington.

Beijing has provided financial aid, developed industrial output in Djibouti and poured investment into infrastructure projects, including upgrading a French railway built in 1917 linking Djibouti to Ethiopia’s capital Addis Ababa.

Chinese state banks have funded an infrastructure building spree across Africa. Many African leaders praise the Chinese for being willing to fund desperately needed projects to help kickstart their economies with less bureaucracy than multilateral institutions like the World Bank.

But some Western nations have expressed concern that the loans could trap poor countries in debt, saddling them with poor quality projects and forcing them to hand over control of strategic assets used as collateral.

(Source: AFP)

## A dozen children were killed in Yemen strikes during a two-day period: UN

**1→** 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 US 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 positions 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.

(Source: agencies)

## Iranians and Iraqis are inseparable

**1→** The photojournalist said he asked the salesclerk “how did you learn Farsi?” to which he responded: “I learnt Farsi when I was a prisoner of war in Iran”. The photojournalist said the Iraqi salesclerk was even hanging a photo of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini on the wall of his shop.

This instance by itself shows that even Saddam Hussein’s war against Iran in the 1980s, which left hundreds of thousands of deaths on both sides, failed to break the strong friendship between the Iranian and Iraqi people.

There are many reasons to cite why Iran and Iraq have good memories of each other despite the wounds left from Saddam’s invasion of Iran.

In view of these facts, those who are against the good relationship between Iraq and Iran are better to consult a psychologist and talk to a sociologists to find about this sense of amity, although hatred of Iran in some people like John Bolton, Mike Pompeo and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman are so excessive that they do not care about such facts.

Iran was the first country that recognized the post-Saddam governing system in Iraq in 2003. Iran’s timely military support for Iraq when Daesh (ISIS) launched a sudden and rapid attack on Iraq from Syria in June 2014 is clear to the Arab world and the West and the Iraqis, both Arabs and Kurds, are thankful of this.

Saudi Arabia, which considers itself an ally of Washington, made great efforts to undermine the post-Saddam Iraq. Also, intelligence evidences showed that Saudi nationals formed the second largest number of terrorists in Iraq when Daesh was committing indescribable crimes in the country. Riyadh was also so angry of the ruling Iraqi system that it refused to establish diplomatic ties with Baghdad until December 2015.

However, the U.S., instead of being thankful to Iran for its approach toward the post-Saddam Iraq, has intensified its hostility against Iran by quitting the international 2015 nuclear deal and reimposing sanctions on the country.

Now, ignorant or oblivious of all these facts, the Trump administration is pressing Iraq to join the anti-Iran sanctions without knowing that even eight years of war failed to separate Iranians and Iraqis. From an objective anthropological and sociological point of view, these two nations see themselves close together.

## Dozen more Iraqi Izadi children reunited with families

Fighters from the Iraqi pro-government Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) have reunited a dozen children from the Izadi minority with their families in the country’s northern province of Nineveh after five years of captivity at the hands of the Daesh Takfiri terrorist group in neighboring Syria.

The media bureau of the volunteer forces – better known by the Arabic name Hashd al-Sha’abi – announced in a statement on Tuesday that the children were rescued after a delicate intelligence operation.

The statement added the children had been kidnapped by Daesh militants from the Kurdish-populated northern Iraqi town of Sinjar back in June 2014.

Four other children from the city of Tal Afar, located 63 kilometers west of Mosul, were also with the Izadis rescued from Daesh captivity.

On March 2, a group of Izadi women and children, who had been freed a week earlier from the clutches of Daesh Takfiris, were reunited with their families in Iraq.

Overjoyed families met their loved ones at a rural truck stop on the road linking Sinjar to Dohuk city.

The group of three Izadi women and 18 children had crossed into Iraq from Syria the previous day. They were among thousands of civilians who fled the last vestige of Daesh’s territorial rule at the besieged eastern Syrian village of Baghouz near the Iraqi border.

(Source: Press TV)

## But where are all the wars? Dick Cheney tears into ‘isolationist’ Pence at neocon conclave

Former U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney has attacked the Trump administration’s “isolationist” foreign policy, lecturing Mike Pence on not living up to his example as one of the primary architects of Middle Eastern destabilization.

“We’re getting into a situation where our friends and allies around the world that we depend upon are going to lack confidence in us,” Cheney said, seemingly unaware of the irony dripping from his words.

“I worry that the bottom line of that kind of an approach is we have an administration that looks a lot more like Barack Obama than Ronald Reagan,” he added, perhaps forgetting that Obama’s foreign policy largely consisted of continuing the wars that began under Cheney’s own watch – with a few more thrown in for good measure.

Even the hire of an actual Reagan relic to run the admin-

istration’s Venezuelan regime change – enforced democracy-dispenser Elliott Abrams, last seen threatening U.S. allies with “secondary sanctions” for refusing to back the self-proclaimed president Juan Guaido – did not soothe the former VP’s ire.

Cheney blindsided Pence with his “concerns” during a private American Enterprise Institute retreat at Sea Island, Georgia, attended by about 150 Republican movers and shakers – as fitting a locale as any to be lambasted by one of the era’s great supervillains. While discussion participants had agreed to keep their words “off the record,” some thoughtful attendee leaked a transcript to the Washington Post.

The hawk’s hawk lamented that Trump “supposedly doesn’t spend that much time with the intel people, or doesn’t agree with them, frequently” – since it’s

hard to lie someone into a war with phony intel if you can’t sit them down for a briefing in the first place. He claimed to worry that the president’s “foreign policy boils down to a crude dollars and cents transaction” – a no-doubt heartfelt criticism coming from the man Sen. Rand Paul accused of starting the Iraq war in order to shore up the fortunes of Halliburton, the energy company where he’d long served as CEO. Halliburton not only received a \$1 billion no-bid contract in the early days of post-“Mission Accomplished” Iraq, which mushroomed into \$39.5 billion over 10 years, but reportedly skimmed so much profit off the top that the resulting low-quality construction actually endangered soldiers’ lives.

Jaws dropped all over Twitter to see Cheney not only roaming free, but dispensing political advice.

(Source: RT)



## MMA fighter McGregor arrested in Florida after fan’s phone smashed

Conor McGregor was arrested in Miami Beach on Monday after a fan said the Irish mixed martial arts fighter smashed his phone and walked off with the shattered remains, police records show.

McGregor, 30, was booked into a correctional centre on suspicion of robbery and criminal mischief, according to an arrest affidavit. The incident took place shortly after 5 a.m. (0900 GMT) on Monday.

McGregor was later released on a \$125,000 bond, the Miami Herald reported.

Samuel Rabin Jr., a Miami-based attorney representing McGregor, said the fighter was involved in a “minor altercation involving a cellphone” and would cooperate fully with police, the Herald reported.

The arrest report, which did not identify McGregor by name, said “the victim attempted to take a picture of the defendant with his cell phone” outside a hotel.

“The defendant slapped the victim’s phone out of his hand, causing it to fall to the floor. The defendant then stomped on the victim’s phone several times, damaging it,” the report said, adding that the device was valued at \$1,000.

McGregor was charged in April 2018 with three counts of assault and one count of criminal mischief after police said he attacked a charter bus in New York carrying UFC fighters, .

He later pleaded guilty to a reduced disorderly conduct charge. *(Source: Reuters)*

## ‘I’m an Aussie’: refugee footballer Araibi granted Australian citizenship

A refugee footballer who fled Bahrain and was held in a Thai prison for months during a tense extradition stand-off between Australia and the Gulf state was granted Australian citizenship on Tuesday.

Hakeem Al Araibi, 25, left Bahrain in 2014 after he was accused of crimes committed during the Arab Spring protests of 2011, which he denied. He was granted refugee status in Australia but after an Interpol notice requesting his arrest was made by Bahrain, he was apprehended by Thai authorities in November when he flew to Bangkok for a honeymoon.

“I’m an Aussie now,” he told reporters in Melbourne after a citizenship ceremony on the banks of the Yarra River that flows through the city.

“I’m very happy to be safe.”

Prime Minister Scott Morrison, who lobbied for his release from detention in Thailand, met Araibi after the citizenship ceremony and handed him the Australian flag lapel pin from his jacket.

“I had a little badge I was going to give you today, but I’m going to give you mine,” Morrison said.

“I think this is a tremendous day that we welcome you, absolutely, into the Australian family.”

Hundreds of supporters cheered “Welcome home, Hakeem!” when he arrived at Melbourne’s airport following his release from jail in Bangkok a month ago.

He was among more than 200 people from 44 countries who, having passed a citizenship exam, pledged loyalty to Australia and were granted citizenship at the ceremony, the Australian Associated Press reported.

Pascoe Vale, the semi-professional team he plays for in Melbourne, congratulated Araibi.

“A moment we all have been waiting for,” the club said on Twitter.

“Finally, no country can follow me now because I am Australian,” Araibi told the Guardian newspaper.

“Bahrain, please don’t follow me. I am now 100 percent safe in this country.”

*(Source: Reuters)*

## Man City launch child sex abuse compensation scheme

Manchester City have launched a compensation scheme for survivors of historical child sex abuse in football, the Premier League club have announced.

The scale of abuse among youth teams in Britain came to light in 2016, when a string of ex-footballers, including England internationals, told of the crimes inflicted upon them, including years of being repeatedly raped.

Former football coach Barry Bennell was last year sentenced to 30 years in prison for abusing youth players, with the judge branding him “sheer evil”.

City said they commissioned a review in November 2016 into whether the club was used by Bennell and “any other individual to facilitate alleged sexual abuse of children from 1964 to the present day”.

That review, which is ongoing, led to the “uncovering of serious allegations of child sex abuse in respect of another individual, John Broome.”

Bennell, who was a youth team coach with City and Crewe, was convicted of dozens of offences committed against 12 boys he coached between 1979 and 1991.

Broome, who is now dead, was involved in City’s youth set-up in the 1960s.

City said the compensation scheme applies to the victims of Bennell and Broome.

“The club’s review remains ongoing and Manchester City FC continues to be restricted as to what it can make public at present for legal reasons,” the club said in its statement.

“The club reiterates, however, its heartfelt sympathy to all victims for the unimaginably traumatic experiences that they endured.

“All victims were entitled to expect full protection from the kind of harm they suffered as a result of their sexual abuse as children.”

The BBC reported that City would offer millions of pounds in compensation and that survivors of the most serious crimes would receive six-figure sums.

The report said City know of 40 potential claimants to their fund but they are braced for more cases.

*(Source: AFP)*

# Zidane risks reputation to usher in new era at Real Madrid



Yet the greatest lure may be that the team has been failing. For the best coaches, and players, there is always self-belief, a sense that no problem is too big to solve.

Zidane knew he would return with more authority than ever, far more even than after he had hoisted a third consecutive Champions League trophy.

The suspicion then was that he was just a face, a popular manager to keep the ship steady while star players engineered their own success.

As two coaches came and went, Zidane’s

stock rose with every chance missed, every seat left empty and every point that Barcelona moved further away.

“I returned because the president called me. I love him and I love this club,” he said. “We will change things, for sure, for the years to come.”

### ■ ‘New golden era’

A new coach could ease the pressure and one like Zidane, remove it almost completely. “We need to start working on a new glorious era,” said Perez. “That is why we welcome back Zinedine Zidane.”

## As FIFA eyes World Cup expansion, rights groups say workers at risk



FIFA’s drive to expand World Cup 2022 and stage it beyond Qatar risks including host countries that do not meet the soccer governing body’s own standards on rights and labour, campaign groups said on Tuesday.

FIFA will discuss expanding the tournament to 48 teams from 32 at a council meeting this week - a format it says will likely require it to stage matches in neighbouring Gulf states such as Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait or Oman.

“There are clear human rights risks associated with adding new hosts for the 2022 World Cup,” said Stephen Cockburn, Deputy Director of Global Issues at Amnesty International. “Not least the potential widespread exploitation of migrant workers providing construction and other services for the World Cup that could cast a major shadow over the world’s biggest sporting event,” he said.

Qatar has come under fire from rights groups in recent years that say its sponsorship system for workers restricts their ability to leave the country, change jobs, and collect owed wages, leaving them vulnerable to abuse.

Doha says it is committed to reform and has enacted measures such as introducing a minimum wage, ending a requirement for permits to exit the country for most workers, and setting up dispute panels to hear workers’ grievances.

There was no immediate reaction from other Gulf Arab countries on Tuesday.

While some such as the United Arab Emirates have introduced labour reforms, such as guaranteed time off for domestic workers, rights groups say their sponsorship systems still often leave workers vulnerable by restricting freedom of movement.

In a letter to FIFA head Gianni Infantino, groups including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the International Trade Union Congress said FIFA must ensure any additional hosts meet rights standards introduced by the soccer body in 2017 and make similar reform pledges.

A FIFA spokesperson said its commitment to human rights are “unequivocal” and written into the hosting requirements of all future tournaments.

The FIFA spokesperson said the feasibility study being presented on Friday confirmed that these standards would apply to any co-hosting country.

The prospects for expansion have been complicated by a Gulf dispute under which Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain imposed a political and economic boycott of Qatar in mid-2017 over allegations it supports terrorism, which Doha denies.

FIFA has courted Kuwait and Oman as alternative sites according to a New York Times report.

*(Source: Eurosport)*

## Commemorative Tokyo 2020 stamps go on sale



Stamps celebrating next year’s Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games went on sale on Tuesday, 500 days before the start of the summer showpiece.

The stamps, released by Japan Post Co., feature the Olympic and Paralympic mascots Miraitowa and Someity as well as an image of the new Olympic Stadium, which is still under construction.

One million sheets of 10 stamps are on sale, priced at 920 yen (\$8.26), which includes a donation of 100 yen towards preparations for the Games.

Dozens queued outside the main post office near Tokyo station to get their hands on the special stamps.

“Each stamp has 10 yen donation to operations for the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo 2020 so I would like to contribute to the Games even if a small amount,” said 77-year-old Masaki Nakamura at Tokyo station.

“I like the mascots,” said Yu Anami, who had come to the station early to get her hands on the stamps.

“I think that there are few stamps with illustrated designs so this would be a good memorial item.”

The designer of the stamps, Akira Tamaki, said he had taken inspiration from the commemorative stamps made for the 1964 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics, when Japan last held the

Zidane has three months to decide what needs changing. He arrives under no illusions. Madrid triumphed in Europe but in La Liga last season, Barcelona finished 17 points ahead. Now the gap is 12.

“I don’t forget what we won but I also don’t forget the bad things we did all together last year,” he said.

The temptation might be to discard a lot and spend even more, but the challenge for Zidane is to find the balance between reform and revolution. A fresh start could bring ousted players in from the cold while progress made by talented youngsters like Vinicius Junior, Sergio Reguilon and Marcos Llorente could quickly be lost.

Ronaldo has gone and, while it was unavoidable the team would miss him, others have struggled to fill the void.

Gareth Bale and Zidane were barely speaking during the second half of last season and Bale is understood to be less than enthused by the Frenchman’s return. A clean slate is possible but a parting appears more likely.

Decisions will need to be made too on Marcelo and Isco, who have both endured torrid seasons, while Keylor Navas was once a favourite of Zidane’s, which could spell trouble for Thibaut Courtois. Luka Modric, heavily linked with a move to Italy last summer, may feel it is time for something new.

Zidane’s biggest gain is Vinicius, who may not take play again this season as he recovers from an ankle injury, but whose emergence has been Madrid’s one shining light.

*(Source: AFP)*

## Klopp wary of Allianz Arena return with Liverpool



### ■ Buoyant Bayern

Klopp knows that his team must walk tall at Bayern’s home. “It’s a much more positive moment for Bayern. They are top of the table and winning games comfortably again,” Klopp told Liverpool’s website.

Bayern have hit form, winning their last three games

with a goal ratio of 12-1 since the first-leg draw.

“But if we are at our best, we can be exceptional.”

Liverpool fans hope Reds’ striker Mo Salah has a red-letter day in Munich after just one goal in his last eight games.

His lack of goals has not stopped Liverpool staying in contention for the Premier League title as Mane and Firmino have filled the breach.

The Liverpool match is seen as a season-defining tie for the German champions.

The five-time winners last failed to get through the last 16 stage in 2011 and confidence is high after they moved into top spot in the Bundesliga at the weekend for the first time since September.

“It’s a very important game - everything is riding on this,” said sporting director Hasan Salihamidzic.

“The boys have put some more self-confidence in the tank,” he added after Saturday’s 6-0 mauling of Wolfsburg.

Bayern will be without the suspended Thomas Mueller, but James Rodriguez will slot seamlessly into the attacking midfield role.

*(Source: France 24)*



# ACL Matchday Two: Esteghlal held, Persepolis suffer late defeat

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iranian football clubs Esteghlal and Persepolis were disappointed to register their first wins in the 2019 AFC Asian League Matchday Two on Tuesday.

In Tehran's Azadi Stadium, Esteghlal were held to a 1-1 draw by Al Ain of the UAE.

Farshid Esmaeili scored for the hosts in the 53rd minute but with five minutes remaining Tsukasa Shiotani equalized the match.

Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia defeated Qatar's Al Duhail 3-1 in another Group C match.

Al Hilal remain top of the group with six points, followed by Al Duhail who have earned three points.

Al Ain and Esteghlal are third and fourth with just one point.

In Group D, Persepolis lost to Al Sadd of Qatar after conceding an injury time goal in Doha's Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium.

Baghdad Bounedjah scored the winner for the Qatari giants in the dying moments of the match with a header.

Earlier on the day, Uzbekistan's Pakhtakor edged past Al Ahli of Saudi Arabia 1-0 in Tashkent's Pakhtakor Central Stadium.

Pakhtakor move up top of the table with four points, followed by Al Ahli and Al Sadd with three points each and Persepolis remain bottom with just one point.



## Chelsea fear Hazard summer move to Real Madrid inevitable

Chelsea fear there is nothing they can do to prevent Eden Hazard from becoming a Real Madrid player in the summer, sources have told ESPN FC.

Zinedine Zidane's shock return to the Bernabeu on Monday, coupled with the uncertainty at Chelsea, has left many at the London club convinced that Hazard regards a move to the Spanish capital as too good to turn down, with his price the only thing left to determine.

Chelsea's confidence of keeping Hazard has been receding for months, with the Belgium international having made no attempt to hide his attraction to Madrid while spurning Chelsea's attempts to reopen talks over a contract extension that would make him the highest-paid player in their history.

The reappointment of his childhood idol Zidane dugout will only strengthen Madrid's appeal to Hazard, although his long-standing interest in playing for them goes beyond the identity of their coach.

Chelsea are expected to demand at least £100 million to sell Hazard, but are aware they will struggle to replace him regardless of the size of fee they recoup -- particularly if they are not able to secure a delay to the two-transfer



window ban imposed by FIFA last month.

Being unable to register new players in the summer would make Chelsea even more loath to lose Hazard, who has made it clear on numerous occasions that he is not

prepared to follow the example of Thibaut Courtois and damage his relationship with the club by going on strike to force a move.

But the winger's contract status means he will not have to, since any refusal to sell leaves Chelsea with the risk of him walking away as a free agent in 2020.

Chelsea are more confident of keeping another of their prized assets, N'Golo Kante, amid reports in Spain this week that Madrid are keen on the World Cup winner as part of Zidane's planned overhaul.

Paris Saint-Germain have also expressed interest in signing Kante in recent windows, but Chelsea's position is strengthened by the fact that the midfielder signed a huge new contract in November that commits him to the club until 2023.

Maurizio Sarri's decision to change Kante's midfield role to accommodate Jorginho this season has encouraged speculation about the France international's future, but Chelsea consider him essential and not the type of person who would agitate to leave.

(Source: ESPN)

## Iran lose to Oman at AFC Beach Soccer Championship 2019

Oman confirmed themselves as Group D winners, and inflicted the first blemish to defending champion Islamic Republic of Iran's campaign, with a 4-3 win in a high-quality AFC Beach Soccer Championship Thailand 2019 clash on Tuesday.

The result means Talib Hilal's side will face Bahrain in Thursday's quarter-finals, while Iran are set for blockbuster, win-or-go-home clash against FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup regulars Japan.

The tie had been locked at 2-2 deep into the final period, but late goals to Sami Al Bulushi and Yahya Al Arami scored crucial late goals to give Oman what proved an insurmountable lead.

Right from its earliest stages, it was a game full of entertainment and quality, with Mohammad Ahmadzadeh coming close twice in the opening 120 seconds, before Mohammad Masoumizadeh thumped in Iran's opener off the bounce in the fourth minute.

Hamid Behzadpour saved to deny Abdullah Salim's overhead kick in the sixth minute, before Mushel Al Arami levelled the tie with an absolutely sensational volley from deep in his own half to level the tie.

Despite continuing end-to-end drama, it looked as though the sides would be level at the end of the opening period, but Jalal Al Sinani guided home Salim's cross to give Talib Hilal's side a 2-1 lead at the end of the 12 minutes.

A combination of Haitham Showan and the woodwork conspired to prevent Iran from taking one of several chances early in the second period, and the holders' mood



soured further Amir Akbari was a shown a yellow card, meaning he will miss the all-important quarter-final through suspension.

Iran persisted in surging forward, and a penalty kick for Masoumizadeh gave them their best chance for some time, but Showan made a brilliant save to help keep Oman's lead intact throughout what proved to be a scoreless second period.

Oman were 12 minutes away from top spot in the group, but keeping the second-best side in the world quiet is no easy task, and star goalkeeper Peyman Hosseini issued a warning when he rattled the crossbar with a volley reminiscent of his 2017 World Cup goal against Mexico.

Finally, the goal came, as Masoumizadeh

atoned for his squandered penalty with an overhead volley that bounced wickedly off the sand and into the net to make it 2-2, and a superb Hosseini save from Al Bulushi's bullet ensured it remained that way moments later.

But Oman refused to be denied, and they took the lead for a second time when Al Bulushi reached a high ball before Hosseini to head it into the back of the net with six minutes remaining.

Masoumizadeh hit the crossbar with a bouncing free-kick, but Oman found a crucial fourth through a late-arriving Yahya Al Arami with just two minutes remaining to extend the lead.

Ahmadzadeh scored with 30 seconds remaining to give Marco Octavio's men late

hope, but Oman held on for a famous win to top the section and send a warning to the rest of the competition.

Talib Hilal, Oman head coach

"First of all, I thank God that we finished the game with a win, which was our target. I'm very, very happy with my boys, because they played with one of the best teams in the world. It was a tactical game, different from the first match, and we were well prepared. We did our best. The players did what I asked of them, and the win was important for us. I respect any team, so the next match won't be easy for us. I will never underestimate any team in this competition.

We'll have one day of rest to prepare my team for the match against Bahrain. I also thank Iran's coach and their team. They gave us a hard time, but we dealt with that, so I am very, very happy with my players and so is everyone in Oman. Now we are focused on going further."

Marco Octavio, Iran head coach

"It was like a final. It was two teams with very good technical conditions and I would like to give big congratulations to Oman. They deserved to win. The people who came tonight saw a very beautiful show of beach soccer. If we were watching this from the perspective of a scout, and judging things like possession and ball control, we would say Iran was the superior team, but Oman were more efficient, and I have to congratulate them for a beautiful performance. We are still alive in the competition and we will do our best to keep on and qualify."

(Source: the-afc)

## Zob Ahan earn dramatic win over Al Nassr of Saudi Arabia

Iran's Zob Ahan snatched a dramatic 3-2 win over Saudi Arabia's Al Nassr at Al Maktoum Stadium on Matchday Two of the 2019 AFC Champions League Group A on Monday.

Al Nassr wasted no time in getting down to business as Brazilian midfielder Giuliano fired them in front just four minutes into the match.

Giuliano found space inside the Zob Ahan box and swept home from close range after Hamad Al Mansour advanced on the right and sent a low cross.

Mohammed Nejad Mehdi equalized for the Iranians at the half-hour mark, powering in a header from Mohammad Reza Hosseini's cross.

Vahid Mohammadzadeh sent Zob Ahan into the lead six minutes before the half time break, capitalizing on poor defensive coverage.

The defender battled for an aerial ball after a long throw-in and managed to squeeze in a shot from an arrow angle that beat goalkeeper Brad Jones at his near post to make it 2-1.

Al Nassr grabbed an equalizer 13 minutes after the restart through Abdelrazaq Hamdalla. The Moroccan looked to



round goalkeeper Mohammed Rashid Mazaheri but was brought down inside the box.

Hamdalla stepped up to take the penalty himself and confidently slotted home the equalizer.

The former Al Rayyan forward thought he had won the game for his team late into the second half after he was again brought down inside the box and awarded a penalty in the dying minutes.

There was disappointment for Al Nassr fans this time, however, as the Moroccan's scoring boot deserted him and he sent his effort from the spot the wrong side of the post.

Instead, there was joy for the Zob Ahan supporters and further misery to the Saudi fans as the Iranian side snatched a late winner deep in added time.

Set-pieces were again the downfall of Al Nassr as Hamid Maleki's corner-kick evaded all the defending bodies to find its way to Amir Motahari who rose highest to drive home the header in the last minute of added time and secure a 3-2 win for Zob Ahan.

Zob Ahan visit Dubai again next month, but this time to face Al Wasl. Meanwhile, Al Nassr's pursuit of a first victory will continue on home soil as they welcome Al Zawraa to the King Fahd International Stadium in Riyadh on April 8.

(Source: the-afc)

## Bahram Ghadimi elected Iran Hockey Federation president

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Bahram Ghadimi has been elected as new president of Iran Hockey Federation on Tuesday.

Ghadimi has been elected for a four-year term till 2023 by receiving 35 votes out of 43 votes in the presidential elections held at the Iran's Academy Olympic.

Ghadimi replaced Bahram Shafie, who died of heart attack in October, in this federation.

The Iran Hockey Federation (IHF) is the national governing body for field hockey in Iran. It is affiliated to the International Hockey Federation (FIH).

The head-quarters of the federation are in Tehran.

## Iranian referee Faghani barred from wearing Nike

**PLDC** — Iranian international referee Alireza Faghani and his assistants are barred from wearing Nike kits.

Faghani officiated a match between Melbourne Victory of Australia and South Korean Daegu FC last week in Group F of the 2019 AFC Champions League, while he didn't wear Nike kit.

Nike is the official kit sponsor of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), while Faghani wore Adidas kit during the 2019 AFC Asian Cup in the UAE.

"Yes, I am not allowed to wear Nike kits due to the sanctions. I wore Adidas kits in the 2019 Asian Cup," Faghani said.

"The limitation is not just for the Iranian referees, it includes all Iranian athletes as well," Faghani, who officiated the third-place match between Belgium and England in the 2018 World Cup, said.

The American sportswear company Nike didn't provide Iranian players with equipment in the 2018 World Cup in Russia.

"U.S. sanctions mean that, as a U.S. company, Nike cannot supply shoes and kits to players in the Iranian national team at this time," a company statement said. "Sanctions applicable to Nike have been in place for many years and are enforceable by law."

## Iran female weightlifters in Asian competitions for first time



**IRNA** — Iran's national weightlifting team will compete for the first time in Asian contests to be held in mid-April in China, the head of the Iran Weightlifting Federation said) on Tuesday.

"The competitions, to be held from April 18-28 in Ningbo, eastern China, are one of the stages of winning spots in 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo," said Ali Moradi.

Ali Moradi said that the 6-8 athletes are to be sent to the competitions.

Thanks to efforts by the Federation, the Iranian national team's attire was accepted by the Asian weight lifting confederation, Moradi had earlier said in July, 2018.

"We started weightlifting for Iranian women last year; and we hope to see their success in international competitions next year," said Moradi.

## British Olympic team set to have more women than men

Great Britain's team for Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games is on course to contain more women than men for the first time, chief de mission Mark England has told the BBC.

The number of women in the British team could rise above 50 percent from 44 percent at Rio in 2016, he added.

"For the first time it looks like we might have more women than men in the Great Britain team for Tokyo as we see the fruition of some fabulous athletic talent," the BBC quoted England as saying.

"We have seen some fantastic role models in multiple Olympic champions like Heather Stanning and Helen Glover, Jade Jones and Nicola Adams.

"Everybody also looks up to Jessica Ennis-Hill and they have clearly all had a great impact in terms of inspiring a new class of young female athletes which is now emerging."

England also said Britain's Olympic Committee was hopeful its athletes could match the medal haul from Rio, where they finished second on the table behind the United States with 27 gold, 23 silver and 17 bronze.

"We have tough shoes to fill from Rio," he said.

"Typically, we don't set medal targets but we are hugely confident that the investment by UK Sport... will make Team GB as successful as it was in Rio."

(Source: Reuters)



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GUIDE TO  
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Take what the world gives you, and turn away from what it refuses you, and do not stoop to its favor. But if you do not wish to turn away from it, try not to seek it in vain.

Imam Ali (AS)

## “Driving Lessons” to compete in Tribeca Film Festival

**A R T** TEHRAN — Iranian director Marzieh Riahi's short film “Driving Lessons” will go on screen at the 18th Tribeca Film Festival in New York City.



Linda Kiani acts in a scene from “Driving Lessons” by Iranian director Marzieh Riahi.

The film is about a young girl, Bahareh, who, according to Iranian law, must have a man from her relatives accompany her on driving lessons so she and her male instructor won't be alone.

Films from 19 countries including Australia, Canada, Norway, Peru, Spain and the U.S. will compete in the short film section of the festival, which will be held from April 24 to May 5.

## “Medeas” director Andrea Pallaoro to hold workshop at Fajr festival

**A R T** TEHRAN — Andrea Pallaoro, the Italian director of the acclaimed movie “Medeas”, is scheduled to hold a workshop during the 37th Fajr International Film Festival, the organizers announced on Tuesday.



Italian director Andrea Pallaoro in an undated photo.

at the festival, which will be held in Tehran from April 18 to 26.

## George Michael's art collection goes on sale in online auction

**LONDON (Reuters)** — More than 170 art works from George Michael's private collection go on sale in an online auction from Friday to raise money for philanthropic causes the late British singer and songwriter had supported.

The collection includes works by leading members of the Young British Art movement such as Damien Hirst, Tracey Emin, Sarah Lucas and Michael Craig-Martin, who rose to prominence in the 1990s. Many of them were personal friends of Michael.

Among the items on offer in the online sale, which runs until March 15, and at an evening auction on March 14, both organized by Christie's auction house, are formaldehyde works by Hirst and neons and embroideries by Emin.

“George Michael's name resonates with fans globally and speaks of pioneering creative talent,” Paola Saracino Fendi, associate director and specialist in contemporary art at Christie's in London, said in a statement.

“The George Michael Collection reflects this revolutionary spirit in its dynamic group of artists and dedication to the arts.”

# “Sojourn”, “Beyond the Rain” share Iran's best game of the year award

**CULTURE** TEHRAN — “The Sojourn” and “Beyond the Rain” have shared the award for best game of the year at the 8th Iran Video Game Festival.

Developed at Respina, “The Sojourn” is a thought-provoking first-person puzzle game, in which gamers traverse the parallel worlds of light and darkness in search of answers.

“Beyond the Rain” is a platform game developed at Fanus Games in collaboration with Avagames.

The awards ceremony of the festival, which is organized every year by the Iran Computer and Video Games Foundation, was held at Tehran's Parsian Hotel on Monday.

“Beyond the Rain” also won the Golden Homa for best design achievement, while “The Sojourn” received the Golden Homas for best sound and music achievement and best aesthetics achievement.

The Golden Homa for best technical achievement was presented to “Arbabe Jang” (God of War).

“Mr. Crow Don't Open the Envelope” won the Golden Homa for best story achievement.

People's Choice Award went to “Hezar Dastan: Shahzad”, a reading promoting game developed at DreamRain.

The list of the other winners is as follows:

Best strategy game: “Doom” from AppDroid

Best action game: “Arbabe Jang” from Pileh Games

Best platform game: “Beyond the Rain” from Fanus Games

Best adventure game: “Noor” from Tickle



A poster for “The Sojourn”.

Studio

Best sports game: “Police II” from Honare

Nur-o-Harakat Studio

The festival was organized in its previous

editions under the title of the Tehran Video Game Festival.

## Russian films line up for Fajr Classics Preserved



A scene from “Stalker” by Andrei Tarkovsky.

**A R T** TEHRAN — A lineup of restored versions of seven films from Russian cinema will be screened in the Preserved Classics section of the 37th Fajr International Film Festival, the organizers announced on Tuesday.

“At Home among Strangers, a Stranger among His Own” (1974) by Nikita Mikhalkov, “Office Romance” (1977) by Eldar Ryazanov, “Uncle Vanya” (1970) by Andrei Konchalovsky and “Stalker” (1979) by Andrei Tarkovsky are among the films.

The lineup also includes “Walking the Streets of Moscow” (1964) by Georgiy Daneliya and “The Rider Named Death” (2004) by Karen Shakhnazarov.

In addition “Dersu Uzala” (1975),

a Soviet-Japanese co-production by Japanese director Akira Kurosawa.

The films have been restored by Mosfilm, one of the largest and oldest film studios in the Russian Federation and in Europe.

Restored versions of five Iranian films from the 1980s will also go on screen in this section.

“The Runner” (1984) by Amir Naderi, “Talisman” (1986) by Dariush Farhang, “Cold Roads” (1986) by Masud Jafari-Jozani, “The Scout” (1988) by Ebrahim Hatamikia and “The Last Act” (1989) by Varuj Karim-Masihi are among the films.

The 37th Fajr International Film Festival will be held in Tehran from April 18 to 26.

## “Marzieh” wins awards at Vancouver women's festival



A scene from “Marzieh” by Dornaz Hajiha.

**A R T** TEHRAN — Short film “Marzieh” by Iranian director Dornaz Hajiha has won two awards at the 14th Vancouver International Women in Film Festival in Canada.

The film won the award for best director and also brought Mastaneh Mohajer the award for best editor, Hajiha announced on her Instagram.

The film, which is a co-production

of Iran and the UK, had its Canadian premiere at the festival, which was held from March 5 to 10.

“Marzieh” tells the story of a couple whose life changes drastically after they return home from a funeral for a relative.

Sepideh Tari, Diba Hajiha and Shahdiar Shakiba are the main cast members.

“Marzieh” was named best short film at the Iranian Film Festival in Prague, Czech in 2018.

## Culture Minister Salehi, envoys of Islamic countries meet



Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi (7th R) and envoys of Islamic countries hold Iranian Quranic periodicals during a meeting in Tehran on March 12, 2019. (MCIG)

**A R T** TEHRAN — Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi met with a number of diplomats of the Islamic countries in his office in Tehran on Tuesday.

The minister talked about the high status of the Holy Quran among the Muslim nation and said, “Different IRIB channels, news agencies and newspapers have various programs to introduce Quranic teachings.”

He added that 30 universities across Iran are teaching topics related to Quran.

He also noted that over 5,000 MA and Ph.D. theses on Quranic topics and about 40,000 books on the Quran have been published in Iran over the past few

decades. Pointing to the activities of the Quranic institutes in Iran, Salehi said that about 8,000 Quran studies centers are active in the villages, and many Quran reciting sessions are being held by people in their homes.

He also said that several Quranic exhibits are organized across Iran every year and invited the Islamic countries to take part in the 35th International Quran Competition, which will open in Tehran within the next month with reciters and memorizers from over 70 countries.

The meeting came to an end by unveiling a number of Quranic periodicals published by the culture ministry in Persian, Arabic and English.

## Colorful egg-shaped statues to add more taste to Noruz



An artist paints an egg-shaped statue set up in a Tehran neighborhood to welcome Noruz on March 16, 2018. (Tasnim/Ali Jabbari)

**A R T** TEHRAN — Tehran Municipality's Beautification Organization will decorate 10 different neighborhoods across the capital with a collection of colorful egg-shaped statues to enrich the Noruz celebration.

Groups of art students came together on Tuesday in the courtyard of the Iranian Artists Forum, Baghe Ferdows and several other neighborhoods on Tuesday to paint

the egg-shaped statues, the organization announced in a press release.

The organization received about 500 designs by 228 students, 68 of which have been selected to be carried out in various places in the city.

The artists will continue their works next week at different sites, including Azadi Square, Park-e Shahr, Daneshju Park and Tehranpars Square.