



Armed forces beside the flood-hit until pain relieved **2**



Blocking aid to flood victims shows U.S. animosity **2**



Mehdi Taj elected as AFC Vice President **15**



Fans bid farewell to actor Jamshid Mashayekhi at Vahdat Hall **16**

Leader: Iraqi progress benefits Iran



See page 2

Zarif rebukes Trump and Pompeo's contradictory remarks about Iran

TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Friday that President Donald Trump and his secretary of state Mike Pompeo make "contradictory" claims against Iran depending on the occasion.

For example, Zarif said, on one occasion the Trump administration claims that Iran is about to "collapse" and an-

other day it claims that Iran is a "great power" that is threatening NATO like Russia and China.

"Flip-flop par excellence: one day US claims Iran on verge of collapse, the next we're demonized as a 'Great Power' that threatens NATO. @SecPompeo & his boss will make any contradictory claim that fits an occasion," Zarif tweeted. **→2**

Iranian scientists produce advanced wound care dressing

TEHRAN — Iranian scientists at the Technology Tower of Amirkabir University of Technology have produced special dressings which stimulate new tissue growth and can treat different kinds of wounds as well as type one and two burnings.

The dressing, called TEBADERM Collagen Matrix dressing has been designed and manufactured after eight years of research and study on dressings that can resemble human skin by scientists

at one of the companies in Amirkabir Technology Tower, ISNA reported on Saturday.

TEBADERM Collagen Matrix has a structure similar to intercellular matrix and biopolymers that provide human cells with an optimal, stress-free environment. This promotes the uptake of growth factors in the wound bed and accelerate cell division and the healing process of the wounds. **→9**

Terrorists equipping missiles with chemical warheads in Syria's Idlib

Members of the Jabhat Fateh al-Sham Takfiri terrorist group, formerly known as al-Nusra Front, together with militants from the Turkistan Islamic Party in Syria, have reportedly mounted chemical warheads on more than a hundred missiles in cooperation with European experts in Syria's northwestern province of Idlib.

Local sources, speaking on condition

of anonymity, told the Arabic service of Russia's Sputnik news agency that the foreign-sponsored Takfiri militants had modified some 120 missiles with toxic chemicals in a bid to strike residential targets as well as Syrian army positions in the western province of Hama and Latakia.

The sources noted that the terrorists, in cooperation with the so-called civil defense group White Helmets, **→13**



PERSPECTIVE

Hanif Ghaffari
Political analyst

Biden's troubles in the presidential election

Undoubtedly, former Vice President Joe Biden is one of the famous Democrat candidates in the 2020 presidential election. Biden has not yet announced his official appearance in the upcoming presidential election. However, there seems to be some hurdles in front of Biden - obstacles that Biden might not be able to overcome.

As Time reported, Joe Biden has been gearing up for a potential White House campaign since last year, scouting office locations around Philadelphia, enlisting donors and recruiting staff in Iowa and New Hampshire. In mid-March, the former Vice President let slip to a group of union members that he might need their support "in a few weeks." Former Senate colleagues who have traded phone calls with Biden said they were convinced he was ready to run. Time continues:

"But in recent weeks, Biden has seemed plagued by second thoughts, blowing past yet another self-imposed decision deadline. His pause has raised familiar worries. In 2016, Biden was close enough to running for President to tap a campaign manager, and a longtime aide wrote a 2,500-word announcement speech.

Was he getting cold feet again? Biden insiders say no. He is likely to mount a third campaign for the presidency soon, two advisers involved in rollout discussions tell TIME. If he does, polls suggest, he'll be the front runner to win the nomination. But Biden's apparent hesitancy suggests he's aware of what else awaits him."

The fact is that Biden has now faced great trouble. In recent days, multiple women have come forward with stories of Biden touching them in ways they considered inappropriate. The main question here is how can recent events affect Biden's fate in the 2020 presidential election?

The reality is that if Biden fails to compete with other Democrat candidates in states like Iowa and New Hampshire, he can hardly continue to run for electoral competition. Eventually, Biden will have a lot of concerns about the 2010 presidential election. On the other hand, Donald Trump, the president of the United States, considers him the main rival. **→7**

Saudi has not really demonstrated nuclear transparency: Heinonen

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Olli Heinonen, the former deputy director general for safeguards at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), tells the Tehran Times that Saudi Arabia has not really demonstrated nuclear transparency, by concluding and ratifying, for example, the IAEA Additional Protocol.

Heinonen, now a senior advisor on science and non-proliferation at Foundation for Defense of Democracies, also believes that "We have also not seen clear nuclear energy plans other than

stating numbers of nuclear reactors to be build."

"They have also not been open on their plans to construct research reactors. The statements of the Saudi authorities are also worrisome with regard to the technologies, which they may acquire," director general for safeguards at the IAEA tells to the Tehran Times.

Following is the text of the interview with Heinonen:

Q: Top Trump administration officials advocated for a plan to build dozens of nuclear power plants in Saudi Arabia despite warnings that the move could pose ethical concerns and violate

federal law, according to a report released by House Democrats. Which group in U.S. try to sell this sensitive technology to Saudi Arabia?

A: There are several countries in the Middle East with programs to tap to nuclear energy as one of the sources to meet increasing electricity and water desalination requirements. Iran, Turkey, the Emirates, and Egypt are proceeding with concrete plans. Participation to these developments in the Middle East is attractive to nuclear industry when they see their ordering books getting thinner elsewhere. The U.S. nuclear technology providers are not an exception from that. **→7**

'People of the region yearn for democracy, human rights and social equality'

By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Professor Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, Chair of the Centre for Iranian Studies at the London Middle East Institute believes that "The people of the region yearn for democracy, human rights and social equality."

Professor in Global Thought and Comparative Philosophies and Chair of the Centre for Iranian Studies at the London Middle East Institute, also adds that "The Islamic revolution spoke to those

themes and made them realisable in Iran."

He says that "The Arab revolts galvanised these sentiments further and as we speak, mass protests in Algiers are spreading in what may become a second Arab spring."

Here is the full text of the interview:

Q: What was the most important event in the Middle East in the last Iranian year and why?

A: Allow me to congratulate all Iranians and everyone who celebrates Nowrouz as a global

festival in the name of universal sentiments such as empathy, humanity and love.

I deem the most important event in West Asia and North Africa the absence of decent human rights standards. I am choosing this theme, because in this Iranian year, the Islamic Republic of Iran turned 40. As such, the Iranian state has ruled the country for the longest continuous period compared to any other state in the modern history of the country. **→7**

Oman has intent to maintain mutually beneficial relations with Iran: Murphy

By Fatemeh Mohammadipour

TEHRAN — Richard W. Murphy, the former U.S. ambassador to Syria and Saudi Arabia, says the "Oman has long displayed skill in balancing its relationships in the area. Its leadership has not forgotten the help it received from Iran in confronting the domestic

challenge to the Sultan's regime during the time of the Shah."

"Oman has the capability and intent to maintain mutually beneficial relations with Iran," Murphy tells the Tehran Times.

Following is the text of the interview:

■ The United States clinched a strategic

port deal with Oman which U.S. officials say will allow the U.S. military better access the Persian Gulf region and reduce the need to send ships through the Strait of Hormuz, a maritime choke point off Iran. What is the importance of this deal for U.S. from strategic aspects? **→7**



© Tehran Times / Morteza Jaberian

Flood in Iran: Emergency evacuation ordered in Khuzestan

Khuzestan's governor general Gholamreza Shariati said on Sunday that six cities along the Karkheh River needed to be evacuated as soon as possible as the river is feared to burst its banks, IRNA news agency reported.

Almost three weeks of torrential rainfalls have caused extensive damage in many provinces of the country including Golestan, Mazandaran, Lorestan as well as Khuzestan.

Devastating floods have so far claimed 70 lives and left many other displaced in 1900 villages and cities nationwide causing widespread damages to infrastructures, houses, crops, and livestock.



REPORT

Ebrahim Fallahi
Tehran Times journalist

Optimism growing among oil traders on signs of a tightening market

In the last two weeks, a variety of boosting factors have come together to push the oil prices up to their highest in near six months.

Despite the Q1 in which fears about weakening global oil demand was envisioning a gloomy future for the market, it seems that the Q2 is starting off on the right foot. Several factors went hand in hand to make the traders believe that the market is not going to be that oversupplied after all, at least not in the near future.

■ Libya

In Libya, the escalating conflicts between the UAE-supported General Khalifa Haftar who has held the country's east, and the United Nations-recognized government in the capital of Tripoli is threatening to disrupt supply from the OPEC member.

The two sides have gone through several rounds of talks, however as Reuters reported, on Thursday commander Haftar ordered his troops to march on Tripoli, escalating the conflict between the two sides.

■ Venezuela

Crude futures also received a boost from news of U.S. hitting Venezuela with new sanctions. The U.S. Vice President Mike Pence announced on Friday that the United States will add 34 PDVSA owned or operated vessels to the sanctions list.

Venezuelan state-owned oil company PDVSA expects its crude upgraders to operate well below capacity this month, according to industry sources and documents seen by Reuters.

■ U.S.-China trade talks

The hopes are also growing over the U.S.-China trade talks reaching some closure. According to White House adviser Larry Kudlow, U.S. and Chinese officials will continue the negotiations next week by video conference as they try to reach a deal to resolve the trade war.

On Friday multiple sources quoted President Trump as saying that the U.S. has found agreement on some of the toughest points in trade talks with China. **→5**

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Leader pardons, commutes sentences of 1,117 prisoners

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has pardoned or reduced the prison sentences of 1,117 prisoners convicted by various courts, IRNA reported on Saturday.

The Leader granted the clemency upon a request by new Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi on the occasion of Yaumul Mab'ath, which marks the day Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) received his first revelation, and also the Islamic Republic Day.

Article 110 of the constitution grants the Leader the right to pardon or commute the sentences of convicts upon a recommendation from Judiciary chief.



'Armed forces beside the flood-hit until pain relieved'

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Major General Mohammad Baqeri, chief of the armed forces, has said the armed forces will stand beside the flood-hit people until their pains calm.

Visiting Lorestan Province days after severe floods hit the province, Baqeri said the volume of aid to flood-stricken areas needs to increase due to the extent of damage, ILNA reported on Saturday.

In his visit, General Baqeri also talked with the people of Pol-e Dokhtar, which was hit hard by the floods, about their problems.

He then departed Lorestan for Khuzestan Province to further survey the damage caused by the floods.



Govt. cannot compensate for flood damage: MP

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Chairman of the Majlis Budget and Planning Committee said on Saturday that the extent of the material damage resulting from the recent floods is so high that the government lack enough money in the current year's budget to compensate for the damage.

Speaking with ISNA, Gholamreza Tajgardoost pointed to his meeting with the Planning and Budget Organization chief, saying in order to compensate for the damage inflicted on different parts of the country, money should be withdrawn from the National Development Fund (NDF).



Explosion on submarine kills 3 in Iran

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Three staff of Iran's defense industries were killed in an explosion in a submarine under construction in Iran's southern shores.

On Saturday, the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting cited local authorities as saying that three technicians were killed when batteries on the vessel exploded.

The explosion took place at a ship-building factory about 37 kilometers west of Bandar Abbas port that overlooks the Strait of Hormuz.

Since 1992, Iran has developed a homegrown defense industry that produces light and heavy weapons ranging from mortars and torpedoes to tanks and submarines.



Iran, Russia, Azerbaijan might hold trilateral meeting: Baku

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Azeri Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov has said Baku had received an official note on the meeting of the presidents of Azerbaijan, Iran and Russia, saying it might take place in Russia in August, ISNA reported on Saturday, citing Sputnik.

Azerbaijan is interested in holding trilateral talks with Iran and Russia in order to agree on economic preferences of the International North-South Transport Corridor, Mammadyarov said.

"The trilateral format of Baku-Moscow-Tehran is a good initiative. The first meeting was held in Baku, then there was a meeting in Tehran. This was a meeting of the presidents who are building a corridor all the way up to St. Petersburg," he added.



EU says to aid victims of Iran's flood through IFRC

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Carlos Martin Ruiz de Gordejuela, spokesperson at the European Commission, has said that the European Union's aid to flood-stricken people in Iran will reach them through the International Federation of Red Cross.

"We will give this money to the International Federation of Red Cross and they are not under the U.S. sanctions and can use the money," he said, according to the Persian service of Euronews.

European Commission announced on Thursday that the EU provides €1.2 million in emergency support following floods.

Since March 19, large parts of Iran have been inundated with flash floods. So far, about 70 people have lost their lives and hundreds of thousands have been displaced. 24 provinces out of 31 have been affected by the flood and landslide.

Leader: Iraqi progress benefits Iran

Baghdad should act in a way that U.S. forces leave Iraq soon, Ayatollah Khamenei suggests

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said in a meeting with visiting Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi on Saturday that the Iranian government and nation consider the Iraqi development and prosperity to their own benefit.

During the meeting which President Rouhani was also present, Ayatollah Khamenei also said relationship between Iran and Iraq goes beyond mere interaction between two neighboring countries.

But contrary to their remarks, Americans view democracy and political activists in Iraq detrimental to their own interests and that is why the Iraqi government should act in a way that American military forces leave the country as soon as possible, the Leader noted.

The Leader said experience has shown that the longer American forces stay in a country the more difficult it will be to drive them out.

Ayatollah Khamenei also praised Abdul Mahdi's clever and wise position toward developments in Iraq and the entire region as a whole.

The Leader also lauded the bravery of the Iraqi youth in fighting Daesh, calling the Iraqi youth's victory over Daesh an "historic event".

Pointing to gifted human resources in Iraq, Ayatollah Khamenei said when the Americans first came to Iraq in 2003 they assassinated a large number of Iraqi scientists since "they were aware of the importance of these important assets."

The Leader added human resources and abundant underground riches will turn Iraq into the most influential country in the Arab world.

The Leader went on to say that the United States and its lackeys are opposed to the current democratic system in Iraq and the political figures who are running the country.

Noting that if the Iraqis follow the White House they will face no problem with Washington, Ayatollah Khamenei said the composition of the Iraqi government parliament and those who are politically active in the country are not favorable to Washington and due to this reason the U.S. is planning to push them out of politics.



Rouhani officially welcomes Abdul Mahdi (right) to Tehran, April 6, 2019.

Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi says close ties between Tehran and Baghdad should set an example to other countries.

The Leader added there is a great difference between the Americans and Saudis' rhetoric and what they have in mind, noting when Daesh captured Mosul they sent money and arms to them but now that Iraqis have defeated this terrorist group they claim friendship with Baghdad.

■ **Iraqi PM calls relations with Iran 'special'**

During the meeting, Prime Minister Abdul Mahdi called Iraq-Iraq relations "special" and said as his country has announced it will never join American sanctions against Iran.

Abdul Mahdi visited Tehran on Saturday morning. It was his first visit to Iran since he was elected prime minister. He was accompanied by ministers of oil, finance, foreign affairs, planning, commerce, energy

as well as national security advisor, army chief of staff, deputy interior minister, and a number of parliamentarians.

The visit came after Rouhani's landmark visit to Iraq in March which marked the signing of several memorandums of understanding for expansion of cooperation in key sectors and meeting with top political and religious figures.

■ **Rouhani says Iran ready to boost energy trade with Iraq**

Earlier on Saturday, Rouhani held talks with the Iraqi prime minister and his accompanying delegation. Rouhani said Iran is ready to expand its gas and electricity trade with Iraq, a move which he said would also benefit other countries.

"The plans to export Iran's electricity,

The Leader says the U.S. and its lackeys are opposed to the current democratic system in Iraq and the figures who are running the country.

Iran to retaliate if U.S. designates IRGC terrorist: MP

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — A senior lawmaker says Iran may react in kind and designate U.S. armed forces as terrorist if Washington puts the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps on its terror list.

"If the Guards is put on America's terror groups list, we will put American military personnel on the terrorist blacklist beside Daesh," Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh, chairman of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, tweeted on Saturday.

His remarks followed a report by the Wall Street Journal in which unnamed sources said the U.S. is expected to designate the

IRGC as a terrorist organization, a move that would mark the first time Washington formally labels another country's military a terrorist group.

The decision, which critics warn exposes U.S. military and intelligence officials to similar actions by unfriendly governments abroad, is expected to be announced by the U.S. State Department as early as Monday, the officials told the Wall Street Journal.

The Pentagon declined to comment and referred queries to the State Department. The State Department and White House also declined to comment.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, a strident Iran critic, has advocated for the change in U.S. policy as part of the Trump administration's tough posture towards Tehran.

The announcement would come before the first anniversary of President Donald Trump's decision to pull out of a 2015 nuclear deal with Tehran and to reimpose sanctions.

The U.S. has already blacklisted dozens of entities and people for their affiliations with the IRGC, but the organization as a whole is not.

The latest sanctions were imposed in March on a network of companies and individuals

gas and oil to Iraq will continue and we are ready to expand these contacts, which would provide facilities for other countries as well," Rouhani said.

Rouhani expressed hope that financial relations between Tehran and Baghdad would further develop in the near future and that work on building a railway linking the two countries, under a deal reached in March, would begin within the next few months.

"We also hope that the two countries' trade relations would reach \$20 million as soon as possible," he remarked.

With a 1,400-kilometer-long joint border, Iraq has turned into a strategic ally and an important trade partner for Iran in recent years.

Iraq's huge energy reserves and a large, diverse market bestow it a special place in the economic equations of the region.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Rouhani emphasized that security is among the top priorities of the two sides, saying Tehran and Baghdad will intensify the fight against terrorism, narcotics and smuggling.

"We have common views on many regional issues," Rouhani said, adding, "Al Quds will remain the permanent capital of Palestine and the Golan [Heights] will remain an integral part of Syria."

He further said the war in Yemen should end immediately through a political solution.

■ **Abdul Mahdi: Iran has greatly helped Iraq in fighting terrorism**

For his part, Abdul Mahdi said the Islamic Republic has made great contributions to Iraq's fight against terrorism, to the extent that "today we are witnessing peace and stability."

He voiced satisfaction over his visit to Iran as a friendly neighboring country, saying the close ties between Tehran and Baghdad should set an example to other countries.

The Iraqi prime minister also pointed to the recent floods across Iran, saying, "We have said in the past and emphasize today that we will stand beside the Iranian nation in good or bad conditions and offer our condolences to you over the tragic flood incident."

He said his country faces similar problems due to floods, adding that Iran and Iraq face common problems at the same time, including floods and droughts.

Blocking aid to flood victims shows U.S. animosity towards Iranians: Larijani

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — By blocked the accounts of Iran's Red Crescent Society the United is practically preventing aid to the Iranian flood victims by other countries, a move which Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani said on Saturday clearly shows the depth of Washington's animosity toward the Iranian people.

"The Red Crescent as an international institution is duty bound to help in difficult situations when there is food shortage, earthquake or war without paying attention to political issues, however, the U.S. blocked the Red Crescent aid," Larijani said before departing to Qatar to participate in the Inter-Parliamentary Union's summit.

He added that the U.S. evil behavior will be discussed in the summit.

About U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's remarks on contributing to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to help the flood-stricken peo-



ple in Iran, Larijani said such remarks are "deceitful" and "shameful".

Since March 19, large parts of Iran have been inundated

with flash floods. So far, about 70 people have lost their lives and hundreds of thousands have been displaced. 24 provinces out of 31 have been affected by the flood.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said on Tuesday that the U.S. sanctions have hampered relief support from foreign donors.

In October 2018, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ordered that the United States had to halt the unilateral sanctions it has re-imposed on "humanitarian" supplies.

On Monday, Zarif stressed that the economic restrictions, which Washington is deploying against Tehran under the banner of "maximum pressure", are violating the related UN and ICJ regulations.

Zarif has said the U.S. is waging "economic terrorism" against Iran by employing restrictive measures that are troubling the relief efforts targeting flood-stricken people across the country.

Tehran, Moscow seek deeper media cooperation venues

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian and Russian media representatives on Friday met to discuss deepening cooperation.

Peyman Jebelli, the CEO of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB)'s World Service, met with Russia Today's Managing Director Alexey Nikolov in the Russian capital

of Moscow, IRIB News reported.

During the meeting, Jebelli said cooperation between Iranian and Russian media outlets is an "effective step" toward ending Western media dominion.

Jebelli said that since similar restrictive measures had been taken against Iranian and Russian media by Western media regulators,

Moscow and Tehran could step up legal and media cooperation to confront those measures.

He said the "double standards" and the "discriminatory" policies exercised by Western media regulators was most evident in their behavior toward the IRIB's Press TV and the anti-Iran, London-based "Iran International" channel, according to Press TV.

In September 2018, "Iran International" invited the spokesperson for a terrorist group to a live show during which he took responsibility for a terrorist attack that had been carried out in Iran just earlier.

The terrorist attack killed at least 25 people — including women and children — and injured 60 others.

Zarif rebukes Trump and Pompeo's contradictory remarks about Iran

➔ Contrary to such remarks, Zarif said, Iran is a "responsible" country that is seeking peace.

"In contrast, Iran is consistently responsible & peace-seeking," Zarif remarked.

During a meeting of NATO foreign min-

isters in Washington on Thursday, Pompeo called for unity to confront what he called "great power" challenges from Russia, China and Iran.

"We must continue to do so, especially in this new era of great power competition from

Russia, from China, and the Islamic Republic of Iran," AP quoted Pompeo as saying.

In an interview with Bloomberg on Thursday, Trump claimed that Iran may collapse because of his administration's policies, including leaving the international nuclear

agreement with Tehran negotiated by his predecessor.

Trump pulled the U.S. from the 2015 international nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, in May 2018 and reimposed sanctions on Iran.

IAEA asks Saudi Arabia to provide safeguards for 1st nuclear reactor

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has asked Saudi Arabia to implement safeguards for its first nuclear reactor under construction near the Saudi capital Riyadh that could complete by the end of the year.

Recently-released satellite images have revealed that the contentious Saudi nuclear reactor is nearing completion on the outskirts of Riyadh, as a heated controversy is underway in the U.S. over what Democrats say is President Donald Trump's rush to approve nuclear projects with the oil-rich Arab kingdom.

The U.S. nuclear deal with Saudis, however, is assumed to be lucrative enough to match the money-driven politics of the American president, a businessman-turned-politician who is not afraid of overstepping boundaries for more dollars.

AEA Director General Yukiya Amano said on Friday that there was nothing secret about Saudi Arabia's nuclear reactor and that Riyadh had informed the agency about its plans as early as 2014.

He also noted that the Vienna-based UN body had encouraged the Arab kingdom to sign a comprehensive safeguards agreement, according to which the IAEA ensures that nuclear material is not being used for building nuclear weapons.

Saudi Arabia is a signatory to a weaker accord designed for countries with minimal quantities of nuclear material, the IAEA's so-called Small Quantities Protocol, which according to Amano, is fine only until Riyadh imports significant amounts.



"We have proposed to Saudi Arabia to rescind and replace it by the full-fledged comprehensive safeguards agreement," the IAEA chief said during a press conference in Washington.

Amano, however, noted that the Saudi authorities had not yet responded to the agency's request.

"They didn't say no, they didn't say yes, and they are now giving thoughts. We are waiting," he said, adding, "For now, they don't have the material, so there is no violation."

The IAEA head also revealed that Saudi

Arabia might bring in nuclear material "by the end of the year," although he cautioned that nuclear projects often get delayed.

Last month, U.S. Energy Secretary Rick Perry told a Senate hearing that his department had given approved six applications by U.S. companies to do nuclear work in the Arab kingdom.

This is while that Riyadh has not sought a so-called Section 123 Agreement to guarantee the peaceful use of nuclear technology. Abiding by this section is required under U.S. law before any transfer of sensitive material.

The 123 agreement, often referred to as Washington's "gold standard" for foreign civil nuclear cooperation, prevents the foreign entity from enriching uranium or reprocessing plutonium made in reactors - two routes to making nuclear weapons.

On Tuesday, a bipartisan group of American legislators raised concerns about the U.S. nuclear dealings with Saudi Arabia despite Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's "deeply troubling actions" and his not-so-secret penchant for acquiring nuclear weapons.

Negotiations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia for nuclear cooperation came to a halt under the administration of former President Barack Obama, after Riyadh refused to accept Washington's proposed standards.

Saudi Arabia has come under sharp criticism in the U.S. over the civilian death toll in its war against impoverished Yemen and for the gruesome murder and dismemberment of U.S.-based dissident writer Jamal Khashoggi in Istanbul back in October.

The Trump administration has so far ignored calls at home and abroad for it to confront bin Salman over the kingdom's murder of Khashoggi, which experts and members of both parties believe bin Salman had a hand in.

"If you cannot trust a regime with a bone-saw, you should not trust them with nuclear weapons," said Democratic Representative Brad Sherman to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo at a hearing last week.

(Source: Japan Times)

UN to Libya's Haftar: Halt and de-escalate advance on Tripoli



The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and the G7 are calling on troops loyal to Libya's renegade General Khalifa Haftar to "halt" their military advance on Tripoli as clashes near the capital prompted concerns of a wider escalation in the North African country.

Militias loyal to the UN-backed government in Tripoli say they captured more than 100 of Haftar's self-proclaimed Libyan National Army (LNA) fighters west of the capital.

Fighting was reported on Friday night into Saturday morning near Tripoli's international airport, about 30km south of the city.

After a closed-door emergency meeting, the UNSC warned that those responsible for reigniting the conflict would be held to account.

The UNSC "called on LNA forces to halt all military movements" and "on all forces to de-escalate military activity," said German Ambassador Christoph Heusgen, who holds the council presidency.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who was in the Libyan capital to help organize a conference aimed at hammering out a plan for elections, held a series of meetings on Thursday and Friday with senior officials including Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj and Haftar.

But he wrote on Twitter on Friday: "I leave Libya with a heavy heart and deeply concerned. I still hope it is possible to avoid a bloody confrontation in and around Tripoli."

Al Jazeera's Mike Hannah at the UN said Guterres's meeting with Haftar did not go well.

"Haftar reportedly said he was confident and defiant and the characterization of the meeting was that Haftar insisted he was not going to back down."

Rights group Human Rights Watch called on all forces to abide by the laws of war. "Armed groups loyal to both sides have a record of abusing civilians," it said in a statement on Saturday.

"Fighters led by General Khalifa Haftar, known as the Libyan National Army (LNA), have a well-documented record of indiscriminate attacks on civilians, summary executions of captured fighters, and arbitrary detention," it said.

"Militias affiliated with the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) and based in western Libya also have a record of abuses against civilians."

The military escalation threatens to undermine UN-led efforts to bring stability to a country that has for years been split between the internationally recognised GNA in Tripoli and a rival administration in the east allied to Haftar.

The 75-year-old former army officer's rise, including advances on strategic oil fields and port cities, has come on the back of support by countries such as neighbouring Egypt and the United Arab Emirates.

He has portrayed himself as the only solution for Libya's instability, but many in the country fear he could try to reinstate authoritarian rule.

■ Haftar's rise

After decades of exile in the United States, Haftar returned to Libya in 2011 to take part in the uprising against longtime ruler Muammar Gaddafi. In the years that followed Gaddafi's removal and killing, various armed groups vied for control in of the oil-rich country.

Amidst the chaos, Haftar launched in 2014 Operation Dignity to "cleanse" the country of what he called "terrorist" militias.

In July 2017, Haftar said his forces had seized Benghazi after a bloody three-year battle. Last year, the LNA gained control of Derna, the last bastion of opposition against Haftar in the east of the country.

Then, in January this year, he launched a new offensive into oil-rich Fezzan in Libya's southwest. The LNA made deals with the local tribes and overran the region without a major fight.

Haftar's "ultimate goal when he went into Fezzan was to take Tripoli," said Jalel Harchaoui, a research fellow at the Netherlands-based Clingendael Institute.

"You cannot rule Libya unless you control Tripoli. Because all the money, diplomatic missions and most of the population is there - everything is concentrated there."

Stunned by LNA's southern advance, the UN scrambled to mediate between Haftar and al-Sarraj, the head of the GNA. The pair met in Abu Dhabi in February, and the UN said they had agreed to hold elections by the end of the year.

In March, the UN's mission in Libya announced that a national conference would be held on April 14 to 16 to discuss a timetable for long-delayed elections and unify the country.

Harchaoui said Haftar agreed to the election plan to buy more time for his long-promised offensive on Tripoli.

"Haftar used UN diplomacy to make military progress. His aim is to change the facts on the ground to his political advantage." (Source: Al Jazeera)

UK issues passports without "European Union" on cover Brexit talks with Labor stall, delay request fails to convince EU

Britain has begun issuing passports with the words "European Union" removed from the front cover - despite Brexit being delayed and its political leaders deadlocked over how to extricate the country from the bloc.

The Interior Ministry said Saturday that a longstanding decision to start introducing passports without reference to the EU had gone ahead from March 30, the day after the original date for Brexit.

Talks between the British government and the main opposition Labour Party aimed at breaking the deadlock over Brexit continue, finance minister Philip Hammond said Saturday, adding that he expected to reach "some form of agreement."

Hammond said the government had no red lines in the talks.

Arriving for a meeting of European Union finance ministers in Bucharest, Hammond also said he was optimistic about the outcome of next Wednesday's EU summit on Brexit, as most EU states agreed that there was a need to delay Brexit, as requested by British Prime Minister Theresa May.

Britain's opposition Labor Party said on Friday that talks with the government on a last-ditch Brexit deal had made no progress, as EU leaders said Prime Minister Theresa May had not convinced them that they should let Britain delay its departure next week.

May wrote to Brussels asking European Union leaders to postpone Britain's exit from next Friday until June 30. But they have insisted that she must first show a viable plan to secure agreement on her divorce deal in the deadlocked parliament.

Labor, which she turned to reluctantly after failing three times to get her deal passed, said the government "has not offered real change or compromise" in three days of talks.

"We urge the prime minister to come forward with genuine changes to her deal," a statement said.

Labor Brexit spokesman Keir Starmer said his party wanted the talks to go on, and a spokesman for May's office said the government had "made serious proposals" in the talks and wanted them to continue over the weekend "in order to deliver a deal that is acceptable to both sides".

May badly needs evidence of a viable divorce strategy to persuade the other 27 EU leaders at a summit next Wednesday to grant a delay, preferably on her preferred departure date.

Any extension would require unanimous approval from the other EU countries, all weary of Britain's Brexit indecision, and could come with conditions.

"If we are not able to understand the reason why the UK is asking for an extension, we cannot give a positive answer," said French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire. German Justice Minister Katarina Barley tweeted: "This

playing for time must end."

Deep divisions in May's Conservative Party and government, and in Labor, have led to a marathon of votes in parliament, in which scenarios ranging from abandoning the EU with no transition period to cancelling Brexit have all been defeated.

Last Friday, May did the unthinkable by asking Labor to negotiate with her on a deal that might work for both - although some in Labor said she was luring the party into sharing responsibility for her failure.

■ Letter to Brussels

Hoping this would satisfy EU leaders, May wrote to EU summit chair Donald Tusk proposing a delay until June 30 at the latest, accepting that Britain might have to hold European Parliament elections on May 23, which she had hoped to avoid.

"The government will want to agree a timetable for ratification that allows the United Kingdom to withdraw from the European Union before 23 May, 2019, and therefore cancel the European Parliament elections, but will continue to make responsible preparations to hold the elections should this not prove possible," the letter said.

So far, there has been little appetite in Brussels for an extension that could create another cliff edge in three months. May asked two weeks ago for a delay until June 30, only to be turned down.

Tusk is planning to propose an extension of a year, which could also be shortened if Britain ratifies the withdrawal agreement, senior EU officials said.

"The only reasonable way out would be a long but flexible extension. I would call it a 'flexension'," one official said.

"It seems to be a good scenario for both sides, as it gives the UK all the necessary flexibility, while avoiding the need to meet every few weeks to further discuss Brexit extensions."

But Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said May's letter raised questions, adding: "We hope for more clarity from London before next Wednesday."

And France, which wants the EU to move on to other business including reforms proposed by President Emmanuel Macron, indicated it was not ready to accept any delay without a clear plan.

"If we are not able to understand the reason why the UK is asking for an extension, we cannot give a positive answer," Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire told reporters in Bucharest.

■ Second referendum?

Sterling fell against the U.S. dollar immediately after Labor's comments and stood 0.5 percent down on the day.

With time running out, it was not clear how Britain would avoid the abrupt "no-deal" departure that business leaders



in Britain and also neighboring Ireland say would cause huge disruption.

Germany, as one of those with most to lose from a sudden dislocation of trade, has been one of those most tolerant of Britain's turmoil.

Justice Minister Barley tweeted that "there can only be an extension with a clear direction", but also proposed a potential way out by adding: "This includes the question of a second referendum."

The idea of asking Britons - who voted by 52 percent to 48 to leave the EU three years ago - to confirm or reject any divorce deal has been gaining ground in Britain.

Yet May herself and many lawmakers in both main parties are strongly opposed, saying it would betray voters and undermine democracy, especially if it offered an option to stay in the EU. Both main parties made commitments after the referendum to deliver Brexit, but they never settled on a plan for how to leave or what future relationship to seek.

May long insisted that her plan - quitting all EU institutions, with a 21-month standstill period to negotiate a bespoke free trade deal - was the only viable one. But it still split her cabinet and infuriated the most Eurosceptic of her Conservatives.

Labor wants closer ties than May has sought, including a customs union, which she has so far ruled out. Many Labor members of parliament insist that any agreement must be put to a second public vote.

(Source: agencies)

South Africa downgrades Israel ties, demotes embassy to liaison office

South Africa has downgraded its relations with Israel, turning its diplomatic mission into a liaison office and not sending a new ambassador to Tel Aviv.

In a recent address to the South African Institute of International Affairs in Johannesburg, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Lindiwe Sisulu announced that "stage one has been completed" in lowering ties with the Israeli regime.

South Africa, she said, had demoted its Tel Aviv embassy to a liaison office with limited functionality and would not replace its envoy to Israel, who was recalled last May in protest at Israel's deadly crackdown on Gaza anti-occupation protests.

"Our Ambassador is back in South Africa and we will not be replacing him," Sisulu said at her speech, which was published on her office's website on Friday.

"Our liaison office in Tel Aviv will have no political mandate, no trade mandate and no development cooperation mandate. It will not be responsible for trade and commercial activities. The focus of the Liaison Office would be on consular [services] and the facilitation of people-to-people relations," she added.

In December 2017, South Africa's ruling African National Congress (ANC) party decided to downgrade the country's mission in Tel Aviv in an expression of "practical support" for the oppressed Palestinian people, warning Israel that it should pay the price for its "human rights abuses and violations of international law."

Last month, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa stressed his government's resolve to go ahead with ANC's decision.

Elsewhere in her address, Sisulu said that

South Africa's position on Israel had "very clearly" been expressed by the ruling party.

She further criticized the U.S. for vetoing any resolution against Israel at the United Nations Security Council.

Palestinian Ambassador to South Africa Hashem Dajani welcomed South Africa's anti-Israel move.

South Africa, he said, "represents values of dignity, freedom and justice, and is fully aware of the importance of its pioneering role in international solidarity with the oppressed people of the world, especially the Palestinian people."

Basem Naim, spokesman for the Gaza-based Hamas resistance movement, also thanked South Africa for the "steps it has taken to express its anger at the apartheid policy of the Israeli occupation state."

The Israeli foreign ministry, however, reacted to South Africa's decision only by saying that "We heard this and are examining the implications."

Meanwhile, South African online newspaper Daily Maverick reported that the second phase of the process to downgrade relations with Tel Aviv would likely involve removing the Israeli ambassador to South Africa from his position.

South Africa established close ties with the Israeli regime during the apartheid era, but after the collapse of the discriminatory system, the African country began to lean towards Palestine.

Most South Africans have historically supported the Palestinians due to similarities between the Israeli occupation and South Africa's apartheid rule.

(Source: Press TV)

France's says G-7 mostly agreed except on Iran, Israeli-Palestinian issue

Foreign ministers of the Group of Seven nations broadly agreed on issues during a two-day meeting, but were unable to bridge differences on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and how to deal with Iran, France's top diplomat said Saturday.

"Despite the crisp air of Dinard, we couldn't overcome some of our differences," Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said at the end of a two-day meeting in western France. "I think the talks were constructive and pleasant both in tone and in the fundamentals."

(Source: Reuters)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	186535.6
IFX	2390.64

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,131 rials
GBP	54,761 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$70.34/b
WTI	\$63.08/b
OPEC Basket	\$68.76/b
Gold	\$1,292.80/oz
Silver	\$15.19/oz
Platinum	\$904.60/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



Mohammadzadeh appointed deputy oil minister for research, technology

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** — Saeid Mohammadzadeh was appointed as the deputy oil minister for engineering, research and technology affairs, Shana reported.

Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh appointed Mohammadzadeh to the post, replacing Habibollah Bitaraf.

By entrusting Mohammadzadeh with the post, Zanganeh delegated a number of tasks to his new research deputy including developing technological relations with universities and research centers in the country, deepening and developing domestic manufacturing of parts and items used in the oil industry, exerting efforts to enhance national contracting capacities in the upstream sector, and updating the systems used for implementing oil industry projects and commissioning of the plans.

Mohammadzadeh was previously the managing director of Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAI).



Annual exports of sweets, chocolates can hit \$1b: official

E C O N O M Y **TEHRAN** — The annual exports of sweets and chocolates from Iran can reach \$1 billion, the secretary of Sweets, Chocolates and Grain Products Desk at Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), asserted.

Gholamreza Sabzali also said: "Through promotion of standards and quality as well as diversifying the products, we witnessed some noticeable growth in the exports of these products in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2019)." TPO Public Relations Department reported.

‘Confronting U.S. sanctions, a top priority for industry ministry’

Iranian Deputy Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade for Industrial Affairs Farshad Moqimi said that combatting the U.S. sanctions imposed on Iran still continues in the ministry seriously.



With the coordination made by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade and Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), effective steps have been taken in the field of providing of raw materials, he added.

He said the ministry faced various challenges in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2019), following the withdrawal of Trump from Iran's nuclear deal known as Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Under such circumstances, pertinent activities should be managed optimally especially in the field of provision of raw materials, he stated.

He placed special emphasis on the need to turn threats caused by sanctions into an opportunity and added, "despite sanctions overshadowing the country in textile and clothing sectors in particular, the country witnessed considerable production growth in these two sectors."

Elsewhere in his remarks, the deputy minister of industry referred to defining 99 projects in one of the giant car manufacturing companies and said, "these projects will bear fruit in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21, 2019)."

(Source: Mehr News Agency)

‘Iran to unveil production flourishing, budget reform plans in coming days’

E C O N O M Y **TEHRAN** — Head of Iran's Planning and Budget Organization Mohammad Bagher Nobakht announced about unveiling a production and employment flourishing plan as well as a plan for reforming the budget structure in the coming days.

"God willing, in the first days after the Norouz holiday, a project for development of

production and employment as well as a plan for reform of the budget structure, which have been prepared through the scientific efforts of my colleagues in the Planning and Budget Organization, will be unveiled in the media." He tweeted on Friday.

Also, in an Instagram post, the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Governor Abdolnaser Hemmati pointed to compensating the damages in the



flood-hit regions of the country as government's top priority in the beginning of the new Iranian calendar year.

He stressed the need for focusing on resilient economy in facing the pressures of the U.S. sanctions instead of falling into despair.

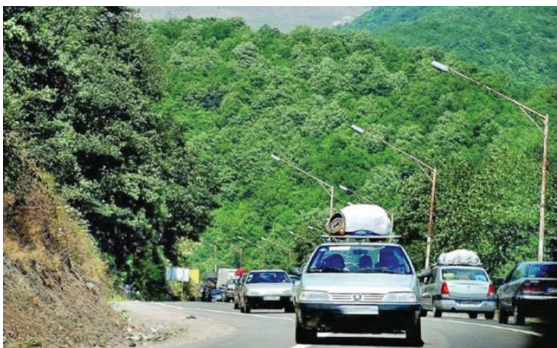
Gasoline consumption in Norouz holidays hits 2b liters

E C O N O M Y **TEHRAN** — Iran's gasoline consumption during the peak demand of the Norouz (Persian New Year) holidays (March 17 – April 5) reached near two billion liters, Tasnim news agency Reported.

According to the data released by April 3, the highest gasoline consumption in the country was reported for the last day of the year 1397 (Wednesday, March 20), in which a historical record of 135.8 million liters was marked.

In the middle of the Norouz holidays, continuous raining and flooding caused the road trips to reduce significantly and consequently gasoline consumption also fell, but by reaching the final days of the holiday, gasoline consumption increased by more than 100 million liters.

Iran's gasoline production has significantly increased



EU executive recommendations to guide future euro zone budget

The European Commission, with the approval of euro zone governments, will set priorities for the yet-to-be-created euro zone budget, EU finance ministers agreed on Friday, in an effort to balance national and EU powers over the new pool of money.

The discussion is the latest, small step in the euro zone's long-standing drive for deeper economic integration that is to make the 19 countries sharing one currency more resilient to economic crises in the future.

The 28 countries that now form the European Union already have a shared EU budget, that is set every seven years and equal to 1 percent of the bloc's gross national income.

But euro zone countries also want to have a separate euro zone budget, which would serve as a fiscal tool to intervene in the euro zone economy alongside the single monetary policy of the European Central Bank.

Detailed work on the construction of such a euro zone budget has been under way from the start of the year and is to finish in June by when the ministers will also have decided on the budget's size and sources of financing.

At the meeting on Friday, ministers discussed the governance of the budget — a complex issue because euro zone governments want to retain control over how the money would be spent. They agreed in December to provide "criteria and strategic guidance".

But they have also agreed that it must be part of the broader and bigger long-term EU budget and that they would determine its size "in the context of" the EU budget.

"There is broad support for making appropriate links between the budgetary instrument and ... the euro area recommendations," the chairman of euro zone finance ministers Mario Centeno told a news conference referring to recommendations



for the euro zone economy issued annually by the Commission.

But to balance the Commission's power, the recommendations have to be approved by euro zone finance ministers. The final text of the recommendations has sometimes changed in the past, when governments disagreed with Commission views.

"The euro area recommendations would set the direction and identify the areas of reform and investment that should be followed," one euro zone official close to the talks said.

"This would then be trickled down to national recommendations, and the budget would support initiatives, reforms and projects linked to these recommendations," he said.

"The euro area recommendations would need to be beefed up. They would be much more pointed and operational. Because there would be money at the end of that line," the official said.

Centeno said the strategic guidance role for the euro zone governments would have to be codified but there was still no consensus on how to do it best.

"Some prefer an Inter-Governmental Agreement, others prefer to develop legal arrangements within the EU law. We will come back to this issue next month," he said.

(Source: Reuters)

Hedge funds just posted their best quarter since 2009

Hedge funds are getting a pick-me-up from the stock market and rebounding from a harsh 2018 to their best quarterly performance in a decade.

Managers returned 5.9 percent on a fund-weighted basis, posting their strongest showing since the third quarter of 2009, according to Hedge Fund Research Inc. The long-short equity strategy led the pack, gaining 7.9 percent.

"For a lot of the strategies there is a dependency on the markets and the ongoing relatively benign economic environment that we live in," said Ian Haas, Neuberger Berman's head of quantitative and directional strategy research. "It does seem like a supportive environment for risk-taking."

While 2019 has marked a turnaround, investors could still get more bang for their buck via the broader equity market: The S&P 500 Index returned 14 percent through March, also marking its best quarter since 2009. The lagging performance may be due, in part, to managers' reticence to jump into stocks. The industry suffered its biggest annual loss last year since 2011, declining 4.8 percent on a fund-weighted basis as it got pummeled by market volatility.

Still, the revival has brought institutional investors flocking back to hedge funds as they seek market-beating returns and diversification, according to a JPMorgan Chase & Co. survey. About a third of respondents plan to boost allocations in 2019, up from 15 percent in 2018.

Bloomberg's preliminary data, released earlier, showed the industry posting a 4.9 percent first-quarter gain.

Several of the biggest hedge fund managers such as Citadel, Point72 Asset Management and Balyasny Asset Management have made money for investors, returning 6.4 percent, 4.8 percent



and 4.2 percent, respectively, according to people with knowledge of the matter. Citadel's Tactical Trading fund, which uses equity and quant strategies, was up 1.9 percent in March and 5.2 percent for the quarter.

Brahman Capital's long-short equity fund, Brahman Partners II Fund, gained 2.1 percent in March and 8.1 percent in the last three months, according to people with knowledge of the matter.

The Renaissance Institutional Equities Fund gained about 0.9 percent in March and 4.7 percent in the quarter, people said. That fund, known as RIEF, trades only U.S.-listed equities and is biased toward those that Renaissance's models expect to rise. Renaissance Institutional Diversified Alpha returned 1.7 percent last month and 1.4 percent for the quarter. Renaissance Institutional Diversified Global Equities, which employs a market-neutral strategy, climbed 1.8 percent in March, pushing its year-to-date gain to 2.2 percent.

Spokesmen for Brahman and Renaissance declined to comment.

Dan Loeb's Third Point Offshore Investors Ltd. fund returned about 8.8 percent through March. Bill Ackman's Pershing Square Holdings Ltd. jumped 37 percent.

(Source: Bloomberg)

French central bank chief calls for looser EU capital rules

France's top central banker has called for Brussels to allow EU subsidiaries of pan-European banks to have less capital, removing a hurdle that lenders view as a big barrier to cross-border banking acquisitions in the region.

François Villeroy de Galhau, Banque de France governor, said on Friday that European lawmakers could encourage more banking consolidation by loosening the rules on the capital buffers they must have. His comments come as the issue of banking consolidation has resurfaced in Europe — after almost a decade without major deals in the sector — prompted by merger talks between Deutsche Bank and Commerzbank in Germany.

Italy's UniCredit is preparing a rival bid for Commerzbank should the talks with Deutsche fall through.

"A useful step towards forming genuine pan-European banking groups could be to lower capital requirements of European subsidiaries, while safeguarding their financial position through credible cross-border guarantees provided by the parent company, which could be triggered both in normal times and in crisis situations," Villeroy de Galhau said in Bucharest on Friday.

"This would be based on European Union law and enforced by European Union authorities," added Mr Villeroy de Galhau, one of the leading candidates to succeed Mario Draghi as European Central Bank president later this year. More leeway from European authorities would make it more attractive for well capitalized European banks to acquire smaller or weaker rivals in other EU states. At present, bank subsidiaries must abide by globally agreed capital



rules, which supervisors believe has prevented some from taking advantage of having a strong parent and limited the consolidation in the sector during Europe's banking crisis.

Analysts welcomed the move. John Cronin, financials analyst at Goodbody, said: "I believe this would provide significant impetus towards cross-border consolidation in a European banking context."

Villeroy de Galhau indicated that less stringent capital rules would be warranted as more cross-border banking meant more risk-sharing among member states.

A waiver on those global capital rules has in the past garnered support from the ECB, which supervises the biggest Eurozone banks via its Single Supervisory Mechanism unit. "The ECB generally supports the introduction of the possibility for a competent authority to waive the application of prudential requirements on an individual basis to

a subsidiary whose head office is located in a member state different to that of its parent undertaking, which is consistent with the establishment of the SSM and the banking union," said Draghi in a legal opinion from November 2017.

But governments and supervisors from smaller EU countries have traditionally been reluctant to assume that subsidiaries on their territory will be able rely on parent companies for support in a crisis. They fear being left high and dry in a financial emergency — a risk highlighted by Lehman Brothers pulling funds out of its London subsidiary shortly before its 2008 collapse. These so-called "host" countries have fought tenaciously in Brussels to retain rights to ring fence capital and liquidity in the bank units that they oversee.

The ECB and others have argued that the creation of a Eurozone banking union renders such ringfencing outdated, given that banks are now supervised at European level. In response, some host countries say the banking union project remains incomplete. Supporters of efforts to further develop the banking union by creating a common scheme to guarantee bank deposits have argued that the measure would help reassure countries that are wary of giving up control.

Villeroy de Galhau's remarks were part of a broader push for the European authorities to take advantage of Brexit to create a more integrated financial market in the rest of the union. The Banque de France governor reiterated calls for the euro to become a more important global reserve currency.

(Source: Financial Times)

Optimism growing among oil traders on signs of a tightening market

➔ The Chinese have also echoed the optimism, with President Xi Jinping touting substantial progress, according to the Chinese state news agency Xinhua.

The two sides have been in talks since December trying to end a trade war that is hurting the global economy.

■ OPEC production

An S&P Global Platts survey on Friday showed that OPEC output in March was down 570,000 bpd from its February output level, an indication that the cartel's efforts in implementing production cuts are paying off well.

As reported, the 14-member group produced 30.23 million bpd in the mentioned month, the lowest in more than four years, with Venezuela contributing most to the decline.

As the cut deal frontier, Saudi Arabia cut its production by 280,000 bpd in March to 9.87 million which is the kingdom's lowest since February 2017.



In December 2018, OPEC and non-OPEC allies agreed to cut 1.2 million bpd in supplies through June, and the group is said to be

willing to see the deal extended when they meet June 25-26 in Vienna.

With all that said, it seems that the traders

are getting more and more optimistic about the future of the oil prices. However the temporary nature of most of the above mentioned factors should not be taken for granted.

Many believe that the conflicts in Libya would settle down soon and they won't affect the country's oil output as they are not currently doing so.

As for the U.S.-China trade war, despite all the handshakes and smiley faces, "there are still many pressing issues to be discussed."

In Venezuela, despite all the blackouts and U.S. pressures, the country was able to maintain relatively steady crude exports in March by drawing from storage, and this pattern could continue for few more months.

The increase in the number of U.S. oil rigs is yet another factor that the traders should be monitoring closely, since this week, the U.S. energy companies added 15 new rigs for first time in seven weeks.

Egypt to slash fuel subsidies as it nears end of IMF program



Egypt will remove subsidies on most energy products by June 15, it told the International Monetary Fund in a January letter released by the IMF on Saturday as part of a review of Cairo's three-year, \$12 billion loan program with the lender.

This will mean increasing the price to consumers of gasoline, diesel, kerosene and fuel oil, which are now at 85-90 percent of their international cost, said the letter, which is dated Jan. 27.

The letter from Egypt's finance minister and central bank governor was included in an IMF staff report dated Jan. 28 and published following the disbursement in February of the fifth out of six tranches of the loan.

The loan program began in 2016 and is tied to reforms that have included a sharp devaluation of the Egyptian pound and the introduction of a value-added tax. They have helped steady Egypt's economy but also put millions of Egyptians under increased economic strain.

Fuel prices have increased steadily over the past three years. LPG and fuel

oil used for electricity generation and bakeries are not included in the commitment to reaching full cost recovery through subsidy cuts, the letter said.

The government said in its letter that after starting to link less-used Octane 95 petrol to international prices - which it accomplished in April - it would introduce similar indexation mechanisms for other products in June, with the first price adjustments expected in mid-September.

The government noted it had also put in place a hedging mechanism to protect against shocks in oil and other commodities. In its review, however, the IMF "advised caution in using financial instruments with upfront costs that protect only temporarily against extreme price movements", referring to hedging.

In its letter, the government said it intended to reduce its general debt from a projected 86 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by the end of June to 72 percent by June 2023. Debt was equal to 93 percent of GDP in June 2018.

(Source: Reuters)

Fitch sees Brent crude at \$62.5/bbl in 2020 as economic woes bite



A faltering global economy may start eating into demand for oil as early as this year, pushing prices lower, Fitch Ratings' senior director Dmitry Marinchenko told Reuters in an interview.

He said that the rating agency expects global economic growth to slow to 2.8 percent in 2019-2020 from 3.2 percent in 2018.

"If the global growth slowdown becomes more pronounced, or even if recession materializes, then demand for oil could fall sharply, which is the main risk for global oil prices," he said.

Fitch Ratings sees 2019 oil prices averaging around \$65 per barrel, falling to \$62.50 in 2020 and \$57.50 by 2022. The price of Brent crude is currently testing \$70 per barrel, its highest this year, following cooperation between the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and other large oil producers led by Russia to cut supply.

U.S. sanctions against Iran and political and economic turmoil in Venezuela have also capped output.

The OPEC-led group agreed to cut their combined oil production by 1.2 million barrels per day for six months starting from January 1.

The next OPEC and non-OPEC meeting is expected to be held in June to discuss an extension of the supply cuts.

Marinchenko said the future of the deal would likely hinge on the situation in Venezuela and Iran. He said it was possible the size of the cuts could be adjusted.

"Oil production in Venezuela will continue to decline, the quotas will have to be revised."

Marinchenko said Fitch does not expect to change the credit rating of Azerbaijan's energy company SOCAR from BB+ in the next two years.

The rating is in line with Azerbaijan's sovereign rating, on which Fitch is due to give an update in July.

Marinchenko said Fitch expects Azerbaijan's oil production to rise by 2020 thanks to a boost in gas condensate output at the large Shah Deniz field.

(Source: Arab News)

OPEC March crude output falls 570,000 bpd to 30.23m bpd: survey

OPEC in March tightened the oil market considerably, slashing 570,000 bpd from its February output level, as Saudi Arabia continued to implement production cuts and Venezuela suffered from extensive power outages on top of U.S. sanctions, an S&P Global Platts survey found.

The 14-country block pumped 30.23 million bpd in the month, the lowest in more than four years, with crisis-hit Venezuela contributing most to the decline.

Once OPEC's third-largest crude producer years ago, Venezuela in March plummeted to 10th, with production falling to 740,000 bpd. That is the lowest in more than 16 years, when a crippling industry strike caused output to fall to 650,000 bpd in January 2003, according to Platts survey archives.

The country experienced at least 10 days of widespread power blackouts, shutting down its extra heavy crude upgraders, and state oil company PDVSA also exhausted its reserves of naphtha diluent by mid-month, according to status reports seen by Platts.

While Venezuela was able to maintain relatively steady crude exports in the month by drawing from storage, survey participants said they see little reason for optimism.

Many of the upgraders are expected to remain offline, the April 28 U.S. sanctions deadline for non-U.S. entities to wind down their transactions with PDVSA is rapidly approaching, and the continued deterioration in the country's infrastructure has likely led to some permanent loss of production capacity, analysts said.



■ OPEC overcompliance

Saudi Arabia, OPEC's largest producer by far, dropped its production by 280,000 bpd in March to 9.87 million bpd, the survey found. That is the kingdom's lowest since February 2017.

Saudi energy minister Khalid al-Falih has said the country aims to "lead by example" on OPEC's production cut agreement, which is aimed at draining global oil inventories and bolstering the market, despite pressure from U.S. President Donald Trump to keep prices low.

OPEC and 10 non-OPEC allies agreed in December to cut a collective 1.2 million bpd in supplies through June, and Falih has said he would like to see the deal extended when

the coalition meets June 25-26 in Vienna to maintain bullish momentum in the market.

Oil prices have risen almost 30 percent since the beginning of the year, briefly surpassing \$70/b on Thursday, largely due to the OPEC/non-OPEC production cuts. The agreement exempts Venezuela, Iran and Libya, and the 11 OPEC members with quotas under the deal achieved 124 percent compliance in March, up from 79 percent in February, primarily thanks to Saudi Arabia's overcompliance.

The kingdom's March production level was 440,000 bpd below its quota of 10.31 million bpd.

■ Iraq down, Iran steady

Iraq, OPEC's second largest producer,

moved closer to compliance with its output cap, as rough weather shut in some production and some voluntary cuts were made, according to the survey. Iraq pumped 4.57 million bpd in the month, a 100,000 bpd decline from February, though still above its quota of 4.51 million bpd.

Iran, which has been under U.S. sanctions since November, produced 2.69 million bpd in March, the survey found. Its output has held relatively steady the last few months, as sanctions waivers the U.S. granted to eight countries to continue purchasing Iranian oil have staved off declines.

The waivers are set to expire in early May, and the U.S. has not announced whether it will renew them.

Libya was the most significant gainer in March, according to the survey, with the restart of the Sharara field pushing the country's crude output up to 1.06 million bpd.

But the war-weary country looks set for another round of military escalation, with the self-styled Libyan National Army marching on the capital Tripoli late Thursday.

The Platts OPEC figures were compiled by surveying OPEC and oil industry officials, traders and analysts, as well as reviewing proprietary shipping data.

2019 output deal, which expires in June, exempts Iran, Libya and Venezuela. The estimate for Iraq includes volumes from semi-autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan. The next OPEC meeting will be on June 25, with the OPEC/non-OPEC meeting due the next day.

(Source: Platts)

Crude oil market rallies on fading fears of a glut

The oil market has all but forgotten last year's price crash. Money managers haven't been this optimistic about U.S. oil prices since early October, just before the crude market began a steep decline on fears of a global oversupply. Crude made a steady comeback this year and sentiment has climbed alongside it, with the net-long position rising for the sixth straight week in data posted on Friday.

West Texas Intermediate crude prices rallied almost 5 percent this week as OPEC stuck to output cuts and blackouts continued to sap Venezuelan production. While the economic outlook remains uncertain, there have been enough positive signs -- including encouraging U.S. jobs data -- to allay the worst fears about demand, said Nick Holmes, an analyst at Leawood, Kansas-based Tortoise.

"China has put on stimulus, the Fed is pretty much all-in dovish on interest rates and it seems like we could be near an end to the trade war," said Holmes, whose firm manages \$16 billion in energy investments. "A lot of the risks that people saw have abated here in 2019 and that's driving the market higher."

The net-long WTI position -- the difference between bets on higher prices and wagers on a decline -- climbed 2.8 percent to 244,807 futures and options contracts for the week ended April 2, according to the U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission. Long positions edged up by almost 1 percent, while shorts plunged by 10 percent.

"There's room for sentiment to expand without being completely stretched out -- but you're at the higher end of the range," said Rob Haworth, senior investment strategist at U.S. Bank Wealth Management in Seattle, which oversees \$164 billion. "I think there's a question about how far this sentiment can go."

(Source: Bloomberg)

Tokyo Gas, Shell sign LNG deal linked to coal pricing in rare move

Japan's Tokyo Gas said on Friday it has signed a deal with Royal Dutch Shell for the long-term supply of liquefied natural gas (LNG), partly using a coal-linked pricing formula in an unusual move for an Asian LNG buyer.

This is believed to be the first time a Japanese buyer is using a coal-based pricing index in an LNG contract, industry observers said.

The companies signed a heads of agreement for Tokyo Gas to buy 500,000 tonnes a year of LNG for 10 years from April 2020. Japan's second-biggest LNG buyer is stepping up its efforts to diversify its supply sources and reduce costs.

"As far as Tokyo Gas and Shell know, this is the first time a pricing formula linked with a coal index has been used with LNG contracts," a Tokyo Gas spokesman said.

A pricing formula based on coal indexation will be used for part of the supply, the spokesman said, while the rest will be priced off conventional gas- and oil-linked indexes. Tokyo Gas did not give the volumes to be done under each pricing method.

"With our long-term relationship and joint consideration, we were able to achieve an innovative agreement that would enhance further diversification of price indexation pursued by Tokyo Gas," Tokyo Gas Managing Executive Officer Kentaro Kimoto said in a statement.

In Asia, most long-term LNG contracts are linked to oil prices, while supply from the United States is typically priced off the Henry Hub Index for natural gas.

Earlier this week, however, two U.S.-based firms announced alternative pricing options for contracts being signed for their new projects, ahead of an expected flood of supplies hitting global markets this year.

The deal follows a series of innovations in LNG contracts announced at the LNG2019 conference in Shanghai, said Nicholas Browne, a Wood Mackenzie analyst.

"Coal remains the largest competitor to gas in the power sector in Asia. If the index is competitive, this could be an important step for enabling LNG and utilities to better compete with coal," Browne said.

As a gas and electricity provider trying to build its share in a competitive and liberalized power market, Tokyo Gas needs to compete with cheaper baseload coal-fired power, he said.

Tokyo Gas together with Japan's Idemitsu Kosan and Kyushu Electric Power said in January they had given up their plan to build a 2 gigawatt (GW) coal-fired power station in Chiba, citing economic reasons.

"This deal may help them compete with cheaper coal based generation even though they don't have much coal generation," Browne said.

Shell will be supplying LNG to Tokyo Gas from its global LNG portfolio, rather than from specific LNG projects.

(Source: Reuters)

Norway's \$1-trillion fund eyes unlisted renewable assets

Weeks after Norway's government proposed that the country's US\$1-trillion fund divest from pure exploration and production oil companies, the cabinet said on Friday that it will allow the world's biggest sovereign wealth fund to invest in unlisted renewable energy infrastructure.

"The Government is now allowing for the Government Pension Fund Global to be invested in unlisted renewable energy infrastructure. The investments shall be made within the scope of the special environment-related mandates only," the Norwegian government said in a statement.

Norway is also doubling the upper limit on unlisted green energy investments from US\$7 billion (60 billion Norwegian crowns) to US\$14 billion (120 billion crowns).

"The market for renewable energy is growing rapidly. A major part of the renewable energy investment opportunities is found in the unlisted market, especially in unlisted infrastructure projects. Expectations of significant investments going forward mean that this market is of interest to institutional investors such as the Government Pension Fund Global," according to the Norwegian government.

"We are not stipulating that the Fund shall be invested in unlisted renewable energy infrastructure, but are enabling Norges Bank to make such investments if deemed profitable," Norway's Finance Minister Siv Jensen said.

The world's largest sovereign wealth fund—created three decades ago to safeguard and manage Norway's oil wealth for future generations—made headlines last month, when the government proposed that the fund divest from oil and gas exploration companies.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Yes, there's a crisis on the border. And it's Trump's fault



By Alan Bersin, Nate Bruggeman and Ben Rohrbaugh

Donald Trump has made border security and immigration enforcement a rallying cry of his campaign and the centerpiece of his presidency. But now, as the effects of his immigration policies have become measurable, it is clear to us — three people who have worked on the issue in previous administrations — that Trump is the worst president for border security in the last 30 years.

The border is currently overwhelmed with increasing numbers of migrants, in particular Central American asylum seekers. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has reported that 66,450 persons were apprehended between the ports of entry in February, the highest monthly total in a decade. Projections for March are even worse — exceeding 100,000 — with experts concerned that monthly totals could exceed 150,000 in the coming months. CBP is reassigning officers from the ports of entry, which are critically understaffed, to help Border Patrol with the crush. CBP Commissioner Kevin McAleenan has said the immigration system on the border is at the “breaking point.” In response, the president threatened to close the border altogether to legal crossings, a threat he walked back on Thursday and replaced with a “one-year warning” to Mexico.

Despite the administration's attempts to shift blame for the chaos, make no mistake: It is Donald Trump himself who is responsible. Through misguided policies, political stunts and a failure of leadership, the president has created the conditions that allowed the asylum problem at the border to explode into a crisis. The solution to our current border troubles lies in reforming the U.S. asylum system and immigration courts and helping Central America address its challenges — not in a “big beautiful” wall or shutting down the border. Yet effective action on these issues has been missing. And the president has now so poisoned the political well with his approach that there is little hope of meaningful congressional action until after the next election. Unless the administration changes course, the immigration crisis will only continue to worsen.

In fiscal year 2017, the last year of the Obama administration and the first of Trump's, 303,916 migrants were arrested by the Border Patrol. This was the lowest level in more than three decades. The Clinton, Bush and Obama administrations had worked hard to tackle the problem of illegal migration through substantial increases in border security staffing, improvements in technology, innovations in strategy and improved security coordination and assistance to Mexico. Coupled with improved economic conditions in Mexico, these administrations were hugely successful in deterring and breaking the cycle of illegal crossing: Unlawful Mexican economic immigration, which had historically been the primary immigration enforcement issue at the border, dropped nearly 90 percent between 2000 and 2016.

■ Political asylum

But the nature of undocumented immigration to the U.S. has changed. Today, it is primarily driven not by Mexican economic migrants — and not by a flood of criminals, as Trump claims — but rather by large numbers of families and minors from Central America who are seeking political asylum. Although this issue first rose to public attention in 2014, the influx then was only a fraction of what it is today. The Department of Homeland Security estimates that triple the number of 2017 apprehensions—more than 900,000 — will occur at the southern border in 2019. Many of those will be migrants seeking asylum, and they will descend on a border and immigration court system ill-equipped to handle those claims.

Of course, the president did not create the conditions in Central America that have driven migrants north. But his obsession with the wall, along with a series of other misguided policies, have severely hampered the U.S. government's response to this flood. The wall has become a profound distraction and waste of time for policymakers and agency leadership as other solutions that would prove far more useful to our real immigration problems have gone neglected.

Virtually all of the desperate families from Central America who seek asylum, whether entitled to protection or not, are permitted to remain indefinitely in the United States while awaiting formal adjudication of their claims. These claims cannot be processed fairly, quickly and efficiently, as the immigration courts face a backlog of nearly a million cases. In fiscal year 2018, less than 15 percent of applicants from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador were granted asylum, but only 1.5 percent of Central American family units apprehended in 2017 have been deported. The rest have, so far, stayed. In other words, Trump, a president fixated on stopping illegal immigration, has presided over a dramatic increase in the numbers of undocumented immigrants living in the U.S.

It is a system that was almost designed to be exploited. Smugglers and migrant advocacy organizations like Pueblo Sin Fronteras are encouraging distressed families from Central America to travel north through Mexico, surrender to U.S. officials at the border and ask for political asylum. The ability to stay and work in the United States for years as their claims plod through the immigration court system is a powerful inducement to come here. Since the Trump administration has done so little to speed up the processing of claims, it is likely that these families will be staying in the U.S. for years. Indeed, the president's government shutdown over the border wall only worsened the immigration court backlog.

■ Illegal immigration

The president's wall is, in other words, unmoored from operational reality. A wall will not make Central America a better place to live. A wall will not stop asylum seekers from coming to the United States and being able to claim asylum. A wall will not address, let alone fix, the issues with America's asylum system and immigration courts. The president's attacks on Mexico and Central America, coupled with the lack of a coherent strategy for the region, have made harder the already difficult work of addressing the underlying drivers of illegal migration from Central America.

→13

What is next for Algeria after Bouteflika's resignation?

By Thomas Serres

On February 10, Algeria's President Abdelaziz Bouteflika - or those who have been speaking for him over the past six years - announced that he was running for a fifth mandate as head of state. It seemed that the incapacitated president was going to prevail once again, despite widespread popular discontent.

By April 2, everything had changed. After seven rounds of mass demonstrations, along with the daily mobilization of students, workers, activists and concerned citizens, Bouteflika has officially resigned. He will not finish his fourth mandate. It would be false and unfair to proclaim, as has the New York Times, that Bouteflika resigned under army pressure.

The people are responsible, not the military. A peaceful popular mobilization has put an end to the routine of government mediocrity, political absurdity and petty corruption.

The ruling coalition that controlled the state has slowly crumbled over the past couple of months. They failed as they used to govern: in a disorderly fashion, attached to their vested interests and without ever convincing the population with their mea culpa.

Members of the so-called Revolutionary Family, ruling parties, business owner associations, and trade unions progressively abandoned the president. Their compromised leaders couldn't cope with the discontent coming from within their ranks. Officers in the army, led by the chief of staff, Ahmed Gaid Salah, eventually joined the movement at the end of March.

■ Symbolic head of government

Yet, protesters are demanding much more. Bouteflika was the symbolic head of the ruling coalition, but the current movement seeks to uproot all of it. “Yetanahâw gâ'a,” an already legendary meme and one of the most iconic catchphrases of the past few months, means “they should all get taken away.” This is nothing short of a revolution.

After a decade-long civil war and twenty years of increasingly grotesque politics, the Algerian people want to renovate their republic. This implies a profound yet peaceful renewal of the political and socio-economic fabric of the country.

Conversely, the events of past few days (the appointment of a new technocratic government, Salah's public calls for Bouteflika's dismissal, France supporting the “continuation of democratic transition”) all display the same logic. They aim to channel popular impulses and attenuate the effects of this revolution to ensure the “continuity of the state.”

Protesters aim to save the state from those who endangered it with their mismanagement. Yet, ensuring the continuity of the state has also been a way for factions of the crumbling ruling coalition to preserve their interests.



After a decade-long civil war and twenty years of increasingly grotesque politics, the Algerian people want to renovate their republic. This implies a profound yet peaceful renewal of the political and socio-economic fabric of the country.

Among other tricks, this resulted in Machiavellian negotiations conducted by the presidency and former members of the secret services in order to convince former President Liamine Zeroul to lead the transition. As usual, and despite the civil yet firm injunction of the population, members of the ruling elite tried to neutralize the effects of political change.

Counter-revolutionary forces are still far from being defeated. This is notably the case with the army, which is now the most powerful institution in the country.

By hastening Bouteflika's resignation, the army's staff did not only echo popular demands. They also eliminated the last competing pole of power in the regime since the restructuring of the country's intelligence services in 2015. As it stands, the army chief is the most influential man in the country, and he will defend his interests and those of other high-ranking officers. Their interference in the unfolding crisis is inevitable. While Gaid Salah is largely compromised, the army still has a genuine political legitimacy.

Other fragments of the ruling coalition are also still relevant. Because political parties and other peripheral organizations are in disarray, the technocracy is more than ever in charge of the daily management of the country. The new government led by

Nouredine Bedoui is an assemblage of high-level public servants and technicians. These technocrats have remained pillars of the regime and navigated successive crises since the late 1980s.

■ Transition after Bouteflika

As for the two figures in charge of ensuring the transition after Bouteflika's resignation, they are both compromised members of the establishment. The current head of the constitutional council, Tayeb Belaiz, occupied key ministries (employment, justice, interior). His name surfaced during the Khalifa Bank corruption scandal, without juridical consequences. He was appointed by the presidency on February 11 2019, just a day after the announcement of Bouteflika's candidacy. The head of the Council of the Nation, Abdelkader Bensalah, is supposed to become head of state during a ninety days interim period. He has remained until the end a devoted supporter of Bouteflika, which is unlikely to appease the protesters.

While counter-revolutionary elements are still in control of the Algerian state, a couple of key issues will affect the outcome of the revolution. It remains to be seen whether political opposition forces will support popular mobilisation by proposing a coherent alternative to the bureaucratic-military apparatus. For the first time since the 1992 military coup, these opponents are in a position to

seize power.

After suffering from pervasive fragmentation and discredit, they have the difficult task of proving that Algerian politicians can be responsible and respectful of their constituents.

The second sensitive issue is the economic side of the revolution. As the judicial apparatus has turned its wrath against crony capitalists associated with the presidency, it seems that the systematic embezzlement and corruption that have undermined the country might finally be addressed.

Yet, these structural problems will not be solved by punishing a handful of businessmen, as powerful as they might be. These flaws are inherent to the Algerian state apparatus, and thus to those who are still in charge - namely, technocrats and high-ranking officers.

Moreover, economic justice cannot be limited to a mere struggle against corruption. The promise of redistribution and collective well-being inherited from decolonisation still has to be fulfilled.

In conclusion, the situation in Algeria is full of uncertainty. Peaceful revolutionaries face a well-entrenched bureaucratic-military apparatus, which has been channelling and derailing transitions for more than 30 years. Yet, contrary to the catastrophizing and paternalistic narrative characteristic of Western media, there are some reasons to be optimistic.

First, both sides have demonstrated their rejection of violence and their refusal to do anything that would lead to a repetition of the civil war. While there was no reason to doubt the pacifism of the population, it is important to notice that even members of the army have been reluctant to militarise the crisis.

Second, the patriotism of the movement is deeply rooted in the national political culture. The Algerian people, as sanctified when associated with the war of independence, have slowly resurfaced over the last decade. Political opponents of various stripes have shown their awareness of this evolution and have tried to overcome their divisions, beyond the fractures of the “Dark Decade”. In a platform released on March 19, they rejected any direct intervention of the army and expressed their attachment to a radical and peaceful change.

Finally, and most importantly, the Algerian people, and especially the youth, have proven to be politicized, organized and conscious of the stakes of the current crisis. They have regained their dignity by themselves, without the help of any foreign power or the mediation of any representative. Such an exemplary political performance will compel the future leaders of the country, whoever they might be, to meet the standards of their own people.

(Source: *aljazeera.com*)

Assange should not be extradited to the U.S.

By Leonid Bershidsky

Julian Assange's increasingly uncomfortable six-year stay at the Ecuadorian Embassy in London may be nearing an end: WikiLeaks, the organization he founded, says he may be pushed out within “hours or days.” The standoff has lasted long enough: Assange should be legally cleared or convicted — just not in the U.S.

When Assange leaves the embassy, he will probably be arrested immediately by the UK police on charges of jumping bail in 2010. That year, a court had ruled that he should be extradited to Sweden to face rape and sexual assault charges. Assange, however, said he feared the accusations were just a pretext for his eventual extradition to the U.S., where he might be tried for publishing state secrets. The fear of being handed over to the U.S. drove him to seek refuge at the Ecuadorian Embassy. The Swedish charges have been dropped but the fear remained, motivating Assange to stay in the embassy even after he'd worn out his welcome and his ability to communicate with the outside world was curtailed by the Ecuadorians.

If the UK police arrest him, an extradition process is highly likely. Last year, U.S. prosecutors accidentally revealed that an indictment had been issued against him under seal. That's standard procedure in cases where a suspect hasn't been arrested and U.S. authorities don't want that person to get suspicious. But in Assange's case, keeping the indictment secret no longer serves that purpose: He knows something is afoot, not least because Chelsea Manning, one of WikiLeaks' major whistleblowers, has been in jail since last month for refusing to testify in an Assange inquiry.

■ Indictment under seal

Whatever the U.S. authorities' reasons for keeping the indictment under seal, they'll be forced to disclose the charges against him when they ask the UK to extradite him, at least to the British extradition judge. In accordance with the two countries' extradition treaty, they'll need to show they have a reasonable suspicion against Assange.

The judge then will have a lot of discretion in how to proceed. Assange may walk, for example, if the judge decides the U.S. case against him is politically motivated. That could be a valid argument. On the one hand, the Democratic Party, which has a majority in the House of Representatives, has reasons to be sour at Assange for publishing its documents from the 2016 presidential campaign that apparently were stolen by Russian military intelligence. On the other hand, the Trump administration may be interested in going after



him to show that Donald Trump wasn't behind the leak or even grateful for it. An Assange trial in the U.S. would certainly be politically charged. But an extradition refusal on the ground of political charges would be a first in UK-U.S. relations.

The UK-U.S. extradition treaty, signed in 2003, gets a lot of criticism in the UK because, as then-Attorney General Dominic Grieve told a 2012 parliamentary hearing, “There is a lack of public confidence in the U.S. criminal justice system.”

Activists and politicians have called for amendments, demanding a higher evidentiary standard and more protection for people handed over to the U.S. But the treaty has withstood the criticism, and attempts by suspects to argue, for example, that the U.S. penitentiary system is so cruel as to violate European human rights protections have been struck down both by British courts and the European Court of Human Rights.

■ On human rights grounds

Still, the UK does occasionally refuse U.S. extradition requests. According to government evidence submitted to the UK Parliament, out of 106 such requests between 2007 and 2014, 14 were turned down, two of them on human

rights grounds.

The Assange case calls for another such refusal. If, as is likely, the U.S. wants the WikiLeaks founder for publishing stolen government secrets, Human Rights Watch General Counsel Dinah PoKempner expects him to be tried under the U.S. Espionage Act of 1917, which has no exemptions for those who reveal classified information in the public interest.

Assange isn't easy to defend. His actions during the 2016 U.S. election suggest a motivation different from public interest — namely, a vengeful desire to hurt Hillary Clinton. But most of the big leaks WikiLeaks has published meet any reasonable definition of public interest journalism, the kind that resulted in the publication of the Pentagon Papers or the Washington Post's reporting on Watergate. Article 6 of the European Convention of Human Rights stipulates the right to a fair trial, and there's an argument to be made that depriving Assange of the public interest defense would make his U.S. trial unfair.

A high-profile case like Assange's could be the occasion for Americans to argue out the conflict between national security and public interest — clearly, the 1971 Supreme Court ruling in the Pentagon Papers case hasn't laid it to rest. But perhaps dragging Assange to the U.S. so this can be argued out isn't quite fair to him, and it should be left up to European courts to decide whether he should be treated as a spy or an investigative journalist.

Though most of the leaks Assange's site published came from the U.S., a few European countries, including France and Switzerland, also were targeted. Even the UK could argue that some of the leaks exposed its secrets. Europe, where Assange's publications are not as politically sensitive as in the U.S., would probably be a fairer jurisdiction for his case. An extradition request from another European country or a UK case against Assange could help keep him out of U.S. hands while still letting an independent court consider the evidence for and against him.

If such a European court decides that WikiLeaks generally has worked in the public interest and not as a “non-state hostile intelligence service,” as Mike Pompeo dubbed it when he was director of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, that could create an opportunity for another U.S. fugitive, Edward Snowden, to leave Russia and find refuge somewhere in the European Union. The U.S. needs to legislate better whistleblower protections before it demands that people like Assange and Snowden face its courts.

(Source: *Bloomberg*)

Saudi has not really demonstrated nuclear transparency: Heinonen

1 → ■ Democrats raise concerns that the Trump administration aiding this effort would allow the Saudi regime access to “sensitive U.S. nuclear technology” that could in turn “allow Saudi Arabia to produce nuclear weapons that contribute to the proliferation of nuclear arms throughout an already unstable Middle East.” What is your opinion?

A: Nuclear energy is a dual use technology, which can contribute to the development goals of nations, but some aspects, uranium enrichment and spent fuel reprocessing, are technologies, which can in a fairly short time be turned to produce fissile material, enriched uranium and plutonium for nuclear weapons. States, which own such kind of capabilities, are nuclear threshold states that can change their nuclear intentions, and proceed to nuclear weapons when they see that their security concerns so require.

There are no economic and technical reasons today for a newcomer nuclear state to embark for uranium enrichment or reprocessing. There is no shortage of nuclear fuel services on the well-functioning global market in years to come. This is why we should support the policy of no reprocessing and uranium enrichment in the Middle East, which has enough security problems.

■ Do you think Trump administration will allow Saudi Arabia for enriching uranium and reprocessing of plutonium by itself?

A: In my view that is out of question. This is probably something where a bi-partisan agreement can be reached. An agreement, which includes restrictions to uranium enrichment and reprocessing.

■ The report alleges those involved in the planning were aiming to enrich themselves and possibly violated the Atomic Energy Act, a federal law that lays out the preconditions of any nuclear deals with another nation and requires Congressional approval. What is the



Saudi Arabia has not really demonstrated nuclear transparency, by concluding and ratifying, for example, the IAEA Additional Protocol. We have also not seen clear nuclear energy plans other than stating numbers of nuclear reactors to be build.

result of the confrontation of the congress and President Trump administration in this case?

A: The dilemma arises from the statements of the Saudi Arabian officials, who have stated that “what Iran gets, we will get” including uranium enrichment. The question is whether the U.S. can pursue Saudi Arabia to conclude a bilateral nuclear cooperation agreement similar to the one with the Emirates, where

the UAE foregoes uranium enrichment. The negotiations will be complicated due to that fact that other technology providers – Russia, The Republic of Korea or China – do not require such guarantees.

In May 2018, Trump unilaterally withdrew the U.S. from the Iran nuclear agreement. Trump logic for the withdrawal was Nuclear Non-Proliferation. But the transferring “sen-

sitive U.S. nuclear technology” that could in turn “allow Saudi Arabia to produce nuclear weapons that contribute to the proliferation of nuclear arms throughout an already unstable Middle East.” How can explain this contradiction?

There is no contradiction here. I have not seen any U.S. officials stating publicly that Saudi Arabia should have uranium enrichment or reprocessing. However, those understandings should be enshrined to a legally binding agreement between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia.

But there is more to that. Saudi Arabia has not really demonstrated nuclear transparency, by concluding and ratifying, for example, the IAEA Additional Protocol. We have also not seen clear nuclear energy plans other than stating numbers of nuclear reactors to be build. They have also not been open on their plans to construct research reactors. The statements of the Saudi authorities are also worrisome with regard to the technologies, which they may acquire.

I would have also expected from the IAEA a bit stronger scrutiny to the Saudi Arabian plans. It is true that the current safeguards agreement puts limitations to the IAEA activities in Saudi Arabia, but investigations and follow-ups on intentions of Saudi Arabia, in the light of the statements of its leadership, calls for a tighter monitoring using other tools such as analysis of open source information and satellite imagery. When the safeguards reports show that the IAEA expenditures for Saudi Arabia have in last five years been about same order of magnitude as spent, for example, for Vatican, some intensification of monitoring is required. If this is not done, concerns of countries regarding the true intentions of Saudi Arabia will prevail, and may contribute to a proliferation cascade in the region.

Biden’s troubles in the presidential election



1 → ■ Some U.S. sources believe Biden, despite the charges, does not intend to withdraw from participating in the 2020 presidential election. Obama’s vice presidential contender for the upcoming presidential election has been the most important election over the past 100 years.

As the Wall Street Journal reports, Biden has told his supporters that he plans to take part in the 2020 election. He has called on his supporters to help fund his campaign. Meanwhile, Biden has expressed concern that he will not be able to make millions of dollars for his campaign, like some Democratic candidates

Oman has intent to maintain mutually beneficial relations with Iran: Murphy



1 → A: The port deal with Oman is an example of the U.S. strategy to seek maximum flexibility for its deployments in potential crisis areas. It has had access to facilities in other member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council for several years but Oman’s geography provides the unique attraction of a port presence near to the Persian Gulf which is not subject to the choke point which the Strait of Hormuz constitutes.

■ Why Oman accept this deal on this time?

A: I am not familiar with the timing and the specifics of negotiations for this port deal but assume that once Oman had indicated it would consider such a deal, considerable time would have been required before it could be finalized. The issues involved in such agreements are always complicated.

■ How can Oman balance its foreign policy with Iran and U.S. under this deal?

A: Oman has long displayed skill in balancing its relationships in the area. Its leadership has not forgotten the help it received from Iran in confronting the domestic challenge to the Sultan’s regime during the time of the Shah. In recent times it has provided an indispensable setting for highly sensitive talks between Washington and Tehran on nuclear issues culminating in the JCPOA.

■ Will this deal impact on Oman relation with Iran?

A: I am confident that Oman has the capability and intent to maintain mutually beneficial relations with Iran.

‘People of the region yearn for democracy, human rights and social equality’

1 → The revolution, then, was a pivotal event, not only for Iran but for the whole world. And yet, after 40 years, the demands of the revolutionaries for “esteghlal” (freedom) have not been met. I think we can all agree on that, without any unnecessary hysteria. The people of the region yearn for democracy, human rights and social equality. The Islamic revolution spoke to those themes and made them realisable in Iran.

The Arab revolts galvanised these sentiments further and as we speak, mass protests in Algiers are spreading in what may become a second Arab spring. The point being that people want their freedoms from political control and authoritarianism. West Asia and North Africa remains the only region in the world, where the majority of countries are ruled in an authoritarian fashion. Other areas such as South America have moved from revolution to normalisation in a much more effective way.

Cubans, for instance, just had the opportunity to revise their constitution which they overwhelmingly voted for (see below). The constitutional amendments are substantial in terms of the rights that they grant. In Iran, such movements towards reconciliation will have to be systematically pursued in the near future as well.

■ What was the most important event in the North America and why?

A: The aforementioned constitutional vote in Cuba. It was adopted by 91% of Cubans and it has enshrined several fundamental laws: It limits the Cuban presidency to



two consecutive five-year terms, protects private property and foreign investment, pluralised the political system by reintroducing the position of Prime Minister and bans discrimination on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and disability. The brother of Fidel Castro, Raul Castro, was a big champion of this immensely important development in Cuba’s post-revolutionary history.

Cuba did it without compromising the independence of the country from interventions by external powers, in particular the Trump administration. In fact, the Cuban state seems by far more secure now, than it ever was. A rights-based approach to governance, political science teaches us, extend the

sovereignty of the state because it deepens its popular legitimacy.

■ What was the most important event in the Asia and why?

A: The further entrenchment of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) which is a proposed free trade agreement between the ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the six Asia-Pacific states with which ASEAN has existing free trade agreements. I consider this event pivotal because it further galvanises China’s march to a great power status and a major centre in an emergent multipolar international system. I expect that in the next Persian New Year the institutionalisation of the

RCEP will continue apace. If this free trade area will be realised, China will be at the centre of the most powerful economic zone in the world.

■ What was the most important event in the Europe and why?

A: For me the most important event in Europe was the death of Karl Lagerfeld who was from my home town Hamburg. He was a true genius - the last doyen of a generation of fashion designers that created a new form of aesthetics that will not reappear in this shape and form ever again.

■ Do you think that polarity of the international system will change in the near future?

A: We have entered a multipolar order

that will continue to develop away from the United States towards Asia and to a lesser extent Latin America. Russia, China and the European Union will entrench their positions as major poles in this newly constituted international system. The fate of Iran will depend on the ability of the ruling elites to serve as a model for surrounding states which will require freeing up the political and social system.

Vacancy Announcement

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Iran Office is seeking to fill the following vacant position:

1. Administration Officer

Main Responsibilities

- Managing the general administration work including accounting, procurement and IT issues.

Minimum Required Knowledge and Experience

- Job experience on general administration and accounting in international organizations in Iran
- Education: Minimum of Undergraduate (Bachelor) Degree
- Languages: Fluency in written and spoken Persian and English
- Other requirements: Must have basic know-how about IT troubleshooting and mobile telecommunication, standard PC skills (Microsoft WORD, EXCEL, PowerPoint etc.). Must have good character and cooperate with others. General knowledge about JICA and Japanese ODA (Official Development Assistance) is preferable. Must be able to handle multiple tasks.

Closing Date of CV Submission: 13 April 2019

All interested applicants should submit CV in English by Email:

ia_oso_rep@jica.go.jp

ONLY SHORTLISTED CANDIDATES WILL BE NOTIFIED

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Iran Office

6th Floor, 114 Kajabadi Street, Jordan, Tehran



“TENDER”

Tender for purchasing of the following items:

(Sheet & Reel)



- 34,250 mt “First class wood free high white offset printing paper in reel (70 gsm)
- 3,150 mt “Fully coated paperboard with white back for book covering (210 gsm)
- 700 mt fully coated wood free matte art paper (in sheet 130 gsm)
- 1000 mt “Super matte light weight coated mechanical offset printing paper in reel. (LWC) (60 gsm)
- 5,900 mt “First class wood free high white offset printing paper in sheet (70 gsm)

Offset CO. and Iran Textbook Printing & Publishing Co. intends to purchase the above-mentioned paper in one package or in four part , through a tender .

Interested participants may collect the said tender documents from below mentioned address as soon as possible and send the requested documents & samples up to Saturday,22/04/2019.

Address: Offset press Inc.
No.8, Ab-ali Rd., 4th Km.
Tehran – Iran Postal code: 1746853171
Tel: +98 21 77339093 – int. 230
Fax: +98 21 77339097
E-mail: info@offset.ir



Second Announcement			
 N.I.O.C 1398.45		 National Iranian Drilling Company	
Call for public tender (First/Second publish) Two- Stages (semi compressed) tender Subject of Tender: (Completion 7500 & 10000 psi)			
Tender descriptions:			
The Tender holder	Registration No. through nationalelectronic tendering system	Tender No. /Indent No.	Estimated value (Rial/Euro)
National Iranian Drilling Company	3185094	PP/IAZD/97/018 48-22-9522023	320,512,000,000
Qualitative evaluation of tenderers Method Based on minimum scoring (60) made in award criterion reflected in the tenderers' pre-qualification forms.			
1. The tenderers who have more than four (4) active contracts with NIDC are not allowed to attend in this tender. 2. The tenderers who have more than two (2) active contracts with same subject (exactly compliance with this subject) with NIDC are not allowed to attend in this tender.			
Purchasing & Submitting			
TenderDocumentDistribution by Company	The distribution of the documents will be started one day after the publishing of second advertisement and ended on the following tenth day thereof. Distribution Place A) Hall No. 316, 3th floor, Foreign Procurement Dept. (DRILLING PROJECTS), National Iranian Drilling Company, After Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel: 061341468222 B) jomhuri street , yaghma alley nice 8th building floor no : 04 room no 428 -tehran- iran . Tel. 02166700249 Submitting Method <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of ... Iranian Rials under account number 409 114804020491 (Shaba No. IR520100004001114004020491) in name of "NIDC Income Centralized Fund" issued by I.R. OF Iran Central Bank. Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents. 		
DocumentsReceivingMethod	Closing date	14 Days after the last time of Purchasing.	
	Address	H Hall NO 107, 1st floor, Tender committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel. +98 61 34148580 +98 61 34148569	
Tender Guarantee			
Value of guarantee	7,911,000,000 Rial/ 165,693 Euro		
Type of guarantee	* Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran -I- Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 409114804020491 (Shaba No. IR520100004001114004020491) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran. "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.		
Duration of credit & quotation	Tender Guarantee and quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration.		
(Name of department) More of this & other tenders are accessible by click on: www.nidc.ir http://sappir/nidc_pr			
تهران تایمز نوبت اول ۱۸/۱۱ نوبت دوم ۹/۱۱/۱۹			

Pars Diplomatic Real Estate

Apartment

Duplex Apt in Mahmoodeh
100 sq.m, 2 Bdrs., furn, green
yard, outdoor pool, parking
\$1600

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Elahieh
3th floor, 170 sq.m, 2 Bdrs.
fully furn, equipped kitchens
beautiful yard, nice view
\$1350

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Apt in Farmanieh
4th floor, 220 sq.m, 3 Bdrs furn,
elevator, storage
spj, parking
\$3000

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Saadat Abad
5th floor, 90 sq.m, 2 Bdrs.
fully furn, renovated
parking
\$1200

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Apt in Velenjak
1th floor, 180 sq.m, 2 Bdrs.
fully furn, equipped kitchen
spj, gym, billiard table
2 parking spots
\$2500

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in South Kamranieh
4th floor, 154 sq.m, 3 Bdrs.
fully furn, spj, laundry
storage, parking
\$2500

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Villa

Villa in Darband
triplex, 1800 sq.m land, 500 sq.m
built up, 5 Bdrs., unfurn outdoor
swimming, garden renovated,
parking, **\$9000**

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Duplex Villa in Zafaranieh
650 sq.m land, 650 sq.m built up
7 Bdrs. unfurn, nice garden
completely renovated, parking
Price: negotiable

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Villa in
North Sheykh Bahayi
triplex, 500 sq.m built up
3 Bdrs., fully furn, indoor Jacuzzi,
indoor swimming pool yard,
parking, **\$4000**

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Duplex Villa in Fereshteh
800 sq.m land, 600 sq.m built up, 4
Bdrs., unfurn, renovated
parking, yard, **\$5500**

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Duplex Villa in Jordan
1200 sq.m built up, 3700 sq.m
land, 6 Bdrs., servant quarter
2-side entrances
\$6500

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Villa in Aqdasiyeh
triplex, 750 sq.m built up
6 Bdrs., nice garden
outdoor swimming pool
servant quarter, parking
\$6500

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156



Holder of

ISO 9001:2008

ISO 10004:2012

ISO 10002:2014

From Oxford Cert Universal

**Best Consultation
Best Services, Best Result**

Intl. Department Manager "Tina 09128103205"

Tel: 22662452-8, Fax: 22667173

Hot Line: 28141

info@parsdiplomatic.com

www.parsdiplomatic.com

Building & Office

Office in Vanak Square
administrative office license
almost new, 6 floors, 6 units
1000 sq.m flat, 4 lines elevator
cafe shop, 10 parking spots
\$40 per sq.m

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Whole Building in Mahmoodeh
5 floors, each floor one apt
each apt 170 sq.m with 3 Bdrs.
unfurn, spj, 8 parking spots
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Modern Office in Jordan
administrative office license
brand new, 2th floor, 2 units
180 sq.m & 220 sq.m flat, modern
design, lobby, lots of parking
Price: negotiable

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Whole Building in Zafaranieh
brand new, 5 floors, 250 sq.m
spj, elevator, roof top
storage, 10 parking spots
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Whole Building in Zafar
brand new, 6 floors, 6 apts
1400 sq.m administrative office
license, 400 sq.m commercial flat
16 parking spots, **\$25000**

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Office in Valiasr
administrative office license
3 units, 102 sq.m, lots of parking
near Niayesh highway
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Ideal Offers

Villa in Sheykh Bahayi
triplex, 500 sq.m built up
3 Bdrs., outdoor swimming pool,
Jacuzzi, no over look
renovated, parking, **\$4000**

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Apt in Elahieh
4th floor, 150 sq.m, 3 Bdrs.
2 bath rooms, fully furn
balcony, swimming pool
Jacuzzi, elevator, billiard table
parking, **\$1700**

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Fereshteh
185 sq.m, 2 master room with one
room, furn, spj, parking **\$1700**

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Duplex Villa in Zafaranieh
560 sq.m, 4 Bdrs., unfurn
swimming pool, Jacuzzi
storage, parking, **\$6000**

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Qeytarieh
3th floor, 150 sq.m, 3 Bdrs.
furn, equipped kitchen, terrace
renovated, storage
parking, **\$1300**

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Office in Valiasr
from 250 sq.m up to 7000 sq.m
commercial office, ready for
renting to foreign companies
lobby, lots of parking
good access to highway
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

مالکین محترم

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

بهترین مشاوره، برترین سرویس، بالاترین رضایت

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

مالکین محترم

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

PARSIAN Real Estate

SHANON
Shanon_tari@yahoo.com
+989121907875
Tel : 88510081

Farmnieh (\$1800) 180sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p
S, J, balcony, & F.F

Tajrish Villa (\$4000) 1000sq.m, 5bdrs
Velenjak Villa (\$6000) 2000sq.m, 7bdrs
Jordan Villa (\$3000) 800sq.m, 4bdrs
All with S/p, S, J, & yard

Available Fully Furn Apts
Zaferanieh (\$2200) 4bdrs, & S/p
Cheitarieh (\$2500) 4bdrs, & S/p
Sa'adat abad (\$1500) 3bdrs, & S/p

Fereshteh bldg (\$8000)
3stoery bldg, total 12 bdrs
enough pkg lots, & F.F

Don't Waste Your Time

Visit our website to choose your desired rental Properties

www.DeltaHOME.ir
The Most Specialized Website for Foreigners

HOME
Real Estate
Member of DELTA Real Estate Group
(021) 88888865

Advertising Dept:
times1979@gmail.com

+9821 430 51 450
www.tehrantimes.com

TEHRAN TIMES

Iran's Leading
International Daily

Advertising Dept

Tel:
021 - 430 51 450

TEHRAN TIMES
Iran's Leading International Daily

ENGLISH PERSIAN GLOSSARY

واژه نامه اصطلاحات مطبوعات
انگلیسی - فارسی

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

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

For more information contact:

Tel: 021 - 430 51 450
times1979@gmail.com

Opening new autism centers on agenda

HEALTH **TEHRAN**—University of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences is going to open two autism centers in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21), announced the university's vice chancellor for medical care and rehabilitation.

Bijan Khorasani made the remarks on the occasion of World Autism Awareness Day on April 2, ISNA reported.

According to Khorasani, this year, the theme of World Autism Day is "Assistive Technologies, Active Participation", and the University of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation is determined to put this idea into practice as it has many untapped potentials.

The centers will employ teams of specialists consisting of the university's top professors and experts coming from psychology, speech therapy and social service departments and they will provide the autistic patients and their families with specialized help, said Khorasani, adding that the university also aims to be the top research center for autism



this year.

He went on to say that the university will support the researchers and technicians who develop new ideas and technologies for empowering autistic patients and it has established the very first "startup trigger" in the country for rehabilitation.

Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are a group of complex brain development disorders. This umbrella term covers conditions such as autism and Asperger syndrome. These disorders are characterized by difficulties in social interaction and communication and a restricted and repetitive repertoire of interests and activities.

World Health Organization estimates that 1 in 160 children has an autism spectrum disorder worldwide.

In mid-January, Mehdi Shadnoosh, head of the transplantation and treatment of diseases department at the Ministry of Health, announced that currently, some 8,000 people have been diagnosed with autism disorder in the country.



Iranian scientists produce advanced wound care dressing

1 → **TEBADERM** Collagen Matrix can be used for treatment of all types of wounds including the diabetic wounds, bed sores, type one and two burnings, injuries resulted by breastfeeding, high exudate chronic wounds and neuropathic wounds. It is also used for treatment of wounds caused by

rheumatoid arthritis, different types of cuts and lacerations, transplantation wounds as well as arterial wounds and venous ulcers.

The new dressing can reduce treatment costs and it is now ready for large scale production.

Does IVF raise cancer risk in children?

While pregnancies enabled by in vitro fertilisation (IVF) have faced more difficulties, with children born earlier and smaller, according to a new study, they may also raise risk of cancer in babies.

IVF is associated with birth defects and imprinting disorders. Because these conditions are associated with an increased risk of childhood cancer, many of which originate in utero, descriptions of cancers among children conceived via IVF are imperative, said researchers from the University of Minnesota in the US.



The study, published in JAMA Pediatrics journal, found that the overall cancer rate among IVF children was about 17 per cent higher than non-IVF children.

In addition, the rate of liver tumours was over 2.5 times higher among IVF children than naturally conceived children.

However, there was no difference in the rates of other cancers between the two groups.

"The most important takeaway from our research is that most childhood cancers are not more frequent in children conceived by IVF," said Logan Spector, Professor at the

University of Minnesota in the US.

"There may be an increased risk of one class of cancers in children. However, due to the nature of our study, we could not distinguish between IVF itself versus the parents' underlying infertility," he said.

The study consisted of 275,686 IVF children and 2,266,847 naturally conceived children.

While the study found a link between IVF and childhood cancer, it's important to note that this does not suggest IVF causes cancer.

(Source: Independent Online)

‘Even moderate alcohol consumption increases stroke risk’

Some research has suggested that drinking alcohol in moderation could have protective effects against stroke. However, a large cohort study in a Chinese population shows that this is not the case at all.

A large new cohort study emphasizes that any alcohol intake can increase the risk of stroke.

We know that alcohol consumption can impact our health in many ways, but some researchers have debated whether the amount and the frequency of consumption could have a bearing on whether drinking is better or worse for health.

Certain studies — such as one published in 2016 in the journal BMC Medicine — have even suggested that moderate alcohol consumption can have a protective effect against stroke.

However, other researchers have called such findings into question and decided to conduct their own investigation into this matter.

A new collaborative study — led by teams from Oxford University, in the United Kingdom, and Peking University, the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences, and the Peking Union Medical College, in Beijing, China — now shows that moderate drinking not only does not protect against cardiovascular events, it actually increases the risk of stroke.

These findings, which appear in the journal The Lancet, are based on the analysis of data collected from over 500,000 people in China.

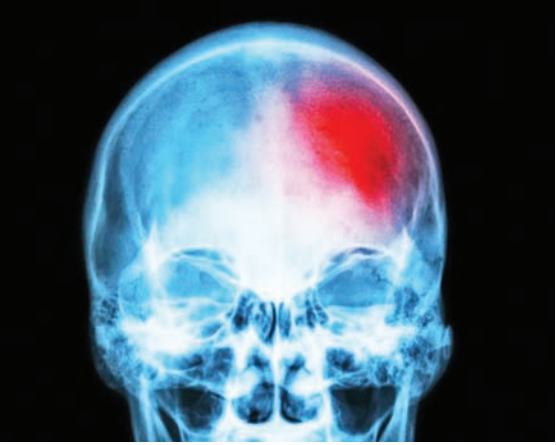
Why the focus on East Asian populations?

The researchers chose to focus on a Chinese population because numerous people of East Asian descent experience something called the "Asian flushing syndrome" — when they consume alcohol, their faces turn red (flushed) and assume a glow.

This, the authors explain in their paper, is because when people with this syndrome drink alcohol, their systems are unable to properly break down some of the components, due to certain genetic variants that are specific to these populations.

"The major clearance pathway for blood alcohol is that an alcohol dehydrogenase [...] oxidizes it to acetaldehyde, which causes discomfort at sufficient concentrations," the researchers write.

"An aldehyde dehydrogenase [...] then detoxifies the acetaldehyde, oxidizing it to acetate, which does not cause



discomfort," they continue, explaining that "Fast clearance of alcohol or, particularly, slow breakdown of acetaldehyde can cause individuals to limit alcohol intake."

While in people of European and African descent, the body breaks down acetaldehyde "quickly enough to maintain tolerably low concentrations in drinkers," the authors explain, in populations from East Asia, this does not happen because of the presence of a certain variant of the ALDH2 gene called rs671.

A variant of the ADH1B gene, rs1229984, which is just as common among people of East Asian descent, actually increases blood alcohol clearance rates, thus increasing tolerance to alcohol.

Moreover, according to the study's researchers, both of these genetic variants are associated with less alcohol consumption.

In the study, the researchers assessed information provided by 512,715 adults from China who enrolled in the China Kadoorie Biobank initiative, and their first step was to look at whether these participants had the rs671 or rs1229984 genetic variants.

As part of the China Kadoorie Biobank project, the participants also provided information regarding their drinking habits and agreed to provide health data over a follow-up period of 10 years.

Using all these data, the investigators who led the current study sought to find out what the relationship

actually was between moderate alcohol intake and the risk of stroke.

"Using genetics is a novel way to assess the health effects of alcohol and to sort out whether moderate drinking really is protective or whether it's slightly harmful," says senior epidemiologist and lecturer Iona Millwood, who co-led the study. "Our genetic analyses have helped us understand the cause and effect relationships," she observes.

Moderation does not protect against stroke

"In our population, men drink more than 20 times as much as women, so these two [genetic] variants have large absolute effects on alcohol intake only among men," the researchers write in their paper.

Among women, fewer than 2 percent reported having any alcohol in a given week, and when they did drink, they reported a considerably lower intake than men. Thus, the scientists looked at women as a viable control group in this study.

When looking at the male population, they found that those with the two genetic variants — which were tied to lower alcohol intake — also had a lower risk of high blood pressure and stroke.

After performing comparisons, the researchers concluded that alcohol intake — even in moderation — can increase the risk of ischemic stroke by as much as 35 percent for every four extra alcoholic drinks per day (or 280 grams of alcohol per week). "There are no protective effects of moderate alcohol intake against stroke," emphasizes co-senior author Prof. Zhengming Chen.

"Even moderate alcohol consumption increases the chances of having a stroke."

At the same time, he notes, "The findings for heart attack were less clear-cut, so we plan to collect more evidence."

Although the researchers acknowledge that they could not reproduce this study with a cohort of European descent, since these populations do not typically have the two genetic variants, they nevertheless argue that the current findings are relevant to all populations.

"Stroke is a major cause of death and disability," notes Prof. Liming Li, a co-senior author, who adds: "This large, collaborative study has shown that stroke rates are increased by alcohol. This should help inform personal choices and public health strategies."

(Source: Medical News Today)

How use of digital devices may influence obesity risk

Recent evidence suggests that people who multitask by switching frequently between digital devices may be more at risk of developing unhealthy eating habits and obesity.

The more gadgets that become available to us, the more we may feel tempted to explore these new technologies, but their constant claims on our attention could end up harming our health.

At home and in the workplace, various technologies compete for our attention: Comput-

ers, smartphones, tablets, and smartwatches all urge us to prioritize different tasks and rewards with their push notifications and the appeal of social media.

And even when we sit down at the dinner table with our partners or catch up over coffee with a friend, some of us may feel tempted to whip out our phones and check for new likes and messages on our various media accounts, switching from one app to the next.

According to a new study — from Rice

University, in Houston, TX, Dartmouth College, in Hanover, NH, and The Ohio State University, in Columbus — people who often switch between forms of digital media are more likely to be overweight or have obesity and to have poorer self-control.

"Increased exposure to phones, tablets, and other portable devices has been one of the most significant changes to our environments in the past few decades, and this occurred during a period in which obesity

rates also climbed in many places," says lead researcher Richard Lopez, Ph.D.

"So, we wanted to conduct this research to determine whether links exist between obesity and abuse of digital devices — as captured by people's tendency to engage in media multitasking," he explains.

The researchers report their findings in a study paper that appears in the journal Brain Imaging and Behavior.

(Source: Medical News Today)

No communicable diseases in flood-stricken areas

HEALTH **TEHRAN**—No communicable diseases have been spotted in areas hit by the flood, all around the country, announced the director of Communicable Diseases Department at the Ministry of Health.



Following heavy rainfalls in the country particularly in provinces of Golestan, Mazandaran, Lorestan, and Khuzestan as well as other provinces in western, southwestern, and northeastern Iran severe flood struck many cities and villages.

According to Mohammad Mahdi Guya, all flood-stricken areas are under complete supervision, IRIB reported on Monday.

Guya further noted that water and food sources in villages hit by the flood are normally at risk of getting contaminated, so it is highly important to take necessary actions to prevent the transmission of diseases from such sources.

Is the ‘sugar rush’ a myth?

It is common knowledge that consuming a large quantity of sugar can give you a physical and psychological high. A recent analysis concludes that, in fact, the reverse might be true.

Does sugar really give us a psychological boost? It will have escaped nobody's attention that sugar consumption across the United States has skyrocketed.

In particular, sugar-sweetened soft drinks have taken off.

From the late 1970s to the early 2000s, energy intake from sugary drinks increased by 135 percent.

A study using data that researchers collected during 1988–1994 and 1999–2000 found that the number one contributor of energy intake for both periods was soft drinks.

Although the causes of obesity are complex, it is not a stretch to imagine that sugar-sweetened beverages play a significant role.

Adverts for sugar-sweetened drinks often infer that they will boost mood and combat fatigue. This claim is likely to influence buyers, so understanding how accurate these claims are is important.

Chasing the buzz

Recently, a number of researchers have looked in more detail at the relationship between sugar and mental health. One study, as an example, concludes that sugar intake seems to harm long-term psychological health.

These types of investigation have reignited public interest in the cognitive effects of sugar intake. However, the results of the research to date are far from conclusive.

A group of researchers recently carried out a meta-analysis with the aim of understanding how acute sugar intake affects mood. The authors explain why they decided to investigate:

"Interestingly, despite researchers not having reached a consensus regarding the exact effects of sugar on mood, it seems that the public strongly believes in the idea that sugar improves mood [...] and increases activity levels (especially in children)."

Contrary to popular belief, the meta-analysis found no evidence of any changes in mood at any of the time points following carbohydrate ingestion. The authors explain:

"In fact, [sugar] consumption was related to decreased alertness and higher levels of fatigue within the first hour post-ingestion."

(source: medical news today)

Inhaling sugar could be sweet way to tackle lung infections, researchers find

Inhaling sugar could be a sweet way to tackle lung infections, new research suggests.

Scientists made the discovery while investigating the impact of glucose on respiratory immune system cells.

They found that blocking sugar-sensitive "receptor" proteins could dampen the inflammation that plays a key role in allergy, asthma, and response to parasites.

But the research had an intriguing flip side — the idea that breathing in sugar might stimulate the lung immune system to fight off infection.

"It is possible that provision of glucose could increase inflammation to help protect against some lung infections," lead scientist Professor Andrew MacDonald, from the University of Manchester, said. "It's reasonable to suggest that short-term inhalation therapy might one day work as such a treatment."

How sugar might be inhaled is not made clear in the study, published in the journal Nature Immunology.

Theoretically sugar could be "snorted" as a powder, but not "vaped". When a sugar solution is heated the water evaporates while the sugar crystallises.

The study in mice looked at specialised white blood cells called macrophages. These act as immune system "vacuum cleaners", removing harmful organisms and debris.

The Manchester team found that macrophages in the lungs need the right level of glucose "fuel" in order to function properly. Too much sugar stimulation led to inflammation of the type often associated with chronic conditions such as asthma.

Lung inflammation is also linked to the potentially deadly effects of parasitic worm infections, a huge problem in Africa and Asia.

The research suggests that blocking sugar receptors on lung macrophages could help suppress such diseases.

On the other hand, stimulating the cells with more sugar might help the immune system fight off bronchial infections responsible for coughing fits and pneumonia.

Prof MacDonald added: "Respiratory illnesses cause terrible suffering in both the developing and developed world. Hundreds of people are admitted to hospital every day in the UK with asthma attacks, while potentially deadly parasitic infections in the lungs are endemic across much of Africa and Asia. The idea that modifying glucose levels in the lungs could one day be a critical factor in treatment of these conditions is tremendously exciting. "Clearly we now need to study the impact of glucose on human lung macrophages."

(Source: The Independent)

Fossil of ancient four-legged whale found in Peru

The fossil of a 43-million-year-old whale with four legs, webbed feet and hooves has been discovered in Peru.

Palaeontologists believe the marine mammal's four-meter-long (13 ft) body was adapted to swim and walk on land.

With four limbs capable of carrying its weight and a powerful tail, the semi-aquatic whale has been compared to an otter or a beaver.

Researchers believe the discovery could shed light on the evolution of the whale and how it spread.

"This is the most complete specimen ever found for a four-legged whale outside of India and Pakistan," Dr Olivier Lambert, a scientist at the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences and co-author of the study, said.

It was found in marine sediments 1km (0.6 miles) inland from Peru's Pacific coast, at Playa Media Luna.

The location has piqued researchers' interest as the first whales are thought to have first evolved in South Asia around 50 million years ago.

As their bodies became better suited to water, they migrated further afield to North Africa and North America, where fossils have been found.

The latest discovery suggests early whales managed to swim there from South America.

"Whales are this iconic example of evolution," Travis Park, an ancient whale researcher at the Natural History Museum in London, said.

"They went from small hoofed mammals to the blue whale we have today. It's so interesting to see how they conquered the oceans."

An international team of palaeontologists from Peru, France, Italy, the Netherlands, and Belgium excavated the fossil in 2011.

They have named it Peregocetus pacificus, meaning "the travelling whale that reached the Pacific".

(Source: BBC)

Boy, 8, found after leaving home to 'travel the world'

An eight-year-old boy from the city of Astrakhan in southern Russia has won social media fame after setting off on an around-the-world trip.

The boy's mother contacted the police after finding a note from her son saying he had left to "travel around the world".

A few hours later, a search team found him walking down a street equipped with encyclopaedias, a toy, money from his piggy bank and a banana, the Russian Interior Ministry reported on its official website.

The young explorer told his rescuers that he was already tired from his trip and wanted to rest. By that point he had travelled on three different buses before continuing on foot.

News of his exploits were widely shared on social media where many users admired the boy's ambition.

"An eight-year-old boy from Astrakhan undertakes a round-the-world-trip by foot. Whereas I complain when I have to travel across town," one Twitter user wrote.

"[I] respect his willingness to get the hell out of Astrakhan," another joked.

The boy also caught the attention of a private language school that offered via Twitter to "teach the young explorer from Astrakhan English for free for a full year".

The viral story led some to recount how they had nearly embarked on "trips around the world" as kids.

"I also left a similar note when I was a kid. But before the journey, I decided to lay down for a bit to gain strength and fell asleep. In the end, I wasn't allowed to go," one user wrote.

(Source: BBC)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Classical Weimar

In the late 18th and early 19th century the small Thuringian town of Weimar witnessed a remarkable cultural flowering, attracting many writers and scholars, notably Goethe (1749-1832) and Schiller (1759-1805). This development is reflected in the high quality of many buildings and parks in the surrounding area.

Weimar is a city in the federal state of Thuringia, Germany.



The Goethe and Schiller Monument in front of the National Theatre, Classical Weimar

It was in the lifetime of Duchess Anna Amalia (1739-1809) that Weimar's Classical period began. She appointed the poet Christoph Martin Wieland (1733-1813) as tutor to her sons in 1772. It was after Carl August (1757-1828) had succeeded to the Duchy that Johann Wolfgang Goethe settled in the town (1775).

Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) came to Weimar in the following year. The high point of the town's cultural influence resulted from the creative relationship between Goethe and Friedrich Schiller that began in 1794 and was intensified when Schiller moved to Weimar in 1799.

The World Heritage properties comprises twelve separate buildings or ensembles: Goethe's House and Goethe's Garden and Garden House; Schiller's House; Herder Church, Herder House and Old High School; Residence Castle and Ensemble Bastille; Dowager's Palace (Wittumspalais); Duchess Anna Amalia Library; Park on the Ilm with the Roman House; Belvedere Castle and Park with Orangery; Ettersburg Castle and Park; Tiefurt Castle and Park; and Historic Cemetery with Princes' Tomb.

(Source: UNESCO)

Over 74m overnight stays recorded across Iran in Noruz

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — Iranians made over 74 million overnight stays during the two-week New Year (Noruz) holidays, starting March 21, CHTN reported.

Some 74 million and 300 overnight stays have been recorded based on data compiled by the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, CHHTO deputy for tourism Vali Teymouri announced on Friday.

On average, 18 million people have traveled throughout Noruz, which shows a six percent year-on-year increase, he said.

Iranians make hundreds of thousands of

domestic trips during the New Year holidays, when most businesses and workplaces are closed, as are schools.

Earlier in March, CHHTO Director Ali-Asghar Mounesan estimated that domestic trips would grow by 20 percent over the New Year holidays.

The country hosts some of the world's oldest cultural monuments, including 22 UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Ancient bazaars, museums, mosques, monuments, gardens, historical sites, rich natural and rural landscapes are amongst its most popular destinations.



Ground broken for enormous healthcare complex in Qeshm

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — Construction of a giant healthcare complex began on Thursday with a ground-breaking ceremony in Iran's southern Qeshm Island, ISNA reported.

"This project could enhance health (and medical) tourism capacity of the country by two fold," Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs Masood Soltanifar said, speaking on the sidelines of the ceremony.

An indigenous investor and 75 medical specialists are shareholders of the multidimensional project, which is locally known as "Qeshm healthcare village", the report said.

"Currently, Iran hosts some 500 to 600 thousands of people who come from neighboring countries per annum for medical treatments. And, proximity of Qeshm to Persian Gulf littoral states could double the number...", Soltanifar explained.

The project is being constructed on a land area of 122 thousand square meters, in three phases of medical, tourist and leisure facilities.



Masood Soltanifar (R) addresses a ground-breaking ceremony in Qeshm Island, April 4, 2019.

The official data shows that foreign patients are drawn by affordable treatments and high quality of

'U.S. sanctions failed to lessen foreign arrivals to Iran'



TOURISM **TEHRAN** — A senior Iranian tourism official has said that U.S.-led sanctions, targeting Iran's economy, has failed to lessen foreign arrivals to the Islamic Republic.

U.S. sanctions have been ineffective in tourism industry of Iran, Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization Deputy Director Vali Teymouri said on Thursday.

"The number of tourists visiting Iran has been unprecedented during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20)," Teymouri said in an interview with IRNA.

The official also referred to adopting

Tabriz as tourism capital of Iran by Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in 2018, saying various national and international events were held in Tabriz last year.

The OIC chooses a city as tourism capital every year, he added. Meanwhile, the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) adopted Hamedan as Asian countries' tourism capital, he said.

The official said that decrease in Iran national currency value has made Iran tour packages more competitive, adding that over seven million tourists visited Iran during the last Iranian calendar year.

Drents Museum extends Tehran show due to popular demand



HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — A landmark Dutch show in Tehran, loaned by the Drents Museum, has been extended for several months as it has been well received by cultural aficionados and museumgoers, Mehr reported.

The show, which was supposed to end on April 6, showcases 331 objects including stone tools, jewelry, and natural human mummies in three sections of archeology, pottery, and paintings, the latter is dedicated to artworks of the 18th to the 20th centuries.

A specific date has not been cited for

the show's termination, however, it is expected to be running through September at the National Museum of Iran in downtown Tehran.

Located in Assen, the Drents Museum, in return, was showcasing some 200 Iranian antique items in an exhibit titled "Iran – Cradle of Civilization". The exhibit was running from June to November 2018.

"Iran, Cradle of Civilization" is now on show at the public at the Archaeological Museum of Alicante (MARQ) in southeastern Spain, running from March 14 to Sept. 1.

Travel longer, cheaper and better: hostels for beginners

By Geoffrey Morrison

Hostels are the best way to travel cheaply all over the world. Here are some tips if you've never stayed in one, or worse, have the wrong idea of what a hostel is like.

What comes to mind when you hear the word "hostel"? A gaggle of 20-somethings on a weeklong bender? Smelly hippie-types barefoot hiking around the world? A movie series that managed to combine enough torture and grunge to scar a generation?

What if I told you that for the majority of the last five years I've traveled all over the world, and in that time stayed at some of the most incredible places... that just happened to be hostels? That I've met dear friends and adventurous companions, all while paying a fraction of what a hotel would charge? Hostels aren't what you think, at least, not anymore. While every hostel is different, I've stayed in over 100 across six continents and feel comfortable offering some general observations.

What you'll find in today's hostels

In the most general terms, a hostel is just like a hotel, except you usually have to share a bathroom. For the lowest room rates, you'll also share a room. Additionally, most hostels have a kitchen and a lounge. The most common dorm, or shared room, has 4 beds, usually in the form of two bunk beds. Most hostels will have rooms with more beds that are cheaper per night, and rooms with fewer beds for slightly more money per night. Only hostels in the most touristy areas will have rooms with a dozen beds or more.

The more people in a room, the lower the rates, but it's just by a few dollars a night. Unless your budget is very tight,

a smaller room will generally be quieter and worth the small premium. Most hostels also have private rooms, which are their most expensive rooms, but still usually cheaper than a hotel. These can be good for couples, families, or even just an individual looking for a quiet night's sleep. In addition to the bed, sheets and a pillow, you'll nearly always have a locker to hold your bags or valuables. Just like a hotel, almost every hostel locks their doors at night, and has keys, cards or codes required to access both the hostel and your room.

Some hostels have "en-suite" rooms, as in there's a bathroom attached to the room, like you'd find in a hotel, just shared with the people staying in that room. Personally, I'm not a big fan. Usually that means you're all fighting for that one bathroom all at the same time. Plus, if someone creates an odorous mess (I'm talking about a deluge of Axe body spray, obviously), then the whole room will smell like that too.

Very, very rarely is there an upper age limit at a hostel. At 40 I'm almost never the oldest, although the average age is younger. Almost all, however, have a lower age limit. Travelers under 18 usually can't stay in dorm rooms. Nearly every hostel will have women-only dorms available, though the majority of rooms are coed.

How to find and book a good hostel

Just like hotels, hostels have review and booking websites to help you find where to stay. Hostelworld and Hostelz are two of the big ones. These feature reviews from recent travelers, lists of amenities, and most importantly, pictures.

The pictures tell a story, directly and indirectly. Sure, you get to see what the hostel looks like, in a best-case "we're having photographs taken today" fashion, but they'll also give

you an idea what the hostel is about. Is every photo a bunch of people drinking? Party hostel. Are there lots of photos of people reading or playing board games? Probably chill and relaxed. These sometimes go beyond the description and inform you what staying there will be like.

Since you'll likely be sharing the space, be extra aware of your person and your belongings. For example, don't eat chips at 1 a.m. Don't leave your durian or Limburger or lutefisk sandwich on your bed. Also, and this is a personal pet peeve, don't use plastic bags in your luggage. The loudest sound in the universe is someone packing their belongings into plastic bags at 5 a.m.

But my biggest advice? Say hello and introduce yourself. Most people in hostels are traveling alone. Break the tension with a smile and a handshake. After all, you'll be living with these folks for a night or more. Who knows, you might even make a new friend. I sure have. As an inveterate introvert and part-time misanthrope, no one was more surprised than I to find that most travelers are good people. Many are amazing and well worth meeting.

Hostels are not perfect, and like hotels will vary considerably region to region. There is an adjustment, of course, needed to sleep next to strangers. But for that adjustment and lack of perfection, you'll be able to travel longer and cheaper. Especially if you're considering slumming in a cheap, possibly questionable hotel instead. I've stayed in bad hotels and bad hostels, and the latter is far easier to take when it costs a fraction of what a cheap hotel costs.

Oh, and the Wi-Fi is almost always free. Can't say that about hotels.

(Source: The New York Times)

Invasive birds play key ecosystem role on Oahu, research team finds

Something unusual has happened on the Hawaiian island of Oahu, where native birds have almost totally been replaced by invasive species.

In an unprecedented finding, researchers have discovered that the newcomers are now the only birds dispersing seeds across the island, and are thus now playing an essential role in the local ecosystem, according to a study published in the *Journal Science Advances*.

The authors of the study — representing several U.S. institutions — say that their results demonstrate how ecosystems in which introduced or invasive species dominate can effectively function in much the same way as those where native species are more prevalent.

The “Hawaiian Islands are known as both the ‘extinction and invasive species capitals of the world,’” ecologist Jeferson Vizenin-Bugoni, lead author of the study from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, told *Newsweek*. “Nearly all of (Oahu’s) native fruit-eating animals are extinct and seed dispersal — an essential process to maintain ecosystem functioning — is almost entirely dependent on a handful of introduced vertebrate dispersers, nearly all of which are birds.

■ Native plants and birds

“This is a sad history of the decline of native plants and birds but at the same time, Oahu offers an amazing opportunity to understand and anticipate what other ecosystems on Earth may experience if human-caused extinctions and biological invasions continue to increase,” he said.

“We decided to study Oahu because there is no other environment like Hawaii,” Corey Tarwater, another author of the study, from the University of Wyoming, told *Newsweek*.



“You have this isolated archipelago that is more than 1,800 miles from the nearest continental land mass and is home to many endemic species.”

“Despite representing only 0.2 percent of the land area of the U.S., almost one-third of the species on the U.S. Endangered and

Threatened Species list are in Hawaii,” she said. “Then you have introduced species from almost every continent and this mix of native species and non-native species from all over are interacting with each other and forming new communities.”

Previous research has shown that the inter-

In an unprecedented finding, researchers have discovered that the newcomers are now the only birds dispersing seeds across the island, and are thus now playing an essential role in the local ecosystem, according to a study.

actions between plants and animals in these “ecological communities” are particularly sensitive to invasive species or extinctions. However, this kind of research has tended to focus on areas dominated by native species, where these interactions have co-evolved over long periods of time.

■ The human influence

To address this lack of knowledge in a world where human influence is seemingly ubiquitous, the researchers investigated how birds dispersed seeds on Oahu, in what is the first comprehensive study on species interaction in a novel ecosystem—a place where most species are non-native.

In total, the team identified more than 100,000 seeds that were collected from bird species across the island. Their subsequent analysis showed that native plants are almost entirely dependent on invasive bird species to disperse their seeds.

The “first major result is remarkable: There are no native bird species dispersing seeds of native plants on Oahu—the interactions are completely novel,” Vizenin-Bugoni said. “This island was once highly diverse but then faced some of the highest rates of extinction on the planet—experts estimate that in the last 700 years, 77 species and subspecies of birds in the Hawaiian archipelago have gone extinct, accounting for 15 percent of bird extinctions worldwide.”

Furthermore, the scientists found that species’ interactions on the island bear a striking resemblance to complex and stable ecosystems around the world where native flora and fauna dominate. This suggests that novel ecological communities can arise in a relatively short time by quickly integrating invasive species.

(Source: *Newsweek*)

The heat transfer in boiling water could lead to efficiency improvements in power plants

Researchers at MIT have found a way to analyze how to predict and prevent a boiling crisis, which is the point when so many bubbles form on a hot surface that they coalesce into a continuous sheet of vapor that blocks any further heat transfer from the surface to the water.

The simple act of boiling water is one of humankind’s oldest inventions, and still central to many of today’s technologies, from coffee makers to nuclear power plants. Yet this seemingly simple process has complexities that have long defied full understanding.

Now, researchers at MIT have found a way to analyze one of the thorniest problems facing heat exchangers and other technologies in which boiling water plays a central role: how to predict, and prevent, a dangerous and potentially catastrophic event called a boiling crisis. This is the point when so many bubbles form on a hot surface that they coalesce into a continuous sheet of vapor that blocks any further heat transfer from the surface to the water.

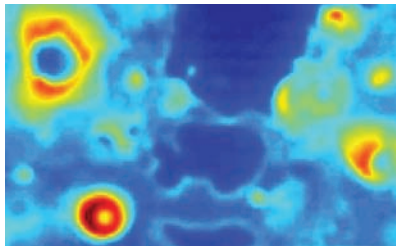
■ Nuclear plants

Such events can cause weakening or melting, so nuclear plants are designed to operate at levels far below those that could trigger a boiling crisis. This new understanding might allow such plants to operate safely at higher output levels by reducing the needed operating margins.

The new results are presented today in the journal *Physical Review Letters* in a paper by assistant professor of nuclear engineering Matteo Buccì and graduate students Limiao Zhang and Jee Hyun Seong.

“It’s a very complex phenomenon,” Buccì says, and although it has been “studied for over a century, it’s still very controversial.” Even in the 21st century, he says, “we talk about an energy revolution, a computer revolution, nanoscale transistors, all kinds of great things. Yet, still in this century, and maybe even in the next century, these are all limited by heat transfer.”

As computer chips get smaller and more powerful, for example, some high-performance



processors may require liquid cooling to dissipate heat that can be too intense for ordinary cooling fans.

■ The world’s electricity

Some supercomputers, and even some high-end gaming PCs, already use pumped water to cool their chips. Likewise, the power plants that produce most of the world’s electricity, whether they be fossil fuel, solar, or nuclear plants, mainly produce power by generating steam to turn turbines.

In a nuclear plant, water is heated by the fuel rods, which heat up through nuclear reactions. The spread of heat through the metal surfaces to the water is responsible for transferring energy from the fuel to the generating turbine, but it also is key to preventing the fuel from overheating and potentially leading to a meltdown. In the case of a boiling crisis, the formation of a layer of vapor separating the liquid from the metal can prevent the heat from being transferred, and can lead to rapid overheating.

Because of that risk, regulations require nuclear plants to operate at heat fluxes that are no more than 75 percent of the level known as the critical heat flux (CHF), which is the level when a boiling crisis could be triggered that could damage critical components. But since the theoretical foundations of the CHF are poorly understood, those levels are estimated very conservatively. It’s possible that those plants could be operated at higher heat levels, thus producing more power from the same nuclear fuel, if the phenomenon is understood with greater certainty, Buccì says.

(Source: *phys.org*)

Unexpected rain on sun links two solar mysteries, new study suggests

Researchers have found rain on the sun in an unexpected place. The findings could create a new link between two of the biggest mysteries in solar physics.

For five months in mid 2017, Emily Mason did the same thing every day. Arriving to her office at NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland, she sat at her desk, opened up her computer, and stared at images of the Sun -- all day, every day. “I probably looked through three or five years’ worth of data,” Mason estimated. Then, in October 2017, she stopped. She realized she had been looking at the wrong thing all along.

Mason, a graduate student at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., was searching for coronal rain: giant globs of plasma, or electrified gas, that drip from the sun’s outer atmosphere back to its surface. But she expected to find it in helmet streamers, the million-mile tall magnetic loops -- named for their resemblance to a knight’s pointy helmet -- that can be seen protruding from the sun during a solar eclipse. Computer simulations predicted the coronal rain could be found there.

■ Escaping from the sun

Observations of the solar wind, the gas escaping from the sun and out into space, hinted that the rain might be happening. And if she could just find it, the underlying rain-making physics would have major implications for the 70-year-old mystery of why the sun’s outer atmosphere, known as the corona, is so much hotter than its surface. But after nearly half a year of searching, Mason just couldn’t find it. “It was a lot of looking,” Mason said, “for something that never ultimately happened.”

The problem, it turned out, wasn’t what she was looking for, but where. In a paper in the *Astrophysical Journal Letters*, Mason and her coauthors describe the first observations of coronal rain in



a smaller, previously overlooked kind of magnetic loop on the sun.

After a long, winding search in the wrong direction, the findings forge a new link between the anomalous heating of the corona and the source of the slow solar wind -- two of the biggest mysteries facing solar science today.

■ High-resolution telescopes

Observed through the high-resolution telescopes mounted on NASA’s SDO spacecraft, the Sun -- a hot ball of plasma, teeming with magnetic field lines traced by giant, fiery loops -- seems to have few physical similarities with Earth.

On Earth, rain is just one part of the larger water cycle, an endless tug-of-war between the push of heat and pull of gravity. It begins when liquid water, pooled on the planet’s surface in oceans, lakes, or streams, is heated by the sun.

Some of it evaporates and rises into the atmosphere, where it cools and condenses into clouds. Eventually, those clouds become heavy enough that gravity’s pull becomes irresistible and the water falls back to Earth as rain, before the process starts anew.

On the sun, Mason said, coronal rain works similarly, “but instead of 60-degree water you’re dealing with a million-degree plasma.” Plasma, an electrically-charged gas, doesn’t pool like water, but instead traces the magnetic loops that emerge from the sun’s surface like a rollercoaster on tracks.

(Source: *sciencedaily.com*)

Microbes may take some of the blame for the reproducibility crisis

For the past several years, science has been plagued by what some consider a reproducibility crisis — the idea that many published studies don’t yield the same results when repeated by other scientists, or sometimes even by the same scientists. Surveys and studies have suggested myriad reasons such as unreliable reagents and cell lines, selective statistics, a bias for publishing studies with positive results, and genetic differences in animal models.

Andreas Bäuml, a microbiologist and immunologist at the University of California, Davis, and his team recently published evidence in *Nature Microbiology* last month (March 25) that, at least in some mouse studies, the problem may come down to the bacteria in the model’s gut. They found that mice of the same strain but purchased from different vendors had different susceptibilities to infection during experiments, a phenomenon that could be explained by varying microbiomes.

“It’s basically a very well-done study of something that people have known for a while and have done in various bits and pieces,” says Vincent Young, a microbiologist at the University of Michigan Medical School who was not part of the study. “There are some cases where, if the results are somewhat variable, you think you’ve controlled for everything.”

Bäuml and his team study *Salmonella typhimurium*, the bacteria responsible for salmonella infections, and how it interacts with its host in the gut using mouse models. During experiments, when a group of animals is exposed to a pathogen, not all of them will get sick and of those that do, the disease will take varying tolls.

In an effort to minimize these differences and make his work as reproducible as possible, Bäuml has made a point of using mice that are genetically similar. But that doesn’t eliminate all the variability.

To find out if that was the case, his group purchased the same strain of mice from four companies and conducted a series of experiments to see if their microbiota differed and how that might influence infection.

(Source: *The Scientist*)

There’s a star in the Milky Way that just got even stranger

An ancient star called J0023+0307 drifts about, minding its business. It’s very old indeed, which isn’t uncommon for stars in the halo - but it contains no detectable carbon, which is pretty danged weird. So weird that the astronomy team who found it even said the star “should not exist.”

Now, they have found something else peculiar in J0023+0307. It apparently has a whole butt-load of lithium.

This isn’t actually that uncommon for very old stars, but it was certainly unexpected in J0023+0307, which formed in the first 300 million years after the Big Bang, just after the first generation of stars were starting to die.

“This primitive star surprises us for its high lithium content, and its possible relation to the primordial lithium formed in the Big Bang,” said astronomer David Aguado of Cambridge University.

When the Universe somehow came into being 13.8 billion years ago, only the very lightest elements were forged. That means hydrogen and helium, of course, as well as very small trace amounts of lithium and beryllium.

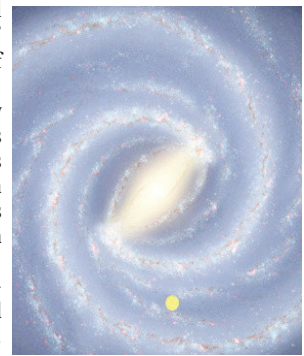
The process whereby these elements formed from the primordial sea of neutrons, protons, electrons, positrons, photons, and neutrinos that came into being immediately following the Big Bang is called Big Bang nucleosynthesis.

Heavier elements came a bit later, created inside the first generations of stars. When these stars died, spewing their contents out into the Universe, the elements they had forged were caught up in the formation of new stars.

That’s how the process of spectroscopy actually identifies very old stars. If they don’t have a lot of heavier elements - what we call extremely metal-poor stars, or EMPs - then it’s a sign they formed at a time before these elements existed in the Universe.

The “lithium content of this primitive star is similar to that of other metal-poor stars in the halo of our galaxy, and they define, roughly, a constant value, independent of the value of the metal content of the star,” said astronomer Jonay González Hernández of the Instituto de Astrofísica de Canarias in Spain.

(Source: *sciencealert.com*)



Ancient four-legged whale from Peru walked on land, swam in sea, research says

Scientists have unearthed fossils in a coastal desert of southern Peru of a four-legged whale that thrived both in the sea and on land about 43 million years ago in a discovery that illuminates a pivotal stage in early cetacean evolution.

The newly discovered early whale *Peregocetus*, which lived about 43 million years ago, is pictured along the rocky shore of the southeastern Pacific in this undated artistic reconstruction obtained by Reuters on April 3, 2019.

The 13-foot-long (4-meter) mammal, named *Peregocetus pacificus*, represents a crucial intermediate step before whales became fully adapted to a marine existence, the scientists said on Thursday.

Its four limbs were capable of bearing its weight on land, meaning *Peregocetus* could return to the rocky coast to rest and perhaps give birth while spending much of its time at sea. Its feet and hands had small hooves and probably were webbed to aid in swimming. With long fingers and toes, and relatively slender limbs, moving around on land may not have been easy.

Its elongated snout and robust teeth - large grasping incisors and canines along with flesh-shearing molars - made *Peregocetus* adept at catching medium-size prey like fish.

“We think that it was feeding in the water, and that its underwater locomotion was easier than that on land,” said Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences paleontologist Olivier Lambert, who led the research published in the journal *Current Biology*.

“Some vertebrates of the tail region share strong similarities with semi-aquatic mammals like otters, indicating the tail was predominantly used for underwater locomotion,” Lambert added.

(Source: *Reuters*)

Researchers use machine learning to ‘optimize’ flavor of basil

A new branch of study called “cyber agriculture” made progress by producing basil plants with more delicious flavors.

Researchers are hoping they could harness and optimize traditional food-growing techniques.

In their first bout of “cyber agriculture,” the research yielded the most optimized and ideal growing conditions needed by basil plants to grow in their most superior state.

The results were made using machine-learning algorithms, a little bit of chemistry, and the principles of botany. Dubbed as “cyber agriculture,” producing basil plants with stronger flavors was just the first goal.

Because of its success, the researchers are now aiming to study and research other possibilities of the field, such as helping farmers adapt their growing techniques to climate change and increasing human disease-fighting properties of various herbs.

“Our goal is to design open-source technology at the intersection of data acquisition, sensing, and machine learning, and apply it to agricultural research in a way that hasn’t been done before,” says Caleb Harper, principal research scientist in MIT’s Media Lab and director of the OpenAg group.



“We’re really interested in building networked tools that can take a plant’s experience, its phenotype, the set of stresses it encounters, and its genetics, and digitize that to allow us to understand the plant-environment interaction.”

■ Exposing the basil plants

In the April 3 issue of *PLOS One*, it was stated that exposing the basil plants to light 24 hours a day is what made

them more flavorful, doubling its flavorful molecules known as “volatile compounds.” It was quite a surprising result, as according to John de la Parra, the research lead for the OpenAg group, there is no other way possible for this data to be discovered.

There is no place on Earth, aside from Antarctica, where light shines for 24 hours a day. As everyone knows, Antarctica’s environment is not necessarily the best place to grow crops. Only by using the artificial circumstances involved did they deduce the said results.

Although the experiment was successful, the researchers were happier that the software and platform they used works and are validated. Now, they are moving on to more ambitious experiments, such as increasing the production of medicinal plants and carrying out trials on exposing plant hormones or other nutrients on different plants and crops.

De la Parra is hopeful that this new field of study would yield more exciting discoveries in agriculture such as adapting to climate change. If successful, the traditional way of food production would be harnessed more efficiently, something to look forward to in the 21st century.

(Source: *techtimes.com*)

Kuwait, Russia, Armenia send aids for flood-hit victims in Iran

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Kuwait, Russia, and Armenia have dispatched humanitarian aid to flood-hit people in Iran.

The humanitarian package by Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) includes high capacity flood control pumps for dewatering large amounts of water, pharmaceuticals, foodstuff and other items. Kuwaiti government’s aid to Iran are to continue in the upcoming weeks, IRNA news agency reported on Saturday.

Meanwhile, according to a news published by Xinhua on April 3, Hilal Al-Sayer, KRCS board chairman, said that the society will launch an immediate aid campaign for affected Iranians next week, adding that it has set up a committee to set out an action plan to provide humanitarian aid.

The Kuwaiti charity would work with its Iranian counterpart, along with other humanitarian organizations, to offer immediate relief aid to affected people in this country, he added.

Moreover, the Russian Emergencies Ministry, together with the Armenian Emergencies Ministry, has begun delivering humanitarian aid to Iran affected by floods, the press service of the Russian Emergencies Ministry informed TASS on Saturday.

«The humanitarian cargo is handed over by the Russian-Armenian Humanitarian Response Center to the Iranian Red Crescent Society.» the ministry said.

The aid is delivered by trucks. The humanitarian cargo includes over 4,000 tents, blankets and folding beds purchased at the expense of Russia.

Following torrential rain in many regions across the country since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year on March 21, catastrophic floods have hit 1,900 cities and villages in western, southwestern, northern and northeastern Iran, leaving 67 dead and hundreds displaced.

Buses to become more accessible for people with disabilities

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Bus rapid transit (BRT) system of the capital will become more accessible for people with disabilities, Tehran bus operating company’s managing director Peyman Sanandaji has said.

Maps showing the capital’s routes and stations will be provided in Braille for the visually impaired people at the stations and also inside the buses, Sanandaji stated, Mehr reported on Friday.

It is also planned to equip the BRT stations with audio announcement systems to help those passengers suffering from disabilities, he added.

He went on to say that “we tend to equip the buses with the audio announcement systems calling the names of stations, however, it needs an advanced infrastructure.”

Some of the station so far have undergone some development, and the rest are scheduled to undergo changes by the next month, he concluded.

In January, Hossein Nahvinejad, deputy director of Iran’s Welfare Organization for rehabilitation affairs, said that 30 percent of the country’s crosswalks and sidewalks have been made accessible for the persons with disabilities to easily pass through.

Some 200 buses in public transport fleet have become accessible for the physically challenged people in province of Khorasan Razavi, and another 200 disability-friendly buses have been purchased in Isfahan province, he added.

Majlis [the Iranian parliament] approved both general outlines and details of a bill on rights of persons with disabilities in January 2018. The law provides better living conditions for persons with disabilities to no longer feel isolated, additionally, development of disability-friendly cities, health insurance and employment are some of the articles of the law.

LEARN ENGLISH

International Workers Day

A: Alright everyone **settles down**. Let’s get started. As you know, an important aspect of becoming a good citizen is understanding the **genesis** of our legal system. It is not enough to simply memorize our laws, it is necessary that we **comprehend** why and how they were formed. This brings me to our topic for today. Does anyone know what we celebrate on May first?

B: Cinco de mayo?

A: No, that’s May fifth in Spanish, James, no wonder you are failing my Spanish class. No, first day of May is International Workers’ Day.

B: Do we get a day off from school then?

A: No! It is not considered to be a **national holiday** here in the US, but in other countries it is.

B: Aww, man!

A: In the nineteenth century, working conditions were **appalling**, with workers being forced to work ten, twelve, and fourteen hours a day. Support for the eight-hour work day movement was growing rapidly, despite the **indifference and hostility** of many union leaders, and by April 1886, 250,000 workers were involved in the May Day movement. Previous **legislative** attempts to improve working conditions had failed, so labor organizers took **drastic** measures. They passed a **resolution** stating that eight hours would **constitute** a legal day’s work. And, on May First 1886, the resolution took effect.

B: Cool! Is that why we only work eight hours now?

A: Yes! But the happy ending came at a high price. On May third, 1886, police **fired into** a crowd of strikers at the McCormick Reaper Works Factory, killing four and wounding many. A mass meeting was called for the next day to protest the **brutality**.

B: And then what happened?

A: Well, as we say, the rest is history...

■ **Key vocabulary**
settle down: relax, become calm
aspect: part
genesis: origin; beginning
comprehend: understand deeply
national holiday: the day that all people in a country will be on holiday
appalling: terrible, horrible, shocking
indifference: showing no interest in
hostility: the attitude of treating something as enemy
legislative: relating to legal system
drastic: sudden and severe
resolution: a formal document stating the wishes of a group
constitute: form, consist
fire into: shoot guns into a place
brutality: violent treatment or behavior

Recent rainfalls fill 70% of dams, restore drained wetlands: minister

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — Recent heavy rainfalls in Iran has filled 70 percent of dams and resulted in restoration of drained wetlands across the country, Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian has said.

The volume of water stored behind the dams amount to 35 billion cubic meters, Mehr news agency quoted Ardakanian as saying on March 31.

The volume of water stored behind the dams in the same period last year amounted to 23 billion cubic meters, the minister highlighted.

Ardakanian also explained that recent rainfalls and floods have resulted in restoration of wetlands, stating that 20% of Hamoun and Hirmand wetlands in southeastern Iran, 70% of Helleh wetland in southern Iran, 100% of Gandoman wetland in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province, 80% of Choghakhor wetland in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province, 90% of Hour-al Azim and 80% of Bamdeji wetlands in southwestern province of Khuzestan, and 40% of Maharlou wetland in Fars province



‘Flood devastation worsened by environmental degradation, improper planning’

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — Ignoring technical issues in developing infrastructure of the water basin along with excessive soil erosion are what made the recent floods extremely devastating, director for wetland ecosystem office at the Department of Environment has said.

Although, flood is a natural phenomenon which results in natural damages to some extent, some conditions cause more devastating damages, ISNA quoted Masoud Baqerzadeh Karimi as saying on Saturday.

The reason which exacerbated flood wreckage is mostly environmental degradation, namely, soil erosion which makes the flood muddy, he stated, adding, soil erosion is the result of illegal construction, land use changes, river basin destruction, depletion of forests, beaches and vegetation.

Muddy flood is produced by an accumulation of run-off over agricultural land, through which sediments are picked up by the run-off and carried as suspended matter or bed-load. It can damage the road infrastructure and may deposit layers of mud blanket and may also clog sewers and damage private property.

“Inappropriate construction projects through the river banks is the second reason compounding flood devastation,” he lamented, adding that no construction project must be



carried out on river beds regardless of being dried.

However, it has been neglected in the country as many roads, tunnels, parks and buildings have been constructed through the dried up river beds and along river banks, he added.

“Not considering the drainage basin shapes is the other reason which is an area of land where precipitation collects and drains off into a common outlet, such as into a river,

bay, or other body of water,” he highlighted

Baqerzadeh Karimi went on to explain that some drainage basins or catchment areas connect into many drainage basins at lower elevations, with smaller sub-drainage basins, which in turn lead to a huge flood.

The shape of catchment basins must be considered through territorial planning, development and construction programs, which unfortunately have always been neglected in the country, he concluded.

Since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year on March 21, some 1900 cities and villages in northern, northeastern, western and southwestern provinces across the country were hit hard by devastating floods incurring a dramatic loss.

According to the latest statistics announced by Iran’s Forensics Organization, some 67 lost their lives in floods in provinces of Fars, Lorestan, North Khorasan, Golestan, Mazandaran, Hamedan, Khuzestan, Kermanshah, Semnan, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad and Khorasan Razavi.

In addition to the casualties, the catastrophic floods have caused major damage to properties, destruction of crops, and loss of livestock in many provinces, especially in Mazandaran, Golestan, and Lorestan.

Recent rainfalls not to fully address prolonged droughts: expert

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — Despite above normal rainfalls amounting to 256 millimeters the country has received since the beginning of the current water year (starting on September 23, 2018), it cannot be claimed that the long-term droughts are set right, director for flood control and aquifer at Forests, Range and Watershed Management Organization has said.

That’s why water management policies must be still drawn up with regard to water scarcity, ISNA news agency quoted Abolqasem Hosseinpour as saying on Saturday.

According to the latest data published on Iran’s Meteorological Organization website precipitation over the current water year has been increased by 39-percent compared to long-term mean, in addition to 184-percent compared to the last water year (September 2017-September 2018).

“However, with only a year of high rainfall averages we cannot say that drought is no longer hitting the country,” Hosseinpour said.

Climate change has resulted in a drop in water resources, on the other hand, due to excessive use of subsurface water resources, the country is facing serious shortages which are not compensated by a year of normal rainfalls, he lamented.



In order to rectify water deficiencies, years of above normal precipitation is required, additionally we should be refraining from depleting groundwater resources, he highlighted.

Hosseinpour went on to say that water management policies should continue to be in line with the water scarcity.

Referring to sustainable reuse of water, he noted that proper management of water resources is accompanied by wise watershed and aquifer planning, so measures must be taken to recharge groundwater resources with rain water.

Some claim that the country is to meet period of wet spells but there is no scientific and rational reason to prove that, Hosseinpour stated.

He further concluded that in fact due to the country’s climatic characteristics “we might face drought again, so best water management policies must be taken.”

Asiatic cheetah, Persian leopards observed in north central Iran

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — An Asiatic cheetah and two Persian leopards have been spotted in Shahrood county in north central Semnan province, Amir Abdous, the provincial department of environment (DOE) chief has announced.

Referring to ten camera traps installed in the area to determine the exact distribution of the species, Abdous noted that the cameras have recently captured photos of an Asiatic cheetah and two Persian leopards.

Last year, some 8 Asiatic cheetahs have been spotted in Khar Turan national park in the province, he added, Mehr reported on Thursday.

He further called on the passengers to be cautious and take safety measures while driving through Abbasabad-Mayami road, linking north-central Semnan province to Mashhad.

Abbasabad-Mayami road is one of the deadliest roads for Asiatic cheetahs as 8 of them have been killed in road crashes over the past 10 years, he lamented.

Locals also must be cautious and contact the DOE in case they see any animal carcasses or illegal hunting activities, he highlighted.

Listed as critically endangered by the International Union for Conservation



of Nature (IUCN), the Asiatic cheetah is among the rarest cats in the world at subspecies level, with fewer than 50 believed to remain in Iran.

Roads fragmenting cheetahs’ habitats are the main threats for the species, while guard dogs and stray dogs, drought spells, decreasing population of the prey species to support the cheetahs, and habitat loss are also other factors endangering the sparse population of the cheetahs in the country.

The Persian leopard is also listed as Endangered on the IUCN Red List; the population is estimated at fewer than 871–1,290 mature individuals and considered declining.

In Iran, primary threats are habitat disturbances followed by illegal hunting and excess of livestock in the leopard habitats. The leopards’ chances for survival outside protected areas appear very slim.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → E

Iran outlaws private ownership of wild animals

Iran has outlawed the private ownership of wild animals, including cheetahs, lions and tigers, and will fine or imprison anyone parading the wild animals in public, YJC reported on Wednesday. “If a person seen in public walking an exotic pet, will be fined up to 800 million rials (about \$20,000) and could face up to three-year term of imprisonment,” Department of Environment’s (DOE) director for hunting and fishing Ali Teymouri has said.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“cryo-, cry-”

■ **Meaning:** freezing or cold
■ **For example:** You can return to most normal activities the day after **cryosurgery**.

PHRASAL VERB

Nail somebody down

■ **Meaning:** to force someone to say clearly what they want or what they intend to do
■ **For example:** Before they repair the car, nail them down to a price.

IDIOM

Cream of the crop

■ **Explanation:** the best people or things in a particular group
■ **For example:** As usual, the cream of the crop of this year’s graduates were offered the best jobs.

Terrorists equipping missiles with chemical warheads in Syria's Idlib

1→ have transferred the missiles from one of the Jabhat Fateh al-Sham's arms depots to another cache in Sahl al-Rouj area west of Idlib on board five ambulances.

They went on to say that the White Helmets, which has been repeatedly accused of cooperating with Takfiri terrorists and staging false-flag gas attacks, has also moved special equipment from the town of Khan Sheikhoun to the region.

The sources further highlighted that Belgian chemical experts had assisted the Takfiri terrorists in equipping the missiles with toxic materials, adding that they had also supervised transfer of eight chlorine gas containers from one of the Jabhat Fateh al-Sham's positions in the town of al-Dana in northern Idlib to the base.

Speaking during a press briefing in the Russian capital Moscow on March 15, Russia's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said there were reports that the Takfiri terrorists, in coordination with the White Helmets, were establishing arms caches in the northwestern provinces of Aleppo and Idlib, the western coastal province of Latakia as well as the western-central province of Hama.

"We are closely monitoring the situation in the Idlib de-escalation zone. The terrorists operating there are not stopping their provocative false-flag attacks against gov-



ernment forces. Since the beginning of the year, over 460 such incidents have been recorded," Zakharova said.

The Russian official said Moscow was "seriously concerned" about new reports that militants from Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, with assistance from the notorious White Helmets, were making preparations for another staged attack involving the use of toxic substances to put the blame for the use of chemical weapons on government forces. "Terrorists are dispersing the correspond-

ing warheads and caches in the provinces of Aleppo, Idlib, Lattakia, and Hama," Zakharova stated.

The U.S. has warned it would respond to any possible chemical weapons attack by Syrian government forces with retaliatory strikes, stressing that the attacks would be stronger than those conducted by American, British and French forces last year.

On April 14, 2018, the U.S., Britain and France carried out a string of airstrikes against Syria over a suspected chemical weapons

attack on the city of Douma, located about 10 kilometers northeast of the capital Damascus.

Washington and its allies blamed Damascus for the Douma attack, an allegation rejected by the Syrian government.

On September 11 last year, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov censured the U.S. threats to use military force against Syria as part of Washington's blackmail policy.

"Unlike the United States, Britain and their allies, Russia provides particular facts on a daily basis through its Defense Ministry, the Foreign Ministry as well as missions in New York, The Hague and Geneva. We particularly name geographical points, where preparations are underway for certain terrorist groups backed by the U.S. and its allies to carry out provocations," Ryabkov said.

Western governments and their allies have never stopped pointing the finger at Damascus whenever an apparent chemical attack takes place.

Syria surrendered its stockpile of chemical weapons in 2014 to a joint mission led by the U.S. and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which oversaw the destruction of the weaponry. Damascus has also consistently denied using chemical weapons.

(Source: Press TV)

Pakistan PM accuses India of war hysteria over downed F-16 claim

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan blamed India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for "whipping up war hysteria" over claims that India shot down a Pakistani F-16 during a standoff in February, saying the truth is always the best policy.

U.S.-based Foreign Policy magazine, citing U.S. officials, said all of Pakistan's F-16 combat jets had been accounted for, contradicting an Indian air force assessment that it had shot down one of the jets.

"The truth always prevails and is always the best policy," Khan said in a Tweet. "BJP's attempt to win elections through whipping up war hysteria and false claims of downing a Pak F-16 has backfired with U.S. Defense officials also confirming that no F-16 was missing from Pakistan's fleet."

Nuclear-armed neighbors India and Pakistan engaged in an aerial battle over the disputed region of Kashmir a day after Indian jets crossed over into Pakistan to attack a suspected camp of anti-India militants.

An Indian jet was brought down during the fight and its pilot captured when he ejected on the Pakistani side of the border. He was later released.

India said it too had shot down a Pakistani aircraft and the air force displayed pieces of a missile that it said had been fired by a Pakistani F-16 before it went down.

Foreign Policy said in a report published on Thursday two U.S. defense officials with direct knowledge of the matter said U.S. personnel had done a count of Pakistan's F-16s and found none missing.

Details of the India-Pakistan air engagement have not been fully provided by either side. If the U.S. report turns out to be true, it would be a further blow to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who had said that India had taught Pakistan a lesson, ahead of elections next week.

The BJP is campaigning on a platform of tough national security, especially with regard to arch foe Pakistan. New Delhi blames Pakistan for stoking a 30-year revolt in Muslim-majority Kashmir but Islamabad denies any involvement.

BJP spokesman Bizay Sonkar Shastri dismissed Khan's accusations.

"Firstly, their (Pakistan's) habit of lying is no secret to the world. Secondly, this is absolutely clear that the roots of terrorism lie in Pakistan and terrorism is cultivated in Pakistan," he told Reuters.

The success of Indian air strikes on a camp of the Jaish-e-Mohammed militant group in northwestern Pakistan has also been thrown into doubt after satellite images showed little sign of damage.

High-resolution satellite images reviewed by Reuters last month showed that a religious school run by Jaish appeared to be still standing days after India said its warplanes had hit the extremist group's training camp on the site and killed a large number of militants.

Pakistan closed its airspace amid the standoff but most commercial air traffic has since resumed and major airports have opened.

Pakistan offered to open one air route on Friday, an



Indian government official said, without specifying details and declining to be named as the matter was not public.

An Air India official said on condition of anonymity that Pakistan has opened one of its 11 air routes, from the southern side, adding that the carrier began operations via this route on Friday.

"Pakistan has opened one air route over India on April 4th, it is a north-west bound route," Mujtaba Baig, spokesman for Pakistan's Civil Aviation Authority, told Reuters on Saturday.

An email sent to the Indian Directorate General of Civil Aviation was not immediately answered. Air India did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

(Source: Reuters)

Greek police fire tear gas at migrants as convoy grows

Greek police fired tear gas to disperse migrants who had gathered in a field near the country's border with Northern Macedonia in the hope of making their way illegally up through the Balkans toward northern Europe. Hundreds have made their way to the field in the village of Diavata since Thursday, galvanized by reports on social media of plans for an organized movement to cross Greece's northwest border with Albania in early April.

Separately, migrants holed up in Turkey were heading toward that country's border with Greece following false rumors that Ankara had opened its border gate. Turkish authorities have detained nearly 1,200 migrants there, Turkish media reported.

By Friday morning migrants had set up more than 100 tents in the field at Diavata. A crowd trying to make its way toward the Greek border scuffled with police who responded with tear gas. TV footage showed shrubs burning nearby.

"It's a lie that the borders will open," Greek Migration Minister Dimitris Vitsas told Greek state television, urging migrants to return to their accommodation centers.

In Athens, about 50 migrants squatted on the tracks of the capital's main railway station shouting "Germany!" and "Open the borders." Several more were at the station under heavy police presence. Services from the station were suspended.

"We want to go to Thessaloniki and then to the borders," said Amin Omar, a 27-year-old Iraqi Kurd sitting on the tracks. "We don't know if they are open."

The situation revived memories of the 2015 migrant crisis, when more than 1 million people, mostly fleeing conflicts and poverty in the Middle East and beyond, travelled via Turkey, Greece and the Balkans toward wealthy western Europe.

Turkey drastically curtailed that exodus in 2016 under a deal with the EU. Soon after, Balkan countries shut their borders, block-



ing a main passage way to northern Europe and stranding tens of thousands in Greece. Miltiadis Klapas, a Greek Migration Ministry official, said the latest movement toward the border was "the result of completely unfounded information that there will be a mass gathering on the borders and that they will open. The borders are closed because of initiatives by other countries," he said.

Turkish police have detained 496 people in Edirne, the province bordering EU member states Greece and Bulgaria, after migrants flocked there in the hope of crossing the border, state-owned Anadolu news agency said.

The migrants, mostly Afghan, Iranian or Pakistani, referred to themselves as the "Convoy of Hope," it said.

Some 700 migrants were also caught in the neighboring province of Tekirdag after police were positioned on the highway in the direction of Edirne, Demiroren News Agency said.

Authorities were not immediately available to confirm the reports.

Reuters Television footage shot Wednesday showed Turkish policemen in plain clothes chasing migrants around train tracks and putting them on buses. Another group, who were sent back to Turkey after illegally crossing into Greece, anxiously waited to be sent to a repatriation center.

(Source: Daily Star)

Nigeria suffers severe heatwave with no relief in sight

Nigeria has been in the grip of an intense heatwave over the past few weeks, with meteorologist saying there is no relief in sight until the seasonal rains set in next month.

The extreme heat has been in place since March, with the Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet) saying last week that the heatwave has been affecting most parts of the country, including coastal areas, with temperatures well above 35 degrees Celsius.

On Friday, the temperature touched 42.2C in Minna,

120km northwest of Abuja. Meanwhile, Kano, 345km north of the capital, has notched up highs in excess of 40C every day since the beginning of April.

As people struggle to cope, authorities have been issuing warnings about the dangers brought on by the excessive temperatures.

Environmental expert Olwafemi Akinbode said climate change has become a public health risk.

"When you have heatwaves, the body is dehydrated, the young, the elderly, people that live sedated lives - these are

the kind of people that have immediate health reactions to the heat wave," Akinbode said.

The severe heatwave is expected to continue until May when the seasonal rains are expected to spread north across the country.

Environmental experts have called on authorities to make long-term plans to slow down the effects of climate change by reducing carbon emission and impose bans on tree-cutting.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Yes, there's a crisis on the border. And it's Trump's fault

6→ Instead of working to address these problems, the president has actively made the problem worse by redirecting resources and attention to his irrelevant wall, antagonizing the people he needs to partner with to actually solve immigration problems, exacerbating backlogs and resource shortages by shutting down the government and announcing enforcement measures that cannot be sustained and which result in increasing numbers of migrants calling his bluffs.

The president may want to implement harsh border security policies, but he has faltered on the basics of governing. The administration has failed at the fundamental tasks of coordinating its plans with the relevant agencies and working through the hard problems of implementation. For instance, the administration's "zero tolerance" policy of prosecuting illegal border-crossers wasted scarce prosecutorial and detention resources and could never be operationally sustained. The family separation policy — a stain on America's moral authority — was not vetted and coordinated within the government, leading to confused implementation that still has not been resolved. Instead, DHS Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen, to preserve her position, has been reduced to a yes woman, kowtowing to every pronouncement the president makes. The enduring images of the secretary's tenure have been her lame denials of a family separation policy and lockstep support of the president's wall demands, even as many in her department worked without pay during the shutdown. The professionals who know what it takes to solve the problem are not consulted but rather relegated to following orders.

Trump made stopping illegal immigration his signature issue. It is time to acknowledge that he has failed miserably — so we can start thinking about how to clean up the mess he has made.

(Source: politico.com)

Erdogan: U.S., EU meddling in Turkey's affairs

'Turkey continues S-400 payments'

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has accused the United States and Europe of "meddling" in Turkey's internal affairs after its Western allies issued statements following his ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP)'s challenge to local election results.

The Turkish leader and his AKP suffered an upset in mayoral elections last week after results showed that the ruling party lost the capital Ankara and was narrowly defeated in Istanbul, the Turkey's biggest city and economic hub.

The AKP then filed objections to the results with the country's High Election Board and contested the slim opposition victory in Istanbul, alleging irregularities.

However, U.S. State Department spokesman Robert Palladino on Tuesday called on Ankara to accept the results after European Union spokeswoman Maja Kocijancic urged Turkey the day before to allow elected officials to "exercise their mandate freely."

"America and Europe are... meddling in Turkey's internal affairs," Erdogan said on Friday, in his first direct remarks to reporters since Monday.

"Turkey gave a democracy lesson to the whole world," he added, rejecting the statements and warning both the U.S. and the EU to "know" their "place."

Meanwhile, AKP spokesman Omer Celik lambasted Palladino for his statement on the Turkish elections.

"No foreign government, or any organ or statement from it, is a source of legitimacy for the election process and election results in Turkey," Celik said at the party's headquarters in the capital.

Before the elections, Erdogan tried hard to promote his party's candidates during numerous rallies across the country, describing the vote as a battle for the nation's survival. However, voters, concerned with the soaring cost of living, double-digit inflation and unemployment, went for the opposition in the country's two biggest cities.

In Istanbul, the opposition's Ekrem Imamoglu narrowly emerged victorious.

However, Turkey's High Election Board on Wednesday said that it would recount local election votes in Istanbul after the AKP demanded a recount.

On Friday, Imamoglu announced that he was still the winner by nearly 19,000 votes even after the recount.

The opposition Republican People's Party (CHP)'s candidate added that nearly 120,000 previously annulled votes had been recounted in 17 Istanbul districts, with 2,184 extra votes being allowed for the AKP's candidate, Binali Yildirim, and 785 for himself.

Imamoglu estimated that once the recounting ended, the final difference could finish between 18,000 to 20,000. He added that nearly 200,000 more votes still needed to be recounted. "It should be over by the end of the weekend."

However, the AKP has said the recount would show its candidate won.

A defeat in Istanbul would be particularly sensitive for Erdogan who commenced his political career as mayor of the city. The AKP or its predecessors had held Istanbul and Ankara since 1994.

----- Turkey & S-400

Erdogan also said that Turkey was continuing to make payments under its deal with Russia to buy S-400 missile defense systems and the United States had not presented the same terms when it offered to sell the rival Patriot missile system.

"The S-400 holds an important place in our talks. The United States' arguments are very wrong. We finished the S-400 process and our payments continue," Erdogan told reporters in Istanbul when asked about planned talks in Moscow next week.

Turkey's planned purchase of the Russian system has put it at odds with NATO ally the United States. Earlier this week, Washington halted delivery to Turkey of equipment related to the stealth F-35 fighter aircraft because of the missile defense disagreement.

In an attempt to persuade Turkey to drop its plans to buy the S-400, the United States has offered the pricier American-made Patriot anti-missile system. Turkey has shown interest in the Patriot, but not at the expense of abandoning the S-400.

A U.S. official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, suggested on Friday that a Turkish purchase of the Russian missile defense systems could present an opportunity for U.S. forces.

"It's shocking that Russia, however, isn't more worried about sending their equipment to a NATO nation, co-located with U.S. forces, where it can be studied and where we are likely to gain valuable intelligence," the official said.

"It may certainly be a unique opportunity," the official added. (Source: agencies)

Double blast kills three people, injures 20 in east Afghanistan

Twin explosions on Saturday in the eastern Afghanistan city of Jalalabad killed three people and injured 20 others, local officials said.

One child and two women were killed, said Mohammad Sholeh Sahak, deputy head of Nangarhar Regional Hospital.

Eight security forces were among the casualties, said Ataullah Khogyani, spokesman for the Nangarhar provincial government.

"In today's incident, my sister and her daughters have been victims," said Sami Ul Haq, a resident of Nangarhar, visiting his family at the hospital. One of his nieces was

killed and the other wounded, along with her mother, in the attack, he said.

"It is such a misery." It was not clear what caused the explosions.

No group took immediate responsibility. ISIL emerged in Nangarhar in 2015 on the porous border with Pakistan to become one

of Afghanistan's most dangerous militant groups for its bombing and complex attacks.

Fighting between militant groups, and between the Taliban and Afghan forces has intensified in recent weeks amid recurring peace talks.

(Source: Reuters)

Plans to reform European football run into opposition

Plans to reform and possible expand European club competition ran into opposition on Friday as the continent's leagues declared they were 'united' in their determination to protect domestic football.

The European Leagues umbrella group said it would take a more active role in influencing public opinion and shaping the future of football on the continent and reiterated its claim that fans prefer domestic league action to UEFA competition.

Meanwhile, the English Premier League, one of the European Leagues' 35 members, said its 20 clubs would "vigorously defend" it against any plans to impose a new calendar.

UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin said on being re-elected in February that he would work with the European Club Association (ECA), which groups 232 of the region's biggest clubs, to "design the club competitions of the future."

The ECA, in turn, said it wanted more teams playing more matches in continental competitions.

European Leagues, which says it represents 900-plus clubs through its affiliates including "those who are not normally playing European football", said domestic football should remain the priority.

"Our main objective is to safeguard the domestic competitions and protect the domestic competitions if needed," its president Lars-Christer Olsson told a news conference.

"These are the most important to the fans, they are much more important than any international competitions."

Olsson added: "These are interesting times. When it comes to real issues, I am happy to see all leagues are united."

Although UEFA has only just started discussing its plans, Olsson said it was important that the public knew what was happening.

"We have to make the views of the European Leagues known to everyone, not only stakeholders but also fans and the public so everyone knows what is going on and how we are preparing for the future club competitions," he said.

(Source: Reuters)

Thauvin slams 'useless' Marseille after Bordeaux defeat

Olympique de Marseille midfielder Florian Thauvin lashed out at his own team following their 2-0 defeat by Girondins de Bordeaux in Ligue 1 on Friday, saying they were 'useless'.

Marseille have not won in the top flight at Bordeaux since 1977 and the latest loss left them eight points from third place, the last qualifying spot for the Champions League.

"We must stop looking for excuses," the French international was quoted as saying by French media on Saturday.

"For a podium finish, it's over. Let's stop lying to ourselves, we didn't have a good season and even if we managed to go to the Champions League, what would we have to show? Here we are, it's the same every year."

Marseille have not played in the Champions League since the 2013-14 season.

"We just have to shut up and acknowledge the fact that we're useless. We were useless, we have to admit it," said Thauvin.

Marseille are fifth in Ligue 1 on 48 points with seven games remaining.

(Source: Eurosport)

Pele says feeling 'much better' after medical treatment

Football legend Pele said Friday he was feeling "much better" after receiving hospital treatment in Paris for a urinary tract infection.

"The anti-biotics are working... I feel so much better," the 78-year-old Brazilian said on his official Twitter account.

"Thank you for all your love!" he told his fans, joking: "I think I'm ready to play again."

The three-time World Cup winner was admitted to a Paris hospital on Wednesday, the day after appearing at a promotional event with France striker Kylian Mbappe.

Pele's declining health has been a cause for concern in recent times, and the meeting with Mbappe -- the only other teenager apart from Pele to score in a World Cup final -- had already been postponed last November.

Previously, Pele had admitted to not feeling robust enough to light the flame at the opening ceremony of the 2016 Rio Olympics. Before that, he spent time in intensive care in Brazil in late 2014 following a kidney complaint.

On Tuesday, the man who was named FIFA's player of the 20th century spent the entirety of his encounter with Mbappe sitting down, but appeared on good form at the event organised by a watch manufacturer.

(Source: AFP)

Real Madrid and Chelsea close to reaching an agreement for Hazard

Chelsea forward Eden Hazard is set to sign for Real Madrid and his move to Los Blancos will be sealed in the coming days.

The three parties - Chelsea, Madrid and the player himself - are close to reaching a total agreement and the Belgium international will soon travel to Madrid, where he will stay for the next six seasons.

As MARCA has learned, Zinedine Zidane gave his approval for the transfer last week after taking into consideration the needs of Madrid's current squad.

The Frenchman is fond of Hazard's skills, including his pace and speed, all characteristics that the current side lack.

Madrid first approached the Blues last summer as they looked to acquire the 28-year-old, but Chelsea asked for 200 million euros and Los Blancos withdrew their interest.

(Source: Marca)

Nuggets clinch division title, Westbrook averages season triple double



Nikola Jokic tallied 22 points, 13 rebounds and nine assists as the Denver Nuggets clinched the Northwest Division title with a 119-110 win over the Portland Trail Blazers on Friday.

Paul Millsap scored 25 points and Jamal Murray had 23 as Denver locked up at least the number three seed in the NBA's Western Conference.

Denver have a slim chance at gaining the top seed but the first place Golden State Warriors also won on Friday, 120-114 over the Cleveland Cavaliers. Denver lead the Houston Rockets by 1 1/2 games for the second seed in the West.

"That's big," said Murray of the division title. "Everybody knows how well we play at home."

Enes Kanter had 24 points, Rodney Hood had 17 and Al-Farouq Aminu had 12 points and 14 rebounds for Portland who dropped to 50-29 on the season.

Damian Lillard scored 14 points and missed all six of his three-point attempts.

The same teams meet again on Sunday night with the Nuggets having won the last six in a row.

"This was our night and it is going to carry over when we go to their place," said Murray. "We have to bring the same energy, same pace and try to get it done."

Curry bounces back

In Oakland, Stephen Curry bounced back from his lowest scoring game of the season to deliver 40 points as the Warriors moved to within one win of clinching the top seed

by beating the struggling Cavaliers.

Golden State just need a win Sunday over the Los Angeles Clippers to seal the top seed in the West playoffs which begin next weekend.

The Warriors swept LeBron James' Cavaliers in last season's NBA finals.

Golden State led wire-to-wire Friday and at one stage had a whopping 21 point lead.

In Oklahoma City, Russell Westbrook secured his third straight season averaging

a triple double as the Thunder beat the Detroit Pistons 123-110 in a NBA contest crucial to both teams' playoff hopes.

Westbrook finished with 19 points, eight rebounds and 15 assists and has now averaged 10 or more points, rebounds, assists over the course of the season. He also averaged 10 or more figures in 2017-18 and 2016-17.

Paul George scored 30 points and Jerami Grant had 19 for Oklahoma City who won for

the second straight game and fourth time in the past seven.

Westbrook came into the game needing three assists to secure his triple double season average and did it on just the fourth possession by Oklahoma City.

He is the only player to achieve the feat in consecutive seasons and he also leads the league in assists.

The Thunder improved to 46-33 on the season and remain in seventh place in the Western Conference, a half-game ahead of the San Antonio Spurs, who also won Friday.

The Pistons lost for the third consecutive game and for the sixth time in their past eight.

Detroit dropped into a tie for seventh in the Eastern Conference with the Brooklyn Nets, just a game ahead of the ninth-place Miami Heat.

Pistons' Blake Griffin tallied 45 points, but when the game got close he scored just one point in the fourth quarter. Griffin had 31 points in the first half and made six of nine three pointers before going cold.

Celtics alone in 4th

Also, Jayson Tatum and Gordon Hayward combined for 43 points as the Boston Celtics seized sole possession of fourth place in the Eastern Conference standings with a 117-97 win over the Indiana Pacers.

Tatum had 22 points and Hayward 21 for the visiting Celtics who are battling for home court advantage in the postseason. Boston are also trying to catch third place Philadelphia in the standings.

(Source: AFP)

Paris 2024 will create 150,000 new jobs, new report claims



Holding the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Paris could create as many as 150,000 jobs over the next five years, a report claimed.

As widely covered in the French press, the President of the Paris 2024 Organising Committee Tony Estanguet announced the figure alongside the French Minister of Labour Muriel Pénicaud and the Minister of Sport Roxana Maracineanu among others.

The figure was established following a study into the expected social and economic impacts of the Games.

It reportedly concludes almost 12,000 jobs will come in the construction industry, more than 78,000 across security, transport and waste management and 60,000 in the tourism sector.

Estanguet says he wants small French companies to play a part, as well as big ones.

"The biggest French companies will have a role to play so these Games are successful," he told Tellerreport.

"But if we really want to highlight the

innovation of this country, it is important to look for the very small businesses, of the social and solidarity economy, because it is often these companies that are closer to home, and who on a daily basis implement solutions that work."

Estanguet – a former slalom canoeist – wants people without degrees and who may be "far from employment" to get involved, as well as experts.

"In sports, it is not the one who has trained the most or who is the best technically (who will be chosen).

"Sometimes it is the one who has the greatest mind, the greatest determination, who manages to make a difference.

"Well, for the jobs, it's a little bit the same thing.

"I want to associate experts and over-qualified people but also people who, today, may not have diplomas, are away from the job, but who have a fierce desire to see this project succeed and who want to contribute."

(Source: Inside the Games)

Tottenham 'will consider selling up to a dozen players' in the summer



Tottenham 'will consider selling up to a dozen players this summer' as Mauricio Pochettino plans a drastic overhaul of his squad. Having just moved into their stunning new stadium, Spurs will try and balance the books in the summer market while making improvements to playing personnel.

According to the Evening Standard, right-backs Kieran Trippier and Serge Aurier top the list of players that will be made available.

Trippier shone for England at last year's World Cup in Russia, scoring a stunning free-kick against Croatia in the semi-finals, but has struggled for form this season.

Pochettino will consider an upgrade in that position if buyers for Trippier and Aurier can be found, with up-and-coming Crystal Palace player Aaron Wan-Bissaka one possibility. Spurs are also willing to allow Danny Rose and Toby Alderweireld to depart - as last summer - if the interest is there.

Manchester United were linked with the Belgian centre-half but did not put in a formal bid.

Squad players including Victor Wanyama, Vincent Janssen, Fernando Llorrente and George-Kevin Nkoudou could also be sold.

Spurs would also consider selling Erik Lamela and Moussa Sissoko if substantial offers were incoming.

Playmaker Christian Eriksen also enters the final year of his Tottenham contract in the summer and a decision will be taken on whether to cash in on the Dane.

Negotiations with Eriksen's representatives reached an impasse some time ago and Real Madrid are among the clubs linked with him. Defender Jan Vertonghen will also enter the final 12 months of his current deal.

It is unlikely that all 12 players will be sold at one, but the willingness to drastically overhaul the squad reflects Pochettino's craving for silverware now Spurs have finally moved into their new home.

The 62,062-capacity, £1billion stadium hosted its first senior fixture on Wednesday night as Tottenham beat Crystal Palace 2-0.

(Source: Daily Mail)

Klopp never doubted Salah's class as Liverpool reclaim top spot

Jürgen Klopp insists he never doubted Mohamed Salah as the Egyptian ended an eight-game scoring drought to help fire Liverpool back to the top of the Premier League.

Salah returned to scoring form with an outstanding solo run and finish as Liverpool recovered from falling a goal behind to beat Southampton 3-1 at St Mary's and move two points clear of Manchester City.

The title remains in City's hands, however, as the English champions have a game in hand.

However, Liverpool continue to pile on the pressure in their pursuit to end a 29-year wait to win the league.

Klopp's side appeared in danger of dropping valuable points until Salah intervened in the 80th minute to claim his 50th Premier League goal for Liverpool in only his second season at the club.

"It was never in doubt that he was a great player in my side," said Klopp.

"It was goal number 50 for Liverpool, an incredible number. He's very consistent."

Salah has been criticized in recent weeks for being too selfish in front of goal in desperation to end his scoreless streak. Yet, on this occasion he chose the right option despite the presence of Roberto Firmino in support.

When asked if he considered playing in the Brazilian, Salah told Sky Sports: "Not at all. As a striker you need to score. I made my decision to shoot."

Liverpool were once again forced to demonstrate their resilience as they struggled to find their most fluent form



after Southampton established a ninth-minute lead through Shane Long.

Naby Keita equalized in the 36th minute with his first Liverpool goal but it was not until Salah struck that Klopp's side could be confident of moving two points ahead of City at the head of the table.

Jordan Henderson wrapped things up in the 86th minute, but Klopp admitted his side were again not at their best, requiring late interventions just as they had in beating Tottenham Hotspur and Fulham in their previous two league games.

"The performance was not top level but it is about fight-

ing," he said. "People want us to play like Manchester City, we are unable to do that, we play our own football.

"We have 82 points now, that is massive in this crazy league and everyone is waiting for us. I am really proud. It is incredible.

"It is a difficult year for everybody, you need to have 70-75 points for the Champions League and 90-something for the title. We are in the race and that is nice."

Klopp acknowledged the introduction of Henderson and James Milner midway through the second half fired up Liverpool's late rally.

"Jordan Henderson came on and brought aggressiveness, verbal aggressiveness, we had direction again after that," he said.

"We have to work for it, the moment will come but all three goals were brilliant.

"It is nice for Naby Keita to score the first to show Southampton it will not be easy for them. After that we controlled it more. It was good, I liked it."

Southampton remain five points clear of the bottom three and manager Ralph Hasenhuttl admitted his disappointment at his side's failure to hold on.

"If you take the lead after five minutes, you are going in the right direction," said Hasenhuttl.

"There is still a way to go but if you are a sportsman you are always frustrated if you are not winning. Not many have won against them this season, we had chances."

(Source: AFP)

Iran to meet Italy at FIVB Volleyball Nations opening match

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — The second edition of the 2019 FIVB Volleyball Men's Nations League will start with a match against Iran and Italy on May, 31.

Team Melli will meet the Azzurri in the Chinese city of Jiangmen.

The men's competition also opens with a bang, when defending champions Russia take on France at Novi Sad in a rematch of the 2018 VNL final (which Russia convincingly won in straight sets at Lille), fivb.com wrote.

The opening weekend has yet another huge match lined up, when Poland and Brazil clash at Katowice on June 2 in a rematch of the 2018 FIVB World Championship final (which the Europeans won in straight sets at Turin).

The Jiangmen pool also features hosts China and Germany, while in Katowice, the U.S. and Australia complete the lineup. And in Novi Sad, Serbia host Japan alongside Russia and France. Elsewhere on the opening weekend of the men's VNL, Argentina host Canada, Bulgaria and newly-promoted Portugal in Mendoza.

The men's competition also features five weekends, wrapping up on June 30, before the top six teams move to Chicago for the finals.

The 2019 FIVB Volleyball Men's Nations League will be the second edition of the FIVB Volleyball Men's Nations League, an annual international men's volleyball tournament contested by 16 national teams.

The competition will be held between May and July 2019 and the final round will take place in the Credit Union 1 Arena, Chicago, United States.

This will be the first edition of the World League or the Na-



tions League to have the Final Round hosted in North America. Following the results of the 2018 Nations League and

2018 Challenger Cup, South Korea will be replaced by debutants Portugal in this edition.

Mehdi Taj elected as AFC Vice President



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) confirmed its five Vice Presidents for the next term and Mehdi Taj, head of Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI), has been elected as the Vice President from the Central Zone.

In the elections took place in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Qatari Saoud A Aziz M A Al-Mohannadi was elected as the Vice President from the West Zone, Makhdoom Syed Faisal Saleh Hayat (Pakistan) took the

same post from the South Zone, Ganbaatar Angalanbaatar (Mongolia) and Zaw Zaw (Myanmar) were also elected from the East Zone and the ASEAN Zone, respectively.

The 29th Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Congress concluded on Saturday with AFC President Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa (Bahrain) re-elected unopposed for a second four-year term (2019-2023) at the helm of a new-look AFC Executive Committee, the-afc.com reported.

Iran to face South Korea in friendly: report



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — South Korean media reports suggest that Iran and South Korea national football teams will meet together in a friendly match in China.

According to the reports, the two Asian giants will play in Guangzhou, China.

South Korea will also play Australia in a friendly match.

Iran have not lost to South Korea since the 2011 AFC Asian Cup.

Since then, the Persians have defeated Taeguk Warriors four times.

Iran national football team are without a coach since parting company with Carlos Queiroz.

Under guidance of the Portuguese coach, Iran failed to bring an end to their 43-year title drought in AFC Asian Cup.

Morocco French coach Herve Renard is a candidate to take charge of Iran national football team.

Alireza Jahanbakhsh on the career choice which has carried him to Wembley

Alireza Jahanbakhsh could have his head under a bonnet. Instead he is heading to Wembley with Albion. And a chance to make up for a series of cup near misses.

Jahanbakhsh became Albion's record signing last summer when they bought him from AZ Alkmaar in Holland for £17 million.

It could have been very different for the two-time World Cup winger from Iran if his dad had got his way.

Jahanbakhsh told The Argus: "I always wanted to be involved with sport, but my father was always worried that if football doesn't go well I had something else to secure my future.

"I don't want to say I didn't like being a mechanic, I just wanted to use my hands, especially with cars and stuff.

"I am not really into cars, but I wanted to learn something. When people talk about mechanics the mind goes on the car, but it can have different things, different jobs in the future.

"I studied for three years. From the second year I started my pro football too. It was very difficult to handle both at the same time.

"Maybe it's not good to say, but sometimes I had to run away from school to make sure I was on time for training.



Sometimes I missed it.

"When I just finished secondary school I didn't continue studying, because my father was seeing it was really difficult for me (to do both).

"I kept playing football. I tried to go to University in Holland, went for a short time then stopped again, because it was really difficult to handle both.

"I've always been ambitious. I wanted to become something important, either for my parents, for people around me.

"I am pretty sure if I had studied to be a mechanic I

could have ended up somewhere good, but football was always something I lived for."

Jahanbakhsh was 19 when he moved to Dutch club NEC Nijmegen from Damash Gilan in Iran and played against Argentina in the 2014 World Cup.

He helped Nijmegen bounce straight back to the top flight after relegation and then rejected Albion's initial interest when they were in the Championship to sign for Alkmaar. Jahanbakhsh, 25, said: "I lost in two cup finals in the last five years and two semi-finals. One time when I was playing at NEC we lost a semi-final and one time with Al Z and two times the final.

"In Holland the team winning the cup qualify for the Europa League. In both years we didn't make the Europa League, which was really important to play in for the club.

"That gave us a little bit of extra pressure. We had a lot of young players. They couldn't handle it.

"Both cup finals that I played in the young players you couldn't even see them. I was talking to them during the game but they couldn't even hear me - the pressure was a lot."

That is not the case for Albion in their FA Cup semi-final at Wembley against hot favourites Manchester City.

(Source: The Argus)

Revamped Club World Cup important for Asia, says Infantino

FIFA president Gianni Infantino has said his controversial plan to expand the FIFA Club World Cup can play a key role in further developing the club game in Asia despite European opposition.

Infantino's desire to expand the tournament from seven teams to 24 when it is relaunched in 2021 has been opposed by the European Club Association (ECA), which has issued a boycott threat.

But the Swiss administrator told the Asian Football Confederation's annual congress on Saturday that the expansion can help further improve the club game in the 47-member regional body.

"We have been speaking again about how we can improve them and make them better and we have been deciding at the last FIFA Council to give birth to a new FIFA Club World Cup with 24 teams, including three Asian teams," Infantino said in his address to delegates.

"I witnessed the final of the Asian Cham-

pions League in Tehran and there are clubs of great tradition in Asia and it's important we foster them and it's important we give them the possibility to shine on the world stage.

"That's why it's important to continue to develop our competitions, for example, with the new Club World Cup."

The reconfigured Club World Cup, which would be played once every four years, would feature eight clubs from Europe, six from South America as well as three each from Asia, Africa and Concacaf - which covers North and Central America nations plus those in the Caribbean - and one from Oceania.

Asian clubs have featured in the tournament since it was created in 2000, with two clubs from the continent - Kashima Antlers from Japan in 2016 and Al Ain of the United Arab Emirates last year - reaching the final. Both lost to Spanish giants Real Madrid.



Infantino also reiterated his desire to further investigate expanding the 2022 World Cup finals to 48 teams and asking current hosts Qatar to share the tournament with neighbouring nations.

"We are very happy with the preparations in Qatar and, of course, we have an additional topic on the table that we will bring, maybe, to the FIFA congress as well on June 5 in Paris," he said.

"And the question on the table is the

question on the subject of whether we think we can already increase the number of teams participating at the World Cup from 32 to 48.

"The results of the summit has been very clear, 90 per cent of the associations would like to move to 48 teams because, of course, it boosts football development all over the world if we have 16 more countries participating in a World Cup and we are looking and analysing that with our partners in Qatar.

"Sharing a few games with a few of the neighbouring countries is, of course, an option as well to make it a true World Cup for the world and for the whole Gulf region.

"It's something to discuss, something to think about and something we are working on with Qatar and together with all of you and, of course, it would be a nice achievement if the first World Cup with 48 teams would be played in Asia."

(Source: Reuters)

Iran rep. learn fate at Asian Men's Club Volleyball C'ship

MNA — Iranian representative, Shahrdari Varamin VC, knew their rivals at the 20th edition of Asian Men's Club Volleyball Championships which is going to be held this month in Taipei.

The Iranian team are seeded in group B of the competitions along with teams from Sri Lanka, Turkmenistan, and Indonesia.

The Iranian representative will start the campaign on April 18 with the match against their Indonesian rival.

Formerly known as Matin Varamin, the team has once claimed the title of the event in 2014.

Iranian teams have been crowned in 13 editions of the games out of 19 previous ones. The 2018 edition was won by Khatam Ardakan.

The 2019 Asian Men's Club Volleyball Championship will be held on April 18 -26 in Taipei, Chinese Taipei.

Alishah left out of Persepolis for match with Al Ahli

TASNIM — Iran's Persepolis will travel to Dubai for the match against Al Ahli of Saudi Arabia without Omid Alishah.

The midfielder showed his dissatisfaction after the match against Paykan in Iran Professional League (IPL) for his lack of opportunities.

Persepolis coach Branko Ivankovic has left out the player out of the team for the clash against Al Ahli.

Persepolis will face the Saudi Arabian football team at the Zabeel Stadium in Dubai, the UAE on Tuesday in Group D of the AFC Champions League.

Iran tennis players bag medals in West Asian competitions

IRNA — Iranian male and female tennis players ranked first and second in the West Asia- ITF 12 & U Team Competition held in Manama, Bahrain.

Iranian female squad defeated Lebanon and stood on the first place.

They also booked ticket for Asian championships to be held in Kazakhstan.

Meanwhile, Iranian male players ranked second in the competitions and grabbed permission to attend Kazakhstan championships.

The event was held with the attendance of Iran, Bahrain, Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, Jordan, Oman, UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Kuwait.

Iran beach soccer unchanged in world ranking

The Iranian national beach soccer team remained second in the world ranking.

Team Melli still are the best Asian team in the ranking with 2492 points.

Iran failed to book a place at the 2019 FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup after losing to Japan 3-2 at the 2019 AFC Beach Soccer Championship quarters in Thailand in March.

Brazil, who won the 2017 FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup, stayed atop of the ranking with 4273 points.

Portugal are third in the rankings with 2425 points.

Russia and Italy sit fourth and fifth with 2017 and 1963 points respectively.

(Source: Beach Soccer)

Iran runner ranks first in Iraq int'l champs

IRNA — Iranian runner Mohammad Jafar Moradi won the half-marathon category of the international championships in Sulaymaniyah, Iraq.

Moradi finished the competitions in one hour and eleven minutes and ranked first among 1,500 athletes.

Turkish rivals ranked second and third.

Moradi is being prepared for 2020 Olympic Games and is supposed to attend Batumi international competitions, Georgia.

Earlier, Moradi ranked first in Beirut International Marathon.

The Beirut Marathon, known also as the Beirut International Marathon, is an annual event that takes place in Beirut, Lebanon. The first ever BIM was held on October 19th, 2003 and attracted over 6,000 runners from 49 countries, and tens of thousands of Lebanese and international spectators.



Al Hilal star Al Dawsari a doubt for Esteghlal match

TASNIM — Al Hilal winger Salem Al Dawsari will be absent in the match against Iran's Esteghlal in Group C of the AFC Champions League.

The player has reportedly sustained an injury and cannot accompany his team against the Iranian football club.

Esteghlal will meet Al Hilal on Monday at the Hamad bin Khalifa Stadium in Doha, Qatar.

Al Hilal sits top of the table with six points, while Esteghlal is fourth with just one point.

INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com
■ Managing Director: Ali Asgari
■ Editor-in-Chief: Mohammad Ghaderi

» Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895
editor@tehrantimes.com
» Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000
» Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051450
» Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807
» Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603
» www.eshterak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co.
Tel: 88911433
» Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com
» Printed at: Hamshahri No. 3 - ISSN: 1017-94

Tehrantimes79 Tehrantimesdaily

No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran
P.O. Box: 14155-4843
Zip Code: 1599814713

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Justice puts everything in its place, and liberality brings out things from a special direction. Justice is a statesman who gives everyone his right, and liberality is a habit belonging to one person only. Therefore, justice if worthier. Imam Ali (AS)

Desert nature, architecture inspire art collection

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Young artist Hanieh Banai has created her latest pottery collection with inspirations coming from desert nature and architecture. The collection is composed of pottery dishes intentionally placed upside down in an exhibition titled “Roof” at Tehran’s Etemad Gallery. The inverted dishes of different tones of khaki represent dunes in the desert as well as the domes and wind towers of traditional buildings found in Iranian desert cities and villages.



A pottery work from Hanieh Banai's series “Roof”
When the objects, which have been glazed inside, are placed in their upright position, they turn into dishes with colorful glazing inside.
“I tried to represent the peaks and valleys of the dunes in these objects, but to make the dishes stand up on a surface, I had to provide them with stands, which made the dishes resemble the domes of traditional buildings in the Iranian desert towns,” Banai told the Persian service of Honaronline on Saturday.
Banai used to create objects for practical applications, but her works have turned into decorations in this collection, which will be on view at the exhibition until April 23.
“Working on this collection was very impressive for me and I intend to show more regard for the artistic aspect of my works in the future,” she concluded.

Fajr film festival to review German cinema

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — A lineup of six movies by German filmmakers will go on screen in the Retrospective of German Cinema at the 37th Fajr International Film Festival, the organizers announced on Friday.
“25 km/h” by Markus Goller, “As Green as It Gets” by Florian Gallenberger and “The Keeper” by Marcus H. Rosenmuller are among the films.
The names of three more movies on the lineup will be announced in the near future.
The 37th Fajr International Film Festival will take place in Tehran from April 18 to 26.

New music coming from Swedish DJ Avicii, one year after his death

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — The family of Swedish DJ Avicii, who took his own life last year, is releasing new music that he was working on before his death.
The electronic dance music star, who had a huge following in Europe, was found dead in Oman on April 20, 2018, at the age of 28. His family said at the time he was a perfectionist who struggled with stress and who “could not go on any longer.”
Avicii, whose real name was Tim Bergling, left behind a collection of nearly finished songs and was close to completing a new album, his representatives said in a statement on Friday.
“The family decided not to keep the music locked away. Instead they wanted to share it with his fans all around the world,” the statement said.
A single, called “SOS,” will be released on April 10 and an album, called “TIM,” will be released on June 6.
Profits will go to the Tim Bergling foundation, whose causes includes suicide prevention and mental illness.

Fans bid farewell to actor Jamshid Mashayekhi at Vahdat Hall

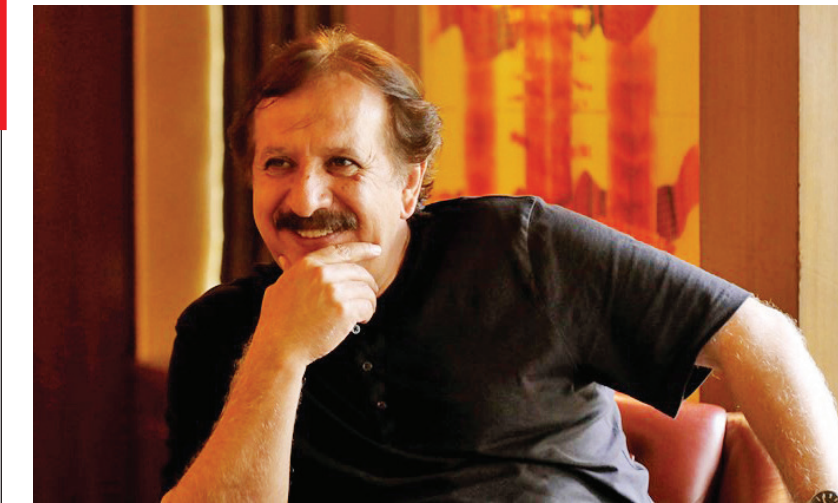
By Manijeh Rezapoor

TEHRAN — People from all walks of life joined family and friends of legendary actor Jamshid Mashayekhi for his funeral in the backyard of Tehran’s Vahdat Hall on Saturday.
Mashayekhi, who starred in such acclaimed movies as “Kamalolmolk” and “Chrysanthemum”, died last Tuesday at the age of 85.
Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi, Cinema Organization of Iran director Hossein Entezami, Iranian House of Cinema director Manuchehr Shahsavari and Theater Forum director Shahram Gilabadi were among the officials who attended Mashayekhi’s funeral.
Mashayekhi’s lifelong friends, Iraj Rad and Ali Nasirian, shared memories of their collaboration with him in short speeches during the funeral.
“Another darling of Iran’s dramatic arts left us alone. The precious dear individuals, who served the art and culture of this land, are leaving us one by one and Mashayekhi is surely one of them,” Rad said.
“Mashayekhi was one of the best. The theater stage was sacred for him. He worked with love. He dedicated his life to the culture of Iran. He would be best remembered for his love towards the art and culture of this land,” he sighed with eyes filled with tears.
He also asked the Tehran Municipality and the officials in charge to name some streets and urban places after the veteran artist.
Nasirian began his words by expressing thanks to the appreciative crowd who had come together to bid farewell to Mashayekhi.
“When (Davud) Rashidi died, I said I did not expect to come here and attend his funeral ceremony. I said the same when Ezzatollah Entezami died. I expected to go



Fans hold pictures of legendary actor Jamshid Mashayekhi in his funeral in the courtyard of Tehran's Vahdat Hall on April 6, 2019. (Mehr/Maryam Kamyab)
on stage here with you (Mashayekhi) once again,” he said with tearful eyes.
“I myself am not feeling well these days. I have lost my wife. I have lost Entezami, Rashidi and now Mashayekhi. These are great losses and great pain,” he added.
“I happened to become acquainted with Mashayekhi in 1957. We had a play that had one character missing and asked Mashayekhi to cooperate. He, who knew theater, began to cooperate and gradually became more experienced and expert.” He stated.
“Mashayekhi was a follower of Iranian morals and I have always respected his good morals and behavior,” he added.
Mashayekhi’s son, Sam, also expressed thanks to the crowd for their participation and said that the soul of his father is surely happy to see this warm farewell.
Mashayekhi was buried in the Artists Section of Tehran’s Behesht Zahra Cemetery.

Iran’s Majid Majidi on panel of Beijing Intl. Film Festival



Iranian director Majid Majidi in an undated photo.
A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Majid Majidi, the Iranian director of such acclaimed movies as “Muhammad (S), the Messenger of God” and “Children of Heaven”, has been selected for the jury of the 9th Beijing International Film Festival.
Filmmakers Rob Minkoff from America, Simon West from England and Cao Baoping from China are other members of the jury of the official competition of the festival, which will be held in the Chinese capital from April 13 to 20.
The jury also includes Chilean filmmaker Silvio Caiozzi, Chinese actress Carina Lau and Russian director Sergei Dvortsevoy.
Iranian films “Tehran: City of Love” by Ali Jaberansari and “Here” by Seyyed Hadi Mohaqeq will be screened in official competition. In addition, “Three Faces” by Iranian director Jafar Panahi will also be screened in the Panorama section of the event.

Austrian quartet Woody Black 4 to perform in Tehran



Woody Black 4 in an undated photo.
A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Woody Black 4, a bass clarinet quartet from Vienna, will give a concert at Tehran’s Nivaran Cultural Center on April 13, the band has announced on its website.
The concert has been organized by Hermes Records, a Tehran-based label that distributes works by prominent musicians in Iran and several other countries, in collaboration with the Austrian Cultural Forum Tehran (OKFT).
The quartet features Daniel Moser, Leonhard Skorupa, Stephan Dickbauer and Oscar Antoli.
Woody Black 4 is following a rather unusual musical path. The instrumentation, with four clarinets, is already out of the ordinary. The varied language of jazz serves as their foundation, but they combine that with distant musical styles, from new music to pop.

Art exhibit to raise funds for Iran’s flood victims



The Iranian Red Crescent renders relief services from Khorramabad Airport to the flood-affected people in Lorestan Province. (Mehr/Mohsen Tiz'hush)
A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — The Art Bureau of the Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization plans to hold an exhibition of artworks to raise funds for Iran’s recent flood victims.
All willing artists are invited to take part in the exhibition, which is scheduled to open on Tuesday, the bureau announced on Saturday.
All funds raised by the exhibition, which will be running until April 13, will be dedicated to the victims.
The recent heavy rainfall in Fars, Golestan, Mazandaran, Lorestan, Khuzestan and several other provinces in western, southwestern and northeastern Iran led to severe flooding, which struck and damaged many cities and villages.

Veteran artists to receive lifetime achievement honors during Islamic Revolution Art Week



This combination photo shows miniaturist Reza Badrosama (L), filmmaker Nader Talebzadeh (C) and painter Gholamali Taheri.
A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Three Iranian artists will be honored with lifetime achievement awards during the opening ceremony of the 5th Islamic Revolution Art Week on Tuesday, the organizers announced on Saturday.
Documentarian Nader Talebzadeh, who is known for his TV series “The Messiah”, is one of the artists.
The other artists are veteran painter Gholamali Taheri and miniaturist Reza Badrossama.
The Art Bureau of the Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization is the organizer of the Islamic Revolution Art Week, which will run in Tehran until April 16.