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PERSPECTIVE

M.A.Saki
Deputy editor-in-chief

Pushing the world toward anarchy

Donald Trump signed a proclamation on March 25 recognizing Israel's stealing of the Golan Heights owned by Syria. Israel seized the land from Syria in the 1967 Middle East war with a support by the U.S. and certain other Western countries.

Trump signed the proclamation while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was present in the White House.

According to France 24, Trump said, "This was a long time in the making." However, it took place at a time to give boost to Netanyahu who is facing reelection on April 9.

Such actions by Trump are making international law irrelevant. In fact, the Trump administration is pushing the world toward anarchy and lawlessness. Trump and his lieutenants, including John Bolton, Mike Pompeo, Mike Pence, are promoting the law of jungle in the world.

Recognizing Jerusalem al-Quds as the capital of Israel and moving the U.S. embassy to there, endorsing Israel's occupation of the Golan Heights, and abrogation of the Iran nuclear deal enshrined in the UN Security Council Resolution 2231 are blatant violations of international law if we still think that international law matters.

Authorizing Israel's stealing of the Golan Heights and other illegal moves will remain in the memory of the human being so long as the life continues on the earth. These actions will also deepen hatred of the U.S. among the people around the world, particularly those in Arab countries. Surely, it will also fan the flames of extremism among the Arab youth.

Such measures are being taken by a country who is claiming support for human rights, the rule of law, respect for international law and many other empty slogans.

It is true that Trump is not synonymous with the entire U.S. and that his rash behavior, especially his foreign policy, is facing fierce opposition at home, yet the U.S. blind support for Israeli occupation of other nations' lands since it was born in 1948 cannot be omitted from the memory of the history. The only difference is that Trump is acting like a wild animal when it comes to supporting Israel. **→13**

Abrupt springtime showers quench Iran's thirst

By Mina Izadi

TEHRAN — Located in an arid and semi-arid region, Iran has been suffering from water scarcity for decades. However, thanks to the helping hand of nature, the unquenchable thirst has slightly been satisfied.

The unprecedented heavy rains which started on March 19, initially hit Golestan and Mazandaran provinces in the north of Iran, flooding villages and damaging roads. The strong and devastating precipitation system gradually covered a much wider area, stretching through the western and central part of the country.

Although shocked with the torrential fall in precipitation during the two-week period, the parched water reserves both surface and ground types are most probably enjoying the abundance

of the reviving fluid.

Figures regularly published by the Water Resources Management Company, show that the sharp rainfalls have changed the pattern of drought in the borders of the country.

According to the charts and numbers, since the beginning of the current water year (September 23, 2018) until April 5, the accumulative precipitation reached 281.3 millimeters all through the country. The number is 180 percent higher than the figure recorded for the corresponding period last year, with 100.3 millimeters of precipitation recorded.

More detailed analysis of numbers comes up with significant twists in the comparatively amount of rainfall each region has received.

For the ease of study, environmentalists and

meteorologists have divided the country into six catchment areas including the Caspian Sea, the Persian Gulf and Oman Sea, Urmia Lake, Central Plateau, Eastern Border and Qarequm in the northeast.

According to WRMC, the Eastern Border catchment area has experienced the most significant changes in the amount of rainfall, receiving around 68 millimeters during the investigated period. The figure is 282 percent higher than the same period of last year with only 17.8 millimeters.

The least change is recorded for Urmia Lake catchment area, receiving 54 percent higher precipitation than the period last year. The watershed has received around 399 millimeters of rainfall, while the figure reached 260 last year. **→11**

Hands off Venezuela!

Maduro provides food for the poorest who are disproportionately hit hard by sanctions. Taking a walk through the richest neighborhoods of Caracas shows just how disingenuous they are.

These same elites seek to return to a time before Chávez when the wealthy few had everything, impoverishing the vast majority of Venezuelans through neoliberal economic policies. A look at Instagram in Venezuela shows the opulent lifestyle the elite live, partying on beaches, traveling the world, and living in a life of luxury. It should come as no surprise then that the government is supported by the poor while the opposition is made up of middle and upper class Venezuelans who are far from starving.

Having participated in a massive demonstra-

tion in support of the government while I was in Venezuela, it became very apparent that the opposition, comprised mostly of the traditional elite and middle class, is mostly white while the government is supported and defended by the overwhelming majority of people of color.

Many may ask why the poorest people of Venezuela, those living in the shantytowns of Caracas and beyond, would support the government? The answer is that for the first time in Venezuelan history, the "wretched of the earth," the poor black, brown and indigenous masses saw themselves represented by the government. Chávez, who identified as indigenous and Afro-Venezuelan, not only made them visible, but put them at the very forefront of the government's policies. **→7**



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Iraqi PM visits Imam Reza shrine in Mashhad

MASHHAD — Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi visited the shrine of Imam Reza (AS), the eighth Shia Imam, in Mashhad late on Sunday.

Abdul Mahdi visited Iran on Saturday for a two-day visit. He was accompanied by a large economic and political team. During his stay in Tehran, he held talks with President Rouhani, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri.

Prime Minister Abdul Mahdi also participated in the business forum in Iran's chamber of commerce in Tehran on Sunday.



ARTICLE

Maryam Qarehgozlou
Head of the Tehran Times
Social Desk

Why Catholic mom implores girls to ditch leggings?

In a letter published in the University of Notre Dame's student newspaper "The Observer" on March 25 a catholic mom, Maryann White, begged female students to stop wearing leggings which sparked inevitable backlash, but why the concept of modest dressing is lost on so many in recent decades?

In her letter White writes: "I've thought about writing this letter for a long time. I waited, hoping that fashions would change and such a letter would be unnecessary — but that doesn't seem to be happening."

She continues: "I'm just a Catholic mother of four sons with a problem that only girls can solve: leggings."

She called the garment "unforgiving" regretting that in such a world it is hard on Catholic mothers to teach their sons that women are someone's daughters and sisters. That women should be viewed first as people — and all people should be considered with respect.

She wondered why women would want to voluntarily expose their "nether regions" by wearing leggings, and asked how difficult it would be for young guys to ignore them.

White also argued that "the human body is a beautiful thing" but if one wants to be seen as a person and not a body and respect oneself and the other people they shouldn't dress like this.

She concludes her letter saying that "leggings are so naked, so form fitting, so exposing. Could you think of the mothers of sons the next time you go shopping and consider choosing jeans instead? You have every right to wear them. But you have every right to choose not to."

It is clearly apparent that social immorality has urged parents and families in West, to step up and act to defend the moral laws, norms and standards.

However, the letter provoked protests as according to The Observer, students wore leggings in objection to the letter on March 26 and 27.

Some believe that everyone deserves to dress in a way that makes them feel comfortable and that women are not responsible for men's behavior, so that they cannot be told what to wear or not to control men's behaviors. **→12**

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Larijani: Islamic states aggrieved at U.S. policies in region

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Islamic countries feel aggrieved at Washington's bloodthirsty policies in the region, Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani said on Sunday evening, pointing to the Israeli-Palestinian issue.

Other countries have also voiced dissatisfaction over U.S. policies on the Iran nuclear deal and the issue of Palestine but they have not severed ties with the United States, ISNA quoted Larijani as saying.

The Majlis speaker called for unity among Muslims with regard to Palestine, saying Islamic countries should react strongly to the bloodthirsty policies of U.S. President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.



Gholam-Hossein Esmaili named Judiciary spokesman

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi named Gholam-Hossein Esmaili as the new spokesman of the Judiciary, replacing Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Eje'i.

Raisi said the decision came after Mohseni-Eje'i asked for naming a new spokesman as he is being given new missions as deputy Judiciary chief, ISNA reported.

He thanked Mohseni-Eje'i for his efforts, saying his work in the Judiciary has always been "valuable" and "effective".

The Judiciary chief also wished for the success of Esmaili in his new post.

Esmaili has served as Tehran Province's chief justice.



Falahatpisheh to attend tripartite meeting in Moscow on Syria

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee Chairman Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh is scheduled to leave Tehran for Moscow on Tuesday to attend the tripartite meeting with his Russian and Turkish counterparts to discuss the Syrian conflict.

Accompanied by a delegation, Falahatpisheh will attend the joint meeting in State Duma on April 10, which will be held in line with the Astana talks with the aim of bringing peace and security to Syria, Mehr reported.

The Astana process was launched by Russia, Turkey and Iran in January 2017 to bring all warring parties in Syria to the negotiating table to complement the UN-sponsored peace talks in Geneva.



Pakistani FM assures flood-hit Iran of full support

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi has promised his country's full support and assistance to the flood victims in Iran.

"The floods in Iran are unprecedented and as concerns grow over greater flooding, I would like to assure Iran of our support and assistance in this difficult time," he tweeted on Monday.

"My thoughts and prayers are with the deceased, their families and the many who have lost their homes," he added.

A day earlier Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan in a tweet said that Pakistan was ready to provide any required humanitarian assistance to Iran.



Armenia sends humanitarian aid to Iran

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Armenia on Monday dispatched humanitarian aid for victims of large-scale floods in Iran, ILNA reported.

The humanitarian aid included four trucks consisting of necessary goods.

The aid was set to be delivered to Iran's Red Crescent Society in the city of Tabriz.

Also on Monday, a press conference was held in Tehran after the delivery of humanitarian aid by the German Red Cross.

The press conference was attended by Rescue and Relief Organization head Morteza Salimi and German Ambassador to Tehran Michael Klor-Berchtold.



EU extends Iran sanctions for alleged rights violations

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The European Union has extended for a year its sanctions against Iran in connection with alleged human rights violations in the country, the EU Council announced on Monday.

"The Council today extended until 13 April 2020 its restrictive measures responding to serious human rights violations in Iran. These measures consist of a travel ban and an asset freeze against 82 people and one entity, and a ban on exports to Iran of equipment which might be used for internal repression and of equipment for monitoring telecommunications," the council said in a statement.

These measures were first put in place in 2011 and have been extended ever since on an annual basis, the statement added.

Trump settles in for a good boomerang

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Trump administration on Monday designated the Iranian Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) as a foreign terrorist organization, taking an unprecedented step that seems to increase pressure on Tehran.

The move seems certain to bring a new level of tension between the two countries, as Iran's leaders have said they will immediately retaliate in kind.

This is while on Sunday, Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari, the commander of the IRGC, warned that if the U.S. labels his force as terrorist, the result would mean the IRGC could target the U.S. military the same way it currently targets ISIS.

Iranian lawmakers on Sunday prepared legislation that would label the U.S. military as a terrorist group, according to IRNA.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in a letter late on Monday asked President Hassan Rouhani as head of Iran's Supreme National Security Council



All in to help the flood-hit

Rouhani asks withdrawal of 2bn euros from national fund to redress for flood damages

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Following recent floods which affected 25 provinces in Iran, people from all walks of life stepped in to lend a helping hand to those affected.

In the western province of Lorestan, which was one of the severest hit, people from Dooreh county carried large bags filled with food, medicine, blankets, and other items on their backs to Mahmulan over 20 kilometers away through mountains and valleys.

Located by the Karkheh River in a long, narrow valley between two rocky mountains in the southern part of Lorestan, Mamulan saw a great part of its residences and public buildings drowned and washed away when the roaring water frothed by.

Elsewhere, Alireza Beiranvand, the Iranian National Football Team goalkeeper who fares from Lorestan, collected 16 truckloads of aid and personally headed the caravan to the location to help.

President Hassan Rouhani has asked

the withdrawal of 2 billion euros from the National Development Fund under the authorization of Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to fix the damages caused by the flood, MP Fatemeh Zolghadr said on Monday.

At least 70 people have been killed since March 19 in floods and extreme weather conditions in various Iranian provinces, from north to south, following the heaviest downpours in the country in decades.

Estimates by government agencies suggest that the floods have destroyed over 25,000

to put United States Central Command (CENTCOM) forces in West Asia on the list of terrorist groups of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

President Trump announced the designation on Monday, in a shift from the decades in which the U.S. has accused Iran of being a state sponsor of terrorism.

With the designation, anyone who deals with the IRGC could run the risk of facing criminal charges.

It's the first time the U.S. has declared an element of a foreign government to be a terrorist organization.

In recent months, the Trump administration has sought to impose "maximum pressure" on Iran, after abandoning the nuclear deal brokered during the Obama administration. Even before news emerged of a possible terrorism designation for the IRGC, more than 970 Iranian entities and individuals were already under U.S. sanctions.

Iran names U.S. CENTCOM terrorist organization

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Supreme National Security Council on Monday named the United States Central Command (CENTCOM) a terrorist organization, and the U.S. government a sponsor of terror.

It came minutes after U.S. President Donald Trump announced the U.S. will formally designate Iran's Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) as a foreign terrorist organization.

The Supreme National Security Council in a statement condemned Trump's move as "baseless" and warned of the consequences of its move for peace and security in the Middle East.

Prior to that, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in a letter asked President Hassan Rouhani, as head of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, to put U.S. forces in West Asia on the list of terrorist groups of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

In a statement, Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said Zarif's request was based on the law to deal with U.S. human rights violations and provocative and terrorist acts in the region, ISNA reported.

"This unprecedented step, led by the Department of State, recognizes the reality that Iran is not only a State Sponsor

of Terrorism, but that the IRGC actively participates in, finances, and promotes terrorism as a tool of statecraft," Trump said in a statement, according to CNN.

Iranian officials warned in recent days against the move, saying if the U.S. went ahead with the designation, Tehran would retaliate by designating the U.S. military as a terrorist organization.

Earlier on Monday, Zarif warned the United States that Iran will take retaliatory action if the U.S. designates the IRGC a terrorist organization, Mehr reported.

He made the remarks at a meeting of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, said Ali Najafi Khoshroudi, the spokesman of the committee.

The foreign minister "condemned the possible U.S. measure and emphasized that such measure would create lots of dangers," Khoshroudi said.

"Although Iran has not been and will not be seeking tension, but should the U.S. decide to implement the move, Iran will take reciprocal action," Khoshroudi quoted Zarif as saying.

Ahmad Amir-Abadi, a member of the Majlis presiding board, also said the parliament would designate all U.S. bases in the region as terrorist bases should the U.S. go on with such move.

Those backing Saudi war on Yemen should account for their crimes: Iran

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said on Monday that the countries that support the Saudi-led war on Yemen should be held accountable for their crimes.

The statement by Qassemi came one day after Saudi-led air strikes on Sanaa hit a warehouse near a girls' school that left at least 13 children dead and many others wounded.

"They are an accomplice in bombarding a school in Sanaa and should account for their supports," the ministry spokesman said.

Qassemi strongly condemned the attack and described it as "inhumane".

He also urged the UN to take immediate actions to stop attacks on Yemenis.

The Saudi-led coalition backed by the U.S. started the war on Yemen in March 2015 with the aim of reinstating ousted president Mansour Hadi with in days. The war has led to famine and spread of cholera in the poor country. The UN is calling it "the world's worst humanitarian crisis."

On the eve of the fifth year of Saudi Arabia's war on Yemen, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif wrote a post on his tweeter account on March

26 saying the regime in Riyadh should put an end to the "nightmare that this war has become."

"On the eve of the war's shameful FIFTH YEAR, a reminder that it's not too late to stop the nightmare that this war has become," Zarif remarked.

In April 2015, Zarif submitted a letter to Ban Ki-moon, then UN secretary general, outlining Iran's four-point peace plan for Yemen.

The plan called for an immediate ceasefire and end of all foreign military attacks, humanitarian assistance, a resumption of broad national dialogue, and establishment of an inclusive national unity government.

"It is imperative for the international community to get more effectively involved in ending the senseless aerial attacks and establishing a ceasefire," Zarif said in the letter, adding that Tehran is ready to cooperate with the UN "to facilitate and encourage an immediate end to these senseless bombardments and initiation of a genuine dialogue to find a political solution to this tragic crisis."

In his tweet on March 26, Zarif said Saudi Arabia and its allies rejected the proposal "claiming that victory was at hand within THREE WEEKS."

Senior MP: Iranian parliament to introduce 14 motions against U.S. terror acts

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Iranian parliament plans to discuss and approve 14 motions against the U.S. for its support for terror activities should the U.S. decides to designate the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organization, Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee Chairman Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh has said.

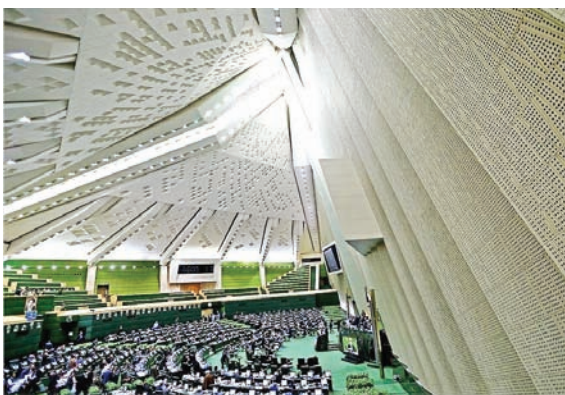
The senior MP broke the story hours before the U.S. formally designated the IRGC as a foreign terrorist organization.

"In line with supporting the Guards, the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee has put on agenda naming the U.S. military men as terrorists," Falahatpisheh told the Tasnim news agency.

Based on the motions, the government, including ministries and executive bodies, will be duty bound to counter the U.S. acts and foil its plots, the MP explained.

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 terrorist designation against the IRGC came 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.

In a tweet on Saturday, Falahatpisheh said, "If the Guards is put on America's terror groups list, we will put American military personnel on the terrorist blacklist

that the United States has blocked the accounts of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) which was to receive foreign cash aid for flood victims in Iran, saying this is happening while Washington makes claims of support for human rights.

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. Some

estimates have put the damages from floods more than two billion euros.

The IRCS said in a statement on Saturday that it has not received any cash for humanitarian aid from other countries for the flood victims as there are no monetary channel to receive cash.

For her part, Roth expressed sympathy with the Iranian people over the flood incident.

She also said her country attaches great importance to Iran's role in the region and its contribution to the reconstruction



of areas in Syria and elsewhere which have been destroyed by terrorists.

Secrecy in nuclear talks with Saudi angers U.S. lawmakers

U.S. lawmakers are infuriated over the Trump administration's secret talks with the Saudi kingdom over a nuclear deal.

With no solid prospects in sight, the administration has shown U.S. companies the green light for that would enable the monarchy to have nukes.

Congressmen specifically want to know whether or not the approval was issued after dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi was murdered at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, the Hill reported Sunday.

"First we want the information from [the Department of Energy], and we're demanding it. We should get it," said New Jersey Democratic Senator Bob Menendez, the ranking member on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. "And I think it's critical to know exactly how this happened, when it happened and particularly were you doing this after Khashoggi?"

In the wake of Khashoggi's murder, the Congress has slowly engaged in a process allegedly to end U.S. support for the Saudi in the war on impoverished Yemen, where a humanitarian crisis is underway.

U.S. Congress sent Trump a resolution for that purpose last week, although President Donald Trump is expected to veto it.

The Oversight and Reform Committee announced in February that it was launching a probe to "determine whether the actions being pursued by the Trump administration are in the national security interests of the United States or, rather, serve those who stand to gain financially as a result of this potential change in U.S. foreign policy."

Trump has thrown his support behind the monarchy and particularly Mohammed bin Salman, who reportedly ordered the assassination of the former Washington Post columnist at the Saudi consulate in Turkey last October.

■ **Saudi Arabia's nuclear plant designed for training scientists: CNN**

A CNN report has revealed new details about Saudi Arabia's first nuclear plant, saying the small experimental nuclear reactor is designed for training scientists.



Progress on the site under construction at the King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology in Riyadh has been confirmed by satellite imagery.

Former director for inspections at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Robert Kelley described progress on the reactor as "expedientious," saying it could be operational within "nine months to a year."

The next phase, however, would require intensive international inspections.

"They've been exempt for 30 years since they signed a non-proliferation treaty," said Kelley. "Now they're going to have to make some serious paperwork and agree to inspections" if they want to acquire nuclear fuel.

He further downplayed concerns that the reactor in Riyadh could be used to create a nuclear weapon, telling CNN that it would take a century to enrich enough plutonium.

"It's the size of a waste basket and has no strategic importance," Kelley said, adding it

was only meant for training scientists.

In an interview with CBS on Friday, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the Trump administration would "not permit [Saudi Arabia becoming a nuclear-armed nation] to happen."

"We will not permit that to happen anywhere in the world. The President understands the threat of proliferation. We will never write a \$150 million check to the Saudis and hand them over the capacity to threaten Israel and the United States with nuclear weapons, never."

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.

On Friday, IAEA chief Yukiya Amano asked Saudi Arabia to implement safeguards for its nuclear reactor.

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.

Concern over Saudi nuclear ambitions has mounted both because of the regime's dark record of violating human rights, particularly for detention of women's rights activists and the cruel murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Turkey, as well as its brutal war in Yemen.

Mohammed bin Salman, the de facto day-to-day ruler of the kingdom, has stated that it would promptly acquire nuclear weapons if Iran did.

Iran, for its part, has warned that it has noticed some of its neighbors with a "proven black record of supporting terrorist movements" working on "suspicious nuclear projects," which would force Tehran to revise its defense strategy.

Last month, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei played down reports about the multibillion-dollar U.S. plan to build nuclear reactors in the kingdom.

"Of course, if they build them, I personally will not be upset because I know that God willing they [the facilities] will fall into the hands of Muslim Mujahedin in the not too distant future," the Leader said.

A heated controversy is underway in the U.S. over what Democrats call President Donald Trump's rush to approve nuclear projects with the oil-rich Arab kingdom.

A bipartisan resolution introduced in the U.S. Senate in February demanded that the use of any U.S. nuclear power technology in Saudi Arabia be accompanied by safeguards to ensure the kingdom cannot enrich uranium or reprocess spent fuel.

"The last thing America should do is inadvertently help develop nuclear weapons for a bad actor on the world stage," said Democratic Senator Jeff Merkley, one of the resolution's sponsors.

(Source: agencies)

Erdogan to discuss possible Turkish operation in Syria with Putin



President Recep Tayyip Erdogan says he is scheduled to discuss with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin a possible Turkish military operation in northern Syria, where it has been confronting US-backed militants.

Erdogan said he would hold talks with President Putin in Moscow on Monday, Russia's RIA news agency reported.

"Our preparations on the border are finished, everything is ready for an operation. We can begin it at any moment. I will discuss this issue among others face-to-face (with Putin) on my visit to Russia," Erdogan was cited as saying.

The Turkish leader has vowed that his troops would crush the U.S.-backed YPG militia east of the Euphrates in northern Syria, saying the militant group could not rely on Washington's support to defeat the Anatolian country.

He said last year that preparations were complete for an operation. Turkey considers the YPG as a terrorist organization and an extension of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has been fighting for an autonomous region inside Turkey since 1984.

Turkey has been infuriated by U.S. support for the YPG, which forms the backbone of the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), an anti-Damascus alliance of predominantly Kurdish militants. Turkey first deployed forces to northern Syria in 2016 to repel the YPG under the banner of the so-called "Operation Euphrates Shield."

The Turkish incursion in Syria's northwestern region of Afrin started after the United States said it sought to set up a thousand-strong force in Syria near the Turkish border comprising SDF, which is led by the YPG.

Syria views the Turkish military intervention as a violation of its sovereignty, and has repeatedly called on Ankara to pull its forces out.

Turkey, however, has vowed to press ahead with attacks on the positions of the YPG.

Last month, U.S. President Donald Trump ordered a quick withdrawal of all 2,000 American forces from Syria but then said troops would get out slowly "over a period of time."

Trump's decision to leave Syria has exposed the Kurdish group to possible Turkish attacks.

The United States, which has set up observation posts on the Syrian side of the border, has warned Turkey against a new incursion and said the newly constructed positions would help deter any security threat against Turkey coming from Syria.

In a separate development on Sunday, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said the easiest way to resolve the issue of Rukban refugee camp near Syria's frontier with Jordan is to put an end to the unlawful U.S. occupation of the Syrian territory.

"I think that the easiest and most effective choice would be to put an end to the unlawful occupation of this territory by the United States," he said.

The camp is located near the U.S. base at al-Tanf which is a key center for training and equipping militants opposed to the Syrian government. The top Russian diplomat further said that that U.S. forces cooperate with militants in al-Tanf zone, urging Washington to end its "occupation" of the region.

"The Americans have announced the establishment of some safety zone in the al-Tanf area with a 55-kilometer radius. It is unclear what they base their illegal presence there on: it is basically occupation."

"There is a lot of illegal armed groups there, and the Americans are gladly cooperating with them, as far as I understand, to help them recover their strength," he said.

(Source: Daily Star)

Malaysia says 200 Rohingya migrants still at sea after latest arrival

Malaysian authorities on Monday were on the lookout for boats believed to be carrying up to 200 Rohingya after dozens of migrants were found near a beach in the country's north.

Scores of Rohingya Muslims have boarded boats in recent months to try to reach Malaysia, part of what authorities fear could be a new wave of people smuggling by sea after a 2015 crackdown on trafficking.

Forty-one Rohingya men and boys, aged between 14 and 30, were detained on Monday near the town of Simpang Empat after landing at Sungai Belati beach, state police chief Noor Mushar Mohamed said in a statement.

Thirty-five migrants landed at the same beach last month in the northern state of Perlis, bordering Thailand.

More boats carrying about 200 Rohingya migrants are believed to be at sea, Noor Mushar said.

"If we find them in our waters, we will bring them to shore," he said, adding that it was not clear if this group was travelling from Bangladesh or Myanmar.

More than 700,000 Rohingya crossed into Bangladesh in 2017 fleeing an army crackdown in Myanmar's Rakhine

state, according to U.N. agencies.

Myanmar regards Rohingya as illegal migrants from the Indian subcontinent and has confined tens of thousands to sprawling camps in Rakhine since violence swept the area in 2012.

The unrest prompted tens of thousands of Rohingya to flee Myanmar by sea. The exodus peaked in 2015, when an estimated 25,000 people crossed the Andaman Sea for Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia, many drowning in unsafe and overloaded boats.

The boat that arrived off Perlis on Monday was carrying 47 Rohingya, all of whom paid a Thai trafficker 4,000 ringgit (\$976.80) each to take them to Malaysia, Noor Mushar said, citing interviews with one of the detainees.

The group had been travelling with hundreds of other Rohingyas on a larger boat before they were transferred to smaller, crowded vessels in Thai waters, he said.

The 47 migrants were dropped about one kilometer offshore and walked for an hour through mud. Forty one were detained and six people are missing, Noor Mushar said.



"Since there was no one to greet them, they made their way in separate groups to the nearby villages, covered in mud," he said, adding they were in good health despite their ordeal.

(Source: Reuters)

India's BJP releases manifesto ahead of elections

India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has made 75 promises, which include the contentious decision to scrap a decades-old law providing special rights to the residents of disputed Kashmir region, according to the party's election manifesto.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's BJP has consistently advocated ending Kashmir's special constitutional status, which prevents non-residents from buying property in Indian-administered Kashmir, arguing that such laws have hindered its integration with the rest of the country.

"We believe that Article 35A is an obstacle in the development of the state," the party's manifesto said.

Political leaders in Muslim-majority Kashmir, where India is fighting an armed rebellion against its rule, have warned that repealing the law would lead to widespread unrest.

Modi has made his strong stance on national security a key part of the BJP's election campaign, following a recent flare-up in tensions with arch foe Pakistan, which also lays claims to Kashmir.

"Nationalism is our inspiration," Prime Minister Modi said at the release of the BJP's election manifesto at the party headquarters in New Delhi.

Amit Shah, the head of the Hindu nationalist party, along with other top leaders released the BJP manifesto for the upcoming elections that begin on Thursday.

The BJP also promised to reserve 33 per-



cent of seats in the Indian parliament and state assemblies for women, if it is voted back to power.

"Women's welfare and development will be accorded a high priority at all levels within the government, and the BJP is committed to 33 percent reservation in parliament and state assemblies through a constitutional amendment," the manifesto said.

Al Jazeera's Faiz Jamil, reporting from New Delhi, said these manifestos are the intent - not necessarily what the governments are going to do.

"Among the more controversial promises is to create a uniform civil code - currently under the constitution, different religions have different civil code rights, particularly for marriage and inheritance," he said.

"They also want to pass the citizenship bill - a measure that would allow immigrants from neighbouring countries who are not Muslim to get Indian citizenship."

■ **Farm income**

The BJP promised a capital investment of 100 trillion Indian rupees (\$1.44 trillion) on infrastructure by 2024, to help create jobs for the millions of youth entering the workforce every year.

The party pledged to simplify the goods and services tax (GST), which disrupted businesses and hurt economic growth when it was introduced by Modi's government in 2017.

The party said it is committed to building a temple for Hindu god Ram in Ayodhya in place of medieval era Babri mosque, which was demolished by Hindu mobs in 1992.

The main opposition Congress party led by Rahul Gandhi is seeking alliances with regional parties to thwart Modi, accusing the BJP of undermining India's secular foundations.

Surveys suggest the BJP is the frontrunner going into the election, although some have said it could lose the clear majority it won five years ago.

The national elections will see close to 900 million voters cast their ballots in nearly a million polling booths - the world's biggest ever democratic exercise.

Voters will elect 543 of 545 MPs to India's lower house of parliament, the Lok Sabha.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Afghanistan to 'exchange views' with Taliban

Afghanistan is sending a delegation to "exchange views" with the Taliban in Qatar, in an ongoing push to find a way out of the country's 17-year-old war.

Fresh talks are expected to take place in Doha later this month, where Taliban members are due to meet with Afghan officials and other stakeholders.

"For now, an inclusive delegation will go (to the Qatari capital) on behalf of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and exchange views with the Taliban," said Mohammad Omar Daudzai, President Ashraf Ghani's envoy for peace.

Daudzai stressed that the delegation will only serve to swap views with the Taliban, and its members would not necessarily be the same as a formal negotiating team.

Afghan officials will meet Wednesday to finalize delegates, and to decide who will comprise that official negotiating team.

U.S. and Taliban officials have held several rounds of talks but the militant group has so far refused to talk directly to the Afghan government, which they consider an illegitimate regime.

Discussions also took place between the Taliban and Afghani opposition groups in Moscow in February.

The Taliban had no immediate reaction to Daudzai's announcement, which comes after U.S. envoy Zalmay Khalilzad spent last week in Afghanistan as part of an ongoing push for a peace deal.

Khalilzad has repeatedly called on Ghani to form a strong negotiating team to reach a deal before the country's delayed presidential elections, now slated for September.

On Friday, during a side trip Khalilzad made to Pakistan, Prime Minister Imran Khan said he had some "brotherly advice" for Afghanistan, suggesting an interim government in Kabul to help smooth the talks process.

Kabul was furious about the comment, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned a Pakistan diplomat to explain the remarks.

(Source: AFP)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	188592.7
IFX	2412.42

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,162 rials
GBP	54,870 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$70.67/b
WTI	\$63.39/b
OPEC Basket	\$68.76/b
Gold	\$1,298.40/oz
Silver	\$15.21/oz
Platinum	\$916.20/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Iran, Iraq ink MOU to establish joint commodity exchange

1 → The two countries also agreed to create suitable grounds for dissemination of business news to persuade Iraqi businessmen to play active role at the IME in order to meet their demands. During a business forum held between Iranian and Iraqi businessmen at the place of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) on Sunday Majid Mozan delivered speech, stressing the two countries' willingness for expansion of economic relations.



Iran Mercantile Exchange Head Hamed Soltaninejad (R) and Basra Chamber of Commerce Head Majed Mozan shaking hand after signing an MOU on establishment of a joint commodity exchange on Sunday

The event was attended by several senior officials from both sides including Abdul-Mahdi, Iran's First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri, as well as Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian, Iraqi Minister of Electricity Louay Al Khateeb, Iraqi Trade Minister Mohammad Hashim Abdul Majid Jasim, Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani, and Gholam-Hossein Shafeie, the chairman of ICCIMA, along with representatives of private companies.

Asia shares at seven-month peak as China talks stimulus

Asian shares inched up to seven-month highs on Monday as investors cheered a rebound in U.S. payrolls and hints of more stimulus in China, though there was some caution ahead of what is likely to be a tough U.S. earnings season.

In a document published on the central government's website late on Sunday, Beijing said it would step up a policy of targeted cuts to banks' required reserve ratios to encourage financing for small and medium-sized businesses.

Chinese blue chips climbed 1.4 percent to territory not visited since March last year. MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan followed by gaining 0.4 percent to its highest since August.

Japan's Nikkei also made its high of the year so far and was last up 0.1 percent. E-Mini futures for the S&P 500 were little moved.

On Wall Street, the benchmark S&P 500 closed higher for its seventh trading day in a row last week, the longest winning streak since October 2017.

However, a test looms as major U.S. banks kick off what analysts expect to be the first quarter of contracting corporate earnings since 2016.

JPMorgan Chase & Co and Wells Fargo & Co will get the ball rolling on Friday.

Minutes of the Federal Reserve's last policy meeting are due out on Wednesday.

"Markets will be looking at just how dovish the FOMC has become," wrote analysts at TD Securities in a note. "We put a very low but not zero chance on a rate cut discussion; conversely rate hikes are still on the horizon for the majority of Fed officials." "The minutes are likely to show peak dovishness in terms of nervousness about the outlook."

There was a huge sigh of relief globally on Friday when the U.S. payrolls report showed a solid 196,000 rise in jobs in March, while annual wage growth slowed a little to 3.2 percent.

"This data assuages both the downside and upside fears," said Alan Ruskin, global head of G10 FX Strategy at Deutsche Bank. "Fears of soft growth are assuaged. On the upside, the wage data does not point to further acceleration that would threaten inflation."

"It plays to idea that the U.S. economy remains reasonably robust, and does not justify any rate cut expectations over say the next six months, and is to that extent going to play to buying U.S. dollar dips versus the majors."

The dollar was flat at 97.329 against a basket of currencies on Monday, but remained short of the March peak at 97.710 which marks major chart resistance.

(Source: Reuters)

IRENEX to hold 8th round of crude oil offering today

E N E R G Y **T E H R A N** — National d e s k Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) will offer one million barrels of crude oil at the base price of \$63.36 at Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX) for the eighth time today, ISNA reported.

As reported, like the previous rounds, the least amount of sales will be 35,000 barrels in this round of offering which is the first round in the new Iranian calendar year (started on March 21).

NIOC offered crude oil at IRENEX first on October 28, 2018 just few days before new

U.S. sanctions on Iran's petroleum sector took effect (November 4). In the first round, NIOC could sell some 280,000 barrels of crude oil at \$74.85 per barrel. With the daily supply amount of one million barrels, the market wrapped up by selling eight 35,000-barrel cargos of oil on the day.

Since the U.S.'s withdrew from Iran's nuclear pact in May 2018, vowing to drive Iran's oil exports down to zero, the Islamic Republic has been taking various measures to counter U.S. actions and to keep its oil exports levels as high as possible.

Export of petrochemical, oil products satisfactory: Zanganeh

During a meeting with members of the energy committee of the Iranian parliament on Sunday, Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said the previous Iranian calendar year of 1397, which ended on March 20, was a good year for oil industry.

"We had no limits for gas supply either to the industrial or power generation sectors during the year," the official said.

He said over 92 percent of the Iranian population had access to natural gas, saying over 99 percent of the urban population and 80 percent of the rural population also had access to the item in Iran.

The official said that efforts were being made for not disclosing any numbers regarding the country's oil and gas condensate exports due to the U.S. sanctions and the potential advantages that might be taken of the figures by Iran's enemies.



The Iranian minister further said Iran was able to export oil and condensate at desired levels and had no technical shortcoming in this regard. "The problem is that oil exports have become a political and security matter, not a practical one."

The official underlined the recent flash floods in several Iranian provinces including the oil-rich southwestern province of Khuzestan.

(Source: Shana)

German exports, imports drop more than expected in February

German exports and imports both fell more than expected in February, data showed on Monday, in the latest sign that Europe's largest economy is likely to post meager growth

in the first quarter.

The Federal Statistics Office said seasonally adjusted exports dropped by 1.3 percent on the month while imports were down 1.6

percent. That meant the trade surplus edged up to 18.7 billion euros (\$20.99 billion) from a revised 18.6 billion euros the previous month. A Reuters poll of economists had pointed

to a 0.5 percent decrease in exports and a 0.7 percent decline in imports. The trade surplus was expected to narrow to 18.0 billion euros.

(Source: Reuters)

Turkish banks sweat under rising pile of debt restructurings

Turkish companies are struggling to get off the hamster wheel of debt as foreign borrowings run near record highs. The reason: a plunge in the lira that has driven up the cost of their obligations in dollars and euros.

Banks are being left to carry the burden amid a surge in demand from some of the country's industrial giants to restructure their liabilities -- on top of a jump in bad loans. Lenders are also pulling back on providing new credit as the financial system comes under increasing pressure from the recession and an inflation rate of almost 20 percent.

While the lira has recovered from the all-time low it hit in August, the currency is still down by a third against the dollar since the beginning of 2018. The result is that Turkey Inc.'s debt amounts to 40 percent of gross domestic product, exceeding ratios in Eastern Europe's 10 biggest emerging markets and that of South Africa, which together averaged 22 percent, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

"The key question for Turkish banks is how much further bad debts will deteriorate in the face of deteriorating growth and political uncertainty," said Tomasz Noetzel, a banking analyst at Bloomberg Intelligence. "Another bout of weakness and big swings in the lira would only add to the risks for the industry."

Having to re-arrange borrowings is adding insult to injury for lenders that have seen their valuations more than halve over the past three years. Efforts by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's administration to prop up growth by stoking a credit binge -- and leaning on banks to lend at rates barely above inflation -- are biting borrowers and lenders alike.

The buffer banks have against any shocks looks "dangerously thin," Noetzel said in a note on Friday. NPLs have swelled about 13 percent this year to \$19.3 billion, which means a deeper-than-anticipated economic contraction or renewed pressure on the lira could erode the estimated \$27 billion in pre-provision operating-profit cushion the lenders have, he said.

Renewable energy company Bereket Enerji Uretim AS was the latest firm to ask banks to reorganize \$5 billion of loans. That means Turkey's largest companies have either completed or sought at least \$28 billion of restructurings, up from \$18 billion a year ago, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

Other companies are also weighing their options. Cukurova Holding AS, a founding stakeholder in the country's biggest mobile-phone operator, is considering asking state-owned TC Ziraat Bankasi AS to rejig a 10-year \$1.6 billion loan taken in 2014. Ferry-boat company IDO is working with Lazard Ltd. to restructure \$500 million.

(Source: Bloomberg)



One of the main strategies that Iran chose to execute to help its oil exports afloat has been trying new ways to diversify the mechanism of oil sales, one of which is offering oil at the country's stock market.

Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zan-

ganeh has said that NIOC will offer crude oil at IRENEX every week.

The minister said that it may take some time for selling crude oil at IRENEX to be common and regular, but the oil ministry will offer the product at this market every week.

'China interested in more investments in Iran'

China is looking for a way to increase trade with Iran and make investments in the country, said the chairman of China International Contractors' Association (CHINCA).

In an exclusive interview with IRNA, Fang Qiuchen said that the trade between Iran and China is eye-catching and various companies of China have implemented big projects with their Iranian counterparts.

He noted that Iran and China have good ties in energy, petrochemicals, and trade.

"We held a big fair in Tehran International Exhibition Center in 2018," Fang said.

Saying that well-known Chinese companies are interested in cooperation with Iran in infrastructure and energy, he voiced readiness to implement joint

projects with the guidance of the leaders of the two countries.

Fang stressed the need for sharing information between Chinese and Iranian companies and said this will help additional cooperation.

He also said that CHINCA has the most important role in investment out of China.

The Chinese official added that the association has 1,500 members that work in construction, energy and petrochemical sectors.

According to him, the economic body invested \$241 billion in 2018.

CHINCA is the national organization formed by Chinese international project investors, contractors, labor service companies and related service providers.

(Source: IRNA)

First Announcement

IN THE NAME OF GOD

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING

INTERNATIONAL TENDER NO. 98-01/100

Tender Holder:
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING (IRIB)

Subject of Two-Stage Tender:
Purchasing of H.265/HEVC Encoder according to the tender documents

Deadline of Receiving Documents:
As of publishing second announcement of advertisement latest by the business hour dated on **Monday April 15, 2019.**

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

Type and Amount of Guarantee for Participating in Tender:
The amount of **USD 7,500** which should be in the form of extendable bank guarantee

Time and Place of Delivering Priced Bid:
The sealed A, B & C packages/envelopes should be submitted within one main envelope marked with tender number no later than **15 p.m. on Saturday May 18, 2019** and submitted to the Secretariat of Commission of Tenders.

Time and Place of Opening Envelopes
The date of opening envelopes A&B is at **8:30 a.m. on Monday May 20, 2019** in the office of Vice President of IRIB Planning and Financial Resources and opening of envelope C will be after technical evaluation.
It should be noted that bidders should hold license from the authorized bodies.
For more information, please contact the following phone numbers: **0098-21-22166313**
It is obvious that cost of publishing two advertisements shall be borne by the winner of tender.

Public Relations Dept. of IRIB

Iran's annual oil revenues exceed \$65.8b: CBI

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** – According to the Central Bank of Iran (CBI)'s latest data, Iran's revenues from crude oil and oil products exports in the Iranian calendar year of 1396 (March 2017 - March 2018) stood at \$65.818 billion.

The oil exports increased by 18.1 percent in the mentioned year compared to its preceding year, Tasnim news agency reported.

The country's oil sales were reported to be \$55.757 billion and \$31.847 billion in the previous two years, respectively and the collected revenues in 1396 were more than what was estimated by the oil ministry.

In February 2017, Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said that considering oil prices at \$55 per barrels, the country's revenues from oil and gas condensate exports will reach \$45-\$50 billion in the Iranian calendar year of 1396.

The increases in oil prices and the removal of the U.S. sanctions were reported to be the main drivers of this jump in the country's oil revenues in the mentioned timespan.

The CBI report comes at the time that currently no official data has been released regarding the last Iranian calendar year's (March 2018- March 2019) oil incomes.

In December 2018, Tasnim reported that to counter U.S. sanctions and limits on petroleum sales, Iran's Planning and Budget Organization (PBO) reduced the current year's budget reliance on oil revenues to 27 percent and set average oil prices at \$54 a barrel, with an estimated sale of 1.5 million



barrels per day.

In the \$405-billion national budget bill for the current Iranian calendar year 1398 (March 2019 – March 2020), which was presented to the Majlis by President Hassan Rouhani in December 2018, the estimated oil incomes stood at 1.425 quadrillion rials (about \$34 billion).

There are many speculations about the realization of the oil income estimations in the budget bill. Currently, the most important factor which plays a significant role in determining the amount of Iran's

oil exports and consequently the outlook of the country's oil revenues in 2019, is the impact of U.S. sanctions.

In May 2018, Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from an international deal with Iran, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and in November the sanctions were reimposed on the country's oil sector.

Although shortly after the sanctions took effect, the U.S. government granted exemptions to eight countries - China, India, Greece, Italy, Taiwan, Japan, Turkey, and

South Korea - allowing them to temporarily continue buying Iranian oil, but analysts believed that the possible changes in the U.S. policies toward Iran and the continuous slowdown in the global economy as a result of U.S.-China trade war could create a less promising outlook for Iran's oil market throughout 2019.

However, recent geopolitical changes in the world envisions more tightening in the oil market which could be considered a good sign for Iranian oil industry.

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.

The conflicts in Libya, Venezuela crisis, the disagreement between Saudi Arabia and its ally U.S. on oil prices and the petro dollar could be listed as some of the factors which are supporting the oil prices for the time being.

However, the mentioned factors all could be considered short-term impacts and to see if Iran will succeed in realizing its budget estimations of oil sales, one should only wait and see; though the \$34b revenue seems quite reachable at the moment.

Oil surges on OPEC cuts, U.S. sanctions and Libya fighting



Oil prices rose to their highest level since November 2018 on Monday, driven by OPEC supply cuts, U.S. sanctions against Iran and Venezuela and fighting in Libya as well as strong U.S. jobs data.

International benchmark Brent futures were at \$70.66 per barrel at 1000 GMT on Monday, up 32 cents, or 0.5 percent from their last close.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were up 30 cents, or 0.5 percent, at \$63.38 per barrel.

Brent and WTI both hit their highest since November at \$70.83 and \$63.53 a barrel, respectively, early on Monday.

To prop up prices, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and non-affiliated allies like Russia, known as OPEC+, pledged to withhold around 1.2 million barrels per day (bpd) of supply from the start of this year.

"OPEC's ongoing supply cuts and U.S. sanctions on Iran and Venezuela have been the major driver of prices throughout this year," said Hussein Sayed, chief market strategist at futures brokerage FXTM.

"However, the latest boost was received from an escalation of fighting in Libya which is threatening further supply disruption," he added.

Strong U.S. jobs data on Friday was also still supporting markets on Monday.

Despite the host of price drivers, there

are still factors that could bring oil prices down later this year.

Russia is a reluctant participant in its agreement with OPEC to withhold output and it may increase production if the deal is not extended before it expires on July 1, Energy Minister Alexander Novak said on Friday.

Another key architect of the OPEC-Russia deal, Kirill Dmitriev, the head of Russia's direct investment fund, said on Monday OPEC and allies should raise output from June. Dmitriev previously said it was too early to pull back from cuts.

Russian oil output reached a national record high of 11.16 million bpd last year.

In the United States, crude production reached a global record of 12.2 million bpd in late March.

U.S. crude exports have also risen, breaking through 3 million bpd for the first time earlier this year.

There also remain concerns about the health of the global economy, especially should China and the United States fail to resolve their trade dispute soon.

"Global demand has weakened, and existing tariffs on Chinese goods shipments to the U.S. are providing an additional drag," rating agency Moody's said on Monday, although it added that Chinese stimulus measures would likely support growth over 2019. (Source: Reuters)

UK's National Grid operator gets ready for 100% renewables by 2025



National Grid, the operator of the UK electricity system and the equivalent to the Australian Energy Market Operator, says it is preparing to change its systems so it can operate the electricity grid with 100 per cent renewable energy by 2025.

Australia is often thought as a leader in the transition to renewables, but the progress in other countries is usually overlooked. In the UK, the Tory government's official policy is to phase out coal completely by 2025 and the grid operator says it needs to develop a system in which it doesn't need coal or gas back-up.

"Great Britain needs to decarbonize its energy system to help address the ever-increasing threat of climate change," National Grid says in a policy statement released late last week.

"A key element of this is to move to lower, and even zero, carbon emissions for the electricity system. Over the past decade the electricity system has been reducing its carbon intensity and GB has been leading the way among the major world economies in this regard.

National Grid says there soon will be times in the year when the market could meet the total demand for electricity through renewable generation only and these periods will increase as more and more renewables are connected

and more load actively participates in the market.

"This is very different to the traditional model of power system operation and, to enable all of this low-carbon generation operate unconstrained, requires us to address and solve some critical engineering challenges," it says.

"Our ambition is that, by 2025, we will have transformed the operation of the electricity system such that we can operate it safely and securely at zero carbon whenever there is sufficient renewable generation on-line and available to meet the total national load.

"Zero carbon operation of the electricity system by 2025 means a fundamental change to how our system was designed to operate – integrating newer technologies right across the system – from large-scale off-shore wind to domestic scale solar panels to increased demand side participation, using new smart digital systems to manage and control the system in real-time."

The document identifies the areas where traditional generation has delivered services such as inertia, frequency control and voltage, which will now have to come from wind and solar, plus various storage technologies and other "demand side" options. (Source: reneweconomy.com.au)

Oil refiners to OPEC+: we're going to need more of your crude

Global oil demand is about to get a boost from a rule that's supposed to help the environment.

The world's refineries will need to process about 700,000 barrels a day more oil by next year directly as a result of a rule to cut the maritime industry's sulfur emissions, according to refining analysts interviewed by Bloomberg. The extra supplies mightn't be easy to find in a market where OPEC and allied producers are removing millions of barrels of supply, and may extend their curbs.

"Crude runs will ramp up starting in the third quarter of 2019, and rise through the fourth quarter," said Eleanor Budds, Paris-based associate director for oil markets, mid-stream and downstream at IHS Markit Ltd.

From January, ships will have to lower the sulfur content in their fuel to 0.5 percent, down from 3.5 percent in most parts of the world today. Alternatively, they can fit kit called scrubbers that stops airborne release of the pollutant.

Acid rain

Sulfur dioxide has been blamed for exacerbating health conditions such as asthma, as well as environmental concerns like acid rain. Despite the rules entering into force in January 2020, vessel owners are expected to start getting ready beforehand. That means demand for the new fuels



will start accelerating later this year.

The problem -- and one reason crude demand is expected to gain -- is that refineries will have to start making more diesel-like products to cover a shortfall of residue-based marine fuel that's expected to emerge. And to achieve that, they will have to run harder.

Year-on-year

"We can expect year-on-year crude run increases to start to gather pace as we move out of the maintenance season

over the next couple of months," said Jonathan Leitch, research director for refining and oil product markets at Wood Mackenzie Ltd., an industry consultant. "Refiners are well aware of the upcoming changes and will be looking to capture as much margin as possible from the disruption."

The expectation is that the ramp up in processing rates won't last. Budds says the impact should diminish in 2021 and 2022.

Wood Mackenzie forecasts a gain of 700,000 barrels a day for refineries next year as direct result of IMO 2020, while Facts Global Energy is anticipating growth "towards the higher end" of a 500,000 barrels to 1 million a day range. Both firms say the ramp up should start to happen in the second half of this year.

"The refining industry won't be able to produce enough low sulfur residual marine fuel, so it will have to make more marine gasoil to cover the shortfall," said Jan-Jaap Verschoor, a director at Oil Analytics, which tracks margins for hundreds of refining configurations worldwide. "The only way to do that in the short term is to ramp up run rates."

His own estimate is that the IMO rule could boost processing rates by between 1 million to 2 million barrels a day. (Source: Bloomberg)

Libya fighting eupts again. Here's the oil impact

Fighting in Libya is encroaching on the capital, elevating the risk of new oil supply outages from the OPEC member. Warlord Khalifa Haftar is moving his self-styled Libyan National Army west to Tripoli, the base of the rival UN-backed, internationally recognized government. Oil output has surged in recent months as a fragile peace took hold, but the latest battles are a reminder that reliable crude flows can't resume without a political solution to eight years of strife.

1. What's going on in Tripoli?

Haftar, who has solidified control of the east and swept through the south in January, is sending his troops west to purge what he labels extremists. Clashes continue on the outskirts of the capital, including air strikes, despite appeals by global powers to halt the offensive.

2. Wasn't the country on the path to unity?

United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres said on March 31 the two sides are getting closer to forming a united caretaker government. Those mediation efforts are faltering, and a military showdown threatens more chaos in the divided country. Tripoli and neighboring Misrata have their own heavily-armed militias, so any confrontation with Haftar will likely lead to civilian casualties.

3. Could Haftar take the capital?

It's too early to say. Resistance to Haftar runs deep in Tripoli. Most of Libya's population is based around the capital. Haftar's ragtag forces are better organized than rivals and easily took over the south, including the biggest oilfield Sharara, through negotiations rather than fighting. Haftar's move west, however, triggered a sharp reaction by the Tripoli militias. "At the moment it's too early to come to any firm conclusion, and ultimately fighting could drag for weeks," said Mohammad Darwazah, a director at Medley Global Advisors.

4. Will this impact oil exports?

Not immediately. Major oilfields and export terminals are far from the clashes. But history shows that fighting anywhere in Libya can cause dramatic swings in output. In June, Libya's crude shipments were suspended for weeks after Haftar captured two export terminals and transferred them to an oil authority in eastern Libya. Exports dropped by 800,000 barrels a day and Libya lost almost \$1 billion before he handed the terminals back to the Tripoli-based National Oil Corp. "Oil operations have been largely normal but any sustained fighting could quickly bring Libya back below one million barrels a day," Darwazah said.

5. Are any oil facilities in western Libya at risk?

Any disruption at Zawiya port, the main export terminal for Sharara, would cause a partial or a complete shutdown of the 300,000 barrel-a-day oil field. Zawiya is scheduled to load 6 million barrels of crude in April. If Haftar takes control of the terminal, he will virtually control Libya's oil industry.

6. Does it matter if Haftar rules Tripoli?

The capture of Tripoli would unify Libya under Haftar's rule. After a grinding, two-year war in the east and the quick campaign in the south, Haftar now controls more than one million barrels of oil production a day -- the source of most of the country's income -- and the nation's strongest military force. Although he is backed by Russia, the United Arab Emirates, France and Egypt, even his foreign supporters expressed public concern about the latest violence.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Asia crude buyers brace for bullish summer spot market

Traders of Middle East sour crude oil expect a surge in physical spot market prices as demand from major refining centers in Asia re-emerges after maintenance, they told S&P Global Platts this week.

"There will be more demand this month as [refineries come] back from turnarounds, and there is higher demand from China," a crude oil trader based in Singapore said.

The cash Dubai spread between Month 1 and Month 3 -- often used as a barometer of sentiment for the Middle East sour crude market -- surged past \$1/b levels to average \$1.07/b to-date in April, from an average of 60 cents/b for the month of March, underscoring strength in the sour crude complex.

Thus far, tepid Q1 demand from Asian refining strongholds such as China, Japan and South Korea has kept a lid on sentiment despite supply tightness for medium and heavy sour crudes, market participants said. Price differentials for Middle East sour crude grades such as Murban, Upper Zakum, Qatar Marine and Banoco Arab Medium dipped into discounts or fetched slight premiums over their respective official selling prices in spot trading over the month of March, indicative of a slowdown in demand.

However, post-maintenance spot price differentials are expected to rebound for June-loading cargoes being traded this month, traders said.

"Quite sure it [Murban] will [trade in premiums]," a crude trader with a Chinese refiner said. "Just a matter of whether [the premium is] 10 cents/b or 30 cents/b."

The spread between Month 1 and Month 3 physical Dubai crude stuck to a tight range of \$1.06/b to \$1.08/b in the first week of April for June trading. Platts data showed Monday on Monday morning at 10:00 am Singapore time (0200 GMT), the spread was holding at \$1.06/b.

The sour crude complex has been in backwardation for exactly a year now, with supplies for Middle East barrels tightening in comparison with sweet crude on the back of OPEC production cuts. U.S.-led sanctions have also crippled flows of similar crude grades from Iran and Venezuela.

A contango market structure for sour crude was last seen over March 2018, when the M1/M3 structure averaged minus 30 cents/b.

Lower quality, high sulfur crude has commanded a premium over higher quality, lower sulfur crude grades such as Brent-linked and WTI-linked barrels several times over the past year.

Meanwhile, the Dubai structure almost doubled between January and February this year, when U.S. sanctions on Venezuela amplified the dearth of medium and heavy crude that formed a large chunk of feedstock for refineries in Asia.

The spread rose from an average of 32 cents/b over January to 62 cents/b in February, Platts data showed.

OPEC supplies continue to plummet as a combined result of planned production cuts and geopolitical events. The 14-country block pumped 30.23 million bpd in the month of March, Platts reported in its monthly OPEC oil production survey last week.

This is OPEC's lowest overall production in more than four years, with crisis-hit Venezuela contributing most to the decline. Volume from the sanctions-hit nation fell to a 16-year low of 740,000 bpd in March, according to results of the survey.

(Source: Platts)

The political ambitions of Michel Barnier

One of the worst kept secrets in Brussels is that Michel Barnier's political star is rising. The EU's chief Brexit negotiator seems interested should higher office become available.



By Peter Müller

Michel Barnier, the EU's chief Brexit negotiator, was only supposed to say a few words about the vote in the British House of Commons today morning. But then he got to talking about his vision for Europe.

British TV stations were broadcasting live as the tall, 68-year-old man with the silver hair issued what was for him a rather unusual statement. He said the remaining 27 member states must build "on the unity required in the Brexit negotiations," adding that the EU was founded to assert a common sovereignty where "the nation state is not enough." He talked about green technologies, industrial policies and a Europe that protects its citizens.

The fact that Barnier ended his brief performance with a small manifesto was the clearest indication to date that the Brexit negotiator does not see his career ending once the British finally withdraw from the EU.

To be sure, Barnier has been eager to allow the public more insight into his work as Brexit negotiator in part because the EU doesn't want to create the impression that it is even partly to blame for the chaos in London. Yet Barnier is also using his public appearances to present himself as a possible successor to EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker.

Barnier is a member of the European People's Party (EPP) and nothing would run more contrary to his values than to publicly stab the party's top candidate, Manfred Weber, in the back. But Barnier's ambitions are one of the worst kept secrets in Brussels. And if Weber isn't able to find a parliamentary majority after European elections, or if he loses the support of the member states, Barnier would hardly have to be asked twice to take his place.

■ A good mood

It was late in the evening by the time exhausted EU officials pushed their way toward the press room at an EU summit last month. Barnier was in a good mood as he leaned against a railing in the Council building, his hair as perfectly kempt as usual. It was like he had just come back from a vacation. "How are you?" he asked, pulling out his smartphone and showing off a photo. His son had sent a picture of his grandchild during the meeting. Barnier was pleased. The ambient hectic didn't seem to phase him.

EU leaders have come to appreciate the relaxed manner in which Barnier has conducted the Brexit negotiations.

Barnier has visited many EU countries multiple times, his most recent trip taking him to Poland and Sweden. When he was recently in Berlin, he briefly visited Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, the general secretary of Germany's Christian Democratic Union. She can't help him much when it comes to his Brexit talks with the British government, but AKK, as she is known, is widely regarded as a likely successor to German Chancellor Angela Merkel. The good impression left behind by Barnier was like a treasure, the value of which remains to be seen.

Government and party leaders recognize him as one of their own, a person with whom they can work together at eye level. Unlike Weber, Barnier has experience gleaned from several government jobs. He has been a European commissioner and the French foreign minister. He even organized the 1992 Winter Olympics in Albertville.

One man in particular has been warming up to Barnier, a man who doesn't think much of the concept of lead candidates anyway: French President Emmanuel Macron.

According to people familiar with the matter, Macron has asked Barnier twice whether he could see himself running for office for La République En Marche, the political party founded by Macron in 2016. Barnier declined: He has been a member of France's conservative party for decades. He's not about to change sides.

The days in which Macron wanted nothing to do with the old man at the head of the European Commission are apparently over. Politically, there is little separating the two. Barnier, for instance, has long advocated a European industrial policy -- an issue that is also close to Macron's heart.

■ Broad support for Barnier

And Barnier could likely expect broad support within European Parliament. A large majority of MEPs, to be sure, insist that only someone who has run as a lead candidate should be allowed to become Commission president. But the only reason Barnier didn't seek that position was because Brexit prevented him from doing so. He wanted to become a lead candidate back in 2014, but he lost to Juncker in the EPP primary.

Just three days before Weber was chosen as EPP lead candidate, Barnier presented his ideas on the future of the EU to a larger audience for the first time. It was Nov. 5, 2018, at the Bozar Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels. His performance was so far away from the official hullabaloo of the EPP primary that no one could accuse him of wanting to steal Weber's show. At the same time, he made it clear that he also had things to say that did not involve Brexit.

But when it comes to the race for the job as Commission president, Barnier, the political insider, is still an outsider. He knows that Weber will likely win the election -- and that his day will only come if the favored candidate fails to form a coalition in parliament.

"Brexit is a lose-lose situation," Barnier said during a recent breakfast in Brussels' European quarter. But that's not entirely true when it comes to the Brexit negotiator himself. If Britain's departure from the EU has a winner, his name is Michel Barnier. (Source: Spiegel)

Abiy's year one: Ethiopia faces the threat of ethnic conflict

By Yohannes Gedamu

On April 2 last year, Abiy Ahmed took over the premiership of a country on the brink of a major catastrophe. Three years of incessant protests across the restive regions of Oromia and Amhara, increasing ethnic violence and a deteriorating economy had brought Ethiopia to the verge of collapse.

The ascendance to power of a young, reformist leader, who was delivering a message of unity, prosperity, justice and peace, gave Ethiopians from all walks of life reason to become optimistic about the future.

For a while it seemed like the new prime minister, the youngest to hold high office in Africa in recent memory, was living up to the people's expectations and more. Political prisoners were released, a landmark peace deal was signed with Eritrea, important political and economic reforms were put in place, and corrupt officials and human rights abusers were punished. Abiy's initial achievements made many Ethiopia watchers believe the country was finally departing from the age-old politics of authoritarian survival.

While much progress was made on many fronts in the first few months of Abiy's premiership, some deep-rooted challenges, such as ethnic tensions and internal displacement of peoples, continued unabated. Fortunately for Abiy and his new administration, many across the political spectrum preached patience and the citizens agreed that meaningful change would take time to implement. As a result, the support for the prime minister remained high.

However, a year into Abiy's first term, public trust in the government seems to be in decline. Ethno-nationalists from different groups are continuing to defy the prime minister's calls for pan-Ethiopian unity, keeping the possibility of conflict alive in several regions, as various groups continue to demand the right to form their own states under the federal system.

Issues such as displacement and home demolitions in the area around Addis Ababa, which caused ethnic tensions, mass protests and violence in the past, remain unresolved. People living on the outskirts of the capital are still being displaced, as their houses are being demolished without the due process the constitution affords them.

Instead of working to resolve these issues, ethno-nationalist Oromo politicians and officials, undoubtedly emboldened by the fact that an Oromo is now heading the federal government, are exacerbating the situation with inflammatory statements aimed at placating their ethnic group.

A video circulating recently on social media reportedly showed the president of Oromia regional state, Lemma Megersa, discussing plans to change the demographic composition of Addis Ababa and influence future election results by providing residence cards to Oromos displaced from Ethiopia's Somali region.

At a March 31 conference, Lemma de-



Issues such as displacement and home demolitions in the area around Addis Ababa, which caused ethnic tensions, mass protests and violence in the past, remain unresolved. People living on the outskirts of the capital are still being displaced, as their houses are being demolished without the due process the constitution affords them.

clared his words were taken out of context and emphasized that he believed in "Ethiopian unity".

Meanwhile, tensions in the West Guji district in Oromia region remain high. Thousands of ethnic Gedeos, who fled the area last year to escape ethnic violence at the hands of Guji Oromos are still languishing in refugee camps across the country.

The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), which had been active in the region, made a deal with the federal government to lay down arms last year, but there have been reports that certain factions are still armed and in control of certain parts of Guji. The government for months has tried to downplay the power OLF still holds in certain parts of the country but locals continue to report attacks.

■ Violence unleashed on minorities

OLF members were also allowed to return from exile in Eritrea last year, which caused major unrest in Addis Ababa's suburbs. Violence unleashed on minorities there killed 23 people in September. Today many people in the area live in fear of ethnic mob attacks.

Ethnic tensions are also simmering across Ethiopia's Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region state, where over 40

ethnic groups once co-existed peacefully.

Self-administration and statehood demands by the Sidamas, the largest ethnic group in the region, and rising Sidama nationalism have caused great tension. Last summer, 15 people were killed in clashes between the Sidama and Wolaita groups. The regional capital, Hawassa, once a budding tourism destination with a rapidly growing industrial scene, is no longer a peaceful city. Although Abiy's administration attempted to hold officials who failed to control the violence in Hawassa accountable, such efforts are yet to ease tensions.

The violence over the summer last year displaced some 1 million people in southern Ethiopia alone.

In the north, new and old conflicts across the North Gondar zone in Amhara Region have displaced tens of thousands of Amharas, as Kemants have made demands for self-administration. Tensions between the Amhara and Tigray regions are rising over border disputes. Meanwhile, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which dominated the country's ethnic coalition for over 27 years before Abiy's ascent to power has become a political entity that defies the federal political order.

All this is happening under Abiy's watch

and he does not appear to have a plan to bring the country back on track. As a result, Ethiopians are running out of patience and many prominent politicians, activists and journalists who had previously voiced their support for the prime minister's reform agenda are now questioning it.

Today, two conflicting but equally critical opinions on the prime minister's political decision-making strategies are becoming increasingly dominant in the country.

The first is the belief that Abiy is a politician only interested in empowering his own constituency - Ethiopia's largest ethnic group, Oromos. Thus, the people who carry this belief argue that the prime minister is simply using words of unity as a cover while working to replace the old Tigrayan minority domination with the absolute hegemony of the Oromo majority.

■ Abiy's reform agenda

The second, on the other hand, is the belief that Abiy's reform agenda is being hindered by the radicals in his own party who he cannot control. The people who hold this view insist that with a national election looming in just over a year's time, Ahmed has no choice but to appease extreme Oromo ethno-nationalist activists and parties. Doing so, they contend, will permit him to claim an electoral victory that would give him a broader constitutional mandate and help his long-term reform efforts.

There is no way to confirm whether either of these points of view reflects the reality on the ground. However, one thing stands clear - not everything in Ethiopia is going well and some Ethiopians are increasingly concerned that their reformist prime minister may have misplaced priorities.

Since he came to power, Abiy has been working hard to change the political narrative across the volatile Horn of Africa region. After successfully forging peace with Eritrea, he started making moves to encourage political and economic integration in the wider region. He attempted to broker diplomatic negotiations between the President of Somalia and the de facto state of Somaliland in Addis Ababa. He also attempted to resolve the offshore rights dispute between Kenya and Somalia.

All these efforts, which helped him strengthen his reformist image abroad, did not sit well with the Ethiopian public. Citizens, who are still suffering as a result of ethnic conflicts, started to question whether he is more concerned with his image and his legacy than the immediate needs and the wishes of his people.

Abiy Ahmed should indeed be applauded for his considerable achievements. However, it also needs to be acknowledged that, after a year in power, his reform agenda is getting off track. Hence, if he wants to hold on to his image as the man who changed it all for Ethiopia, he needs to reconsider his priorities and focus on resolving ethnic conflicts, reigning in ethno-nationalists and protecting innocent civilians.

(Source: aljazeera.com)

President Trump warns a Democratic win in 2020 could 'leave Israel out there'

By Zeke Miller

President Donald Trump warned on Saturday that a Democratic victory in 2020 could "leave Israel out there," as he highlighted his pro-Israel actions in an effort to make the case for Jewish voters to back his re-election.

Speaking at the annual meeting of the Republican Jewish Coalition, Trump touted his precedent-shredding actions to move the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv and recognition last month of Israeli sovereignty over the disputed Golan Heights, a strategic plateau that Israel seized from Syria in 1967.

"We got you something that you wanted," Trump said of the embassy move, adding, "Unlike other presidents, I keep my promises."

The group, backed by GOP megadonor Sheldon Adelson, supported Trump's 2016 campaign and is preparing to spend millions on his 2020 effort.

"I know that the Republican Jewish Coalition will help lead our party to another historic victory," Trump said. "We need more Republicans. Let's go, so we can win everything."

■ Sided heavily with Democrats

Jewish voters in the U.S. have traditionally sided heavily with Democrats -- and are often ideologically liberal -- but Republicans are hoping to narrow the gap next year, in part as Trump cites actions that he says demonstrate support for Israel.

Trump earned standing ovations for recounting both the embassy move and the Golan Heights recognition.

Trump noted it had long been a priority for Adelson and his wife, Miriam. "That is the most important thing that's ever happened in their life," Trump said. "They love Israel."

Trump's speech comes weeks after he suggested Democrats "hate" Jews. His remark followed an internal fight among Democrats over how to respond to comments by Rep. Ilhan Omar, D-Minn., that some criticized as anti-Semitic.

Trump mockingly thanked Omar as he began his speech, before adding, "Oh, I forgot. She doesn't like Israel, I forgot, I'm sorry. No, she doesn't like Israel, does she? Please, I



apologize."

He also accused Democrats of allowing anti-Semitism to "take root" in their party.

Before Trump's appearance, people assembled for the event carried signs with "We are Jews for Trump" and "Trump" written in Hebrew. Dozens of men and several women wore red yarmulkes with "Trump" in white that were distributed at the event.

Trump also took credit for eliminating hundreds of millions of dollars in aid to the Palestinians and for pulling the U.S. out of several UN organizations, the UN Human Rights Council and UNESCO, citing anti-Israel bias in their agendas.

■ Democrats re-entering Iran deal

Trump criticized some 2020 Democrats who have been suggesting they would re-enter the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, from which Trump withdrew the United States. The agreement was fiercely opposed by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has cheered as Trump re-imposed stringent new sanctions on the country that Israel regards as an existential threat. Trump is closely aligned with Netanyahu, who's seeking to return power in today's national election.

Trump predicted that election is "gonna be close," adding it features "Two good people," seemingly referring to Netanyahu and his chief threat to Netanyahu's coalition, former Israeli Army chief of staff, Benny Gantz.

Despite his criticism of Democrats, Trump has faced his own criticism from the Jewish community. Trump was slow to condemn white supremacists who marched violently in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017. The previous year, he circulated an image of a six-pointed star alongside a photo of Hillary Clinton, a pile of money and the words "most corrupt candidate ever."

When he addressed the RJC in 2015 he said he didn't expect to earn their support because he wouldn't take their money. "You want to control your politicians, that's fine," Trump said at the time. Ultimately, the group and many of its donors backed Trump.

Trump met privately with Adelson before speaking, according to an official. Adelson has cancer and has been in poor health, but he and his wife attended Trump's remarks -- receiving a standing ovation when they entered the ballroom.

The Adelsons gave Trump's campaign \$30 million in 2016. They followed that by contributing \$100 million to the Republican Party for the 2018 midterm elections.

Introducing Trump, former Sen. Norm Coleman, R-Minn., the chairman of the RJC, led the audience in an adapted version of the Passover reading "Dayenu," as he recounted what Trump had done for Israel.

Stuart Weil, a Jewish man from Fresno, California, said Americans have traditionally been very supportive of Israel but the "progressive, liberal wing of the Democratic Party" is changing that.

Weil, who wore a blue Trump-style hat that read, "Making Israel & America Great Again," says he's a Republican because of the party's strong stance on Israel.

According to AP VoteCast, a survey of more than 115,000 midterm voters and 3,500 Jewish voters nationwide, voters who identified as Jewish broke for Democrats over Republicans by a wide margin, 72 percent to 26 percent, in 2016.

Over the past decade, Jewish voters have shown stability in their partisanship, according to data from Pew Research Center. Jewish voters identify with or lean toward the Democratic Party over the Republican Party by a roughly 2-1 ratio. (Source: time.com)

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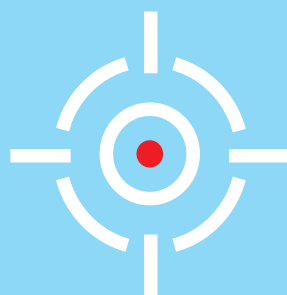
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Vitamins for Kids: Do They Need Them (And Which Ones)?

As children grow, it's important for them to get enough vitamins and minerals to ensure optimal health.

Most kids get adequate amounts of nutrients from a balanced diet, but under certain circumstances, children may need to supplement with vitamins or minerals.

This article tells you everything you need to know about vitamins for kids and whether your child may need them.

Nutrient needs for kids are dependent on age, sex, size, growth, and activity level.

According to health experts, young children between the ages of 2 and 8 require 1,000–1,400 calories each day. Those ages 9–13 need 1,400–2,600 calories daily — depending on certain factors, such as activity level.

Children require some amount of every vitamin and mineral for proper growth and health, but exact amounts vary by age. Older children and teens need different amounts of nutrients than younger kids to support optimal health.

■ Do kids have different nutrient needs than adults?

Kids need the same nutrients as adults — but usually require smaller amounts.

As children grow, it's vital for them to get adequate amounts of nutrients that help build strong bones, such as calcium and vitamin D. Moreover, iron, zinc, iodine, choline, and vitamins A, B6 (folate), B12, and D are crucial for brain development in early life.

Thus, although kids may need smaller amounts of vitamins and minerals compared to adults, they still need to get enough of these nutrients for proper growth and development.

Kids usually need smaller amounts of vitamins and minerals than adults. Nutrients that help build bones and promote brain development are especially significant in childhood.

■ Do kids need vitamin supplements?

In general, kids that eat a healthy, balanced diet don't need vitamin supplements.

However, infants have different nutrient needs than children and may require certain supplements, such as vitamin D for breastfed babies.

Both the American Academy of Pediatrics and the United States Department of Agriculture Dietary Guidelines for Americans don't recommend supplements over and above the recommended dietary allowances for healthy children older than 1 who eat a balanced diet.

These organizations suggest that kids eat a variety of fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy, and protein to obtain adequate nutrition.

These foods contain all of the necessary nutrients for proper growth and development in children.

Overall, kids who eat a balanced diet that includes all food groups don't usually need vitamin or mineral supplements. Still, the next section covers some exceptions.

Kids should eat a variety of foods to get



the nutrients they need. Vitamins are usually unnecessary for healthy children eating balanced diets.

■ Supplemental nutrients

Even though most children who eat a healthy diet don't need vitamins, specific circumstances may warrant supplementation.

Certain vitamin and mineral supplements may be necessary for kids who are at risk of deficiencies, such as those who:

- follow a vegetarian or vegan diet
- have a condition that affects the absorption of or increases the need for nutrients, such as celiac disease, cancer, cystic fibrosis, or inflammatory bowel disease (IBD)
- have had a surgery that impacts the intestines or stomach
- are extremely picky eaters and struggle to eat a variety of foods

In particular, kids who eat plant-based diets may be at risk of deficiencies in calcium, iron, zinc, and vitamins B12 and D — especially if they eat few or no animal products.

Vegan diets can be particularly dangerous for children if certain nutrients like vitamin B12 — which is found naturally in animal foods — are not replaced through supplements or fortified foods.

Failing to replace these nutrients in children's diets can lead to serious consequences, such as abnormal growth and developmental delays.

However, it's possible for children on plant-based diets to get adequate nutrition from diet alone if their parents are incorporating enough plant foods that naturally contain or are fortified with certain vitamins and minerals.

Children with celiac or inflammatory bowel diseases may have difficulty absorbing several vitamins and minerals, especially iron, zinc, and vitamin D. This is because these diseases cause damage to the areas of the

gut that absorb micronutrients.

On the other hand, kids with cystic fibrosis have trouble absorbing fat and, therefore, may not adequately absorb the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E, and K.

In addition, children with cancer and other diseases that cause increased nutrient needs may require certain supplements to prevent disease-related malnutrition.

Finally, some studies have linked picky eating in childhood to low intakes of micronutrients.

One study in 937 kids ages 3–7 found that picky eating was strongly associated with low intakes of iron and zinc. Still, the results indicated that blood levels of these minerals were not significantly different in picky compared to non-picky eaters.

Nevertheless, it's possible that prolonged picky eating could lead to micronutrient deficiencies over time and may warrant nutritional supplements as a result.

Vitamin and mineral supplements are often necessary for kids who follow vegan or vegetarian diets, have a condition that affects the absorption of nutrients, or are very picky eaters.

■ Choosing a vitamin and dosage

If your child follows a restrictive diet, cannot adequately absorb nutrients, or is a picky eater, they may benefit from taking vitamins.

Always discuss supplements with a healthcare provider before giving them to your child.

When choosing a supplement, look for quality brands that have been tested by a third party, such as NSF International, United States Pharmacopeia (USP), ConsumerLab.com, Informed-Choice, or the Banned Substances Control Group (BSCG).

Not to mention, choose vitamins that are specifically made for kids and ensure that they don't contain megadoses that exceed

the daily nutrient needs for children.

■ Vitamin and mineral precautions for children

Vitamin or mineral supplements can be toxic to children when taken in excess amounts. This is especially true with the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E, and K that are stored in body fat (20).

One case study reported vitamin D toxicity in a child who took too much of a supplement (21).

Note that gummy vitamins, in particular, can also be easy to overeat. One study cited three cases of vitamin A toxicity in children due to overeating candy-like vitamins (22, 23).

It's best to keep vitamins out of reach of young children and discuss appropriate vitamin intake with older kids to prevent the accidental overeating of supplements.

If you suspect that your child has taken too much of a vitamin or mineral supplement, contact a healthcare provider immediately.

When choosing a vitamin, look for high-quality brands and supplements that contain the appropriate dosages of vitamins and minerals for children.

■ How to ensure your child is getting enough nutrients

To ensure children are getting adequate amounts of nutrients so that they don't need supplements, make sure their diet contains a variety of nutritious foods.

Incorporating fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, healthy fats, and dairy products (if tolerated) into meals and snacks will likely provide your child with enough vitamins and minerals.

To help your kid eat more produce, continually introduce new veggies and fruits prepared in different and tasty ways.

A healthy diet for kids should also limit added sugars and highly processed foods and focus on whole fruits over fruit juice.

However, if you feel that your child is not getting proper nutrition through diet alone, supplements can be a safe and effective method to deliver the nutrients children need.

Consult your child's pediatrician if you're concerned about your child's nutritional intake.

By providing your child with a variety of whole foods, you can ensure they're getting the nutrients needed for optimal health.

■ The bottom line

Kids who eat healthy, balanced diets typically fill their nutrient needs through food.

Still, vitamin supplements may be necessary for picky eaters, children who have a health condition that affects nutrient absorption or increases nutrient needs, or those following a vegetarian or vegan diet.

When providing vitamins to children, be sure to choose high-quality brands that contain appropriate doses for kids.

To ensure your child is getting enough nutrients, offer a balanced diet that includes a variety of foods and limits sweets and refined foods.

(Source: healthline.com)

Can scientists 'hack' memory?

Modern science brings us endless possibilities to help our bodies and our minds stay healthy, but some recent scientific pursuits have also been the center of controversy. One of these is researchers' interest in manipulating memories. Is this feat possible, and if so, why would we want to achieve it?

In this Spotlight feature, we explore whether scientists can achieve memory manipulation, and how they might do it.

Our memories make up so much of who we are, and the things we remember can often define our experience of the world.

And while positive memories can help us grow and thrive, negative memories do not always have such welcome effects.

Sometimes, unpleasant memories can be part of a learning curve — getting scalded with boiling water means that next time we will be more careful when handling the kettle.

However, there are also memories that are truly traumatic, and recalling them can lead to distress and serious mental health conditions, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The study of memory — formation, recall, and forgetting — attracts a lot of attention and curiosity among neuroscientists, psychologists, and even researchers from the humanities, as there is still so much we do not fully understand about the processes surrounding memory.

And, while we still need to find out more about how memories form in the brain, researchers in recent years have started investigating the possibility of manipulating memories — particularly negative ones — to see if they can weaken or remove them altogether.

In this Spotlight feature, we look briefly at why we remember and why we naturally forget. We also explore some studies that have delved into memory manipulation, explaining how researchers aim to achieve it, and why.

■ Memory recall and forgetting

When the brain encodes information, those data become stored in groups of neurons that synapses — or links that allow brain cells to “communicate” — connect together.

Scientists typically associate stronger synapses with a better memory, and the brain constantly “updates” synaptic connections, forming new ones or strengthening old ones, as new memories build or we update older ones.

However, synapses can also become weaker if they are not activated often enough, and the brain often loses some of these connections altogether. Thus, forgetting can occur naturally and, indeed, researchers argue that forgetting is a crucial part of learning and creating new memories.

Medical News Today spoke to Sam Berens, Ph.D., who is currently a research assistant at the University of York

in the United Kingdom, and he explained to us that natural forgetting can be due to a few different reasons.

“Forgetting occurs because it would not be energy efficient to indefinitely maintain all the memories that we form each day,” he explained, adding that it “also seems to be a natural consequence of neurogenesis — the process that creates new brain cells in support of future learning.”

“Because of this, clearing old and unused memories may be directly related to our ability to learn new things,” he told MNT.

But scientists continue to explore the many complications that riddle memory recall and formation. For instance, not all our memories are correct, and sometimes our brains “implement” forgetting as a defense mechanism.

■ Memory conformity and distortion

Past research has shown that social interactions can influence a person's memory of an event, as can what other people remember — or claim to remember — about the same event.

What other people tell us can influence our memories.

According to a report in the journal *Science*, “conformity may present in two forms, which initially convey similar, explicit behavior but are fundamentally different.” These are:

Private conformity, in which “an individual's recollection may genuinely be altered by social influence, resulting in long-lasting, persistent memory errors.”

Public conformity, in which “individuals may choose to outwardly comply, providing an account that fits that of others, but inwardly maintain certitude in their own original memory.”

However, while public conformity does not actually affect an individual's own memory perception, engaging in this process could lead to that person influencing others' memory of the event.

At the same time, the reports' authors note, “memory conformity may also serve an adaptive purpose because social learning is often more efficient and accurate than individual learning,” which is not always reliable.

For instance, as studies have shown, the process of memory retrieval can mean that the original memory is rewritten — with the memory of that memory — so that the original memory becomes warped.

A study appearing in the *Journal of Neuroscience* calls this “retrieval-induced distortion,” and explains that the distortion could occur either because the retrieval process modified the memory, “or because it led to the formation of new [...] associations” that “got stuck,” so to speak, to

the original memory.

“A memory is not simply an image produced by time traveling back to the original event — it can be an image that is somewhat distorted because of the prior times you remembered it,” says Donna Bridge, one of the study authors.

“Memories aren't static. If you remember something in the context of a new environment and time, or if you are even in a different mood, your memories might integrate the new information.”

■ Forgetting as an adaptive mechanism

On top of the issues surrounding how we remember the things that we remember, there is also the problem of why we forget, and some researchers note that forgetting sometimes occurs as an adaptive mechanism.

One way in which forgetting can be adaptive, Berens told MNT, is that, by letting go of irrelevant details, our brains are then better able to recall important information.

“[M]y own work suggests that forgetting specific details of an event allows us to focus on the bigger picture and pull out general patterns that can predict the future,” he explained.

“For instance, remembering exactly which trees in the forest bear the most delicious fruit is only useful until you have eaten all of that fruit. Instead of remembering the specifics trees, it may be best to remember the general area of a forest that has the best trees.”

“This sometimes involves forgetting specific details [...] and blurring together many experiences in order to pull out a general pattern,” Berens continued.

The researcher also noted that another way in which forgetting can be a helpful process is by placing negative memories out of reach so that they are less distressing to the person they affect.

“Memories for emotional or traumatic events lose their emotional tone over time,” said Berens, and “this can help us reappraise and learn from past experience without the need to reexperience all the associated emotions at the same time.”

■ Disrupting intrusive memories

But what happens when traumatic memories persist and resurface unbidden? Experts call this the “intrusive reexperiencing of trauma,” and it is a core feature of PTSD.

Memories are vulnerable during a specific time window. Individuals who experience PTSD may spontaneously recall a traumatic memory, or feel as if they are going back into the context that produced the trauma.

This effect can cause the person severe distress and lead to erratic behaviors as a coping strategy.

(Source: Medical News Today)

Drinking bottle of wine a week has same cancer risk as smoking up to 10 cigarettes, study claims

Drinking a bottle of wine a week increases the lifetime risk of cancer by the equivalent of smoking five to 10 cigarettes, research suggests.

For women, drinking one bottle of wine per week increases the absolute lifetime risk of cancer to the same extent as smoking 10 cigarettes a week. This is mostly due to an increased risk of breast cancer caused by drinking, according to the study.

For men, drinking a bottle of wine a week increases the absolute lifetime risk of cancer equivalent to smoking five cigarettes.

This is due to the risk of cancer in parts of the body such as the bowel, liver and oesophagus, according to the team of researchers from the University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust, Bangor University and University of Southampton.

The team said three bottles a week is equivalent to smoking roughly eight cigarettes per week for men and 23 cigarettes per week for women.

Writing in the journal *BMC Public Health*, the team said alcohol is generally perceived by the public as being far less harmful than smoking, despite being directly linked to several different types of cancer.

In terms of absolute risk, the researchers said one bottle of wine per week is associated with an increased absolute lifetime cancer risk for non-smokers of one per cent among men and 1.4 per cent with women.

The risks for men were equivalent to five cigarettes per week, they added.

The team estimated if 1,000 non-smoking men and 1,000 non-smoking women each drank one bottle of wine per week across their lifetime, around 10 men and 14 women would develop cancer as a result.

And if 1,000 men and 1,000 women drank three bottles of wine per week throughout their lives, around 19 men and 36 women could develop cancer as a result.

Dr Theresa Hydes, who worked on the study, said: “It is well established that heavy drinking is linked to cancer of the mouth, throat, voice box, gullet, bowel, liver and breast.

“Yet, in contrast to smoking, this is not widely understood by the public.

“We hope that by using cigarettes as the comparator we could communicate this message more effectively to help individuals make more informed lifestyle choices.”

She added: “We must be absolutely clear that this study is not saying that drinking alcohol in moderation is in any way equivalent to smoking. Our finds relate to lifetime risk across the population.

“At an individual level, cancer risk represented by drinking or smoking will vary and, for many individuals, the impact of 10 units of alcohol [equivalent to a bottle of wine] or five to 10 cigarettes may be very different.”

Professor Sir Ian Gilmore, chairman of the Alcohol Health Alliance, said: “Even at relatively low levels, alcohol can have serious consequences for our health.

“The chief medical officers recommend drinking no more than 14 units a week to keep the risks low but, worryingly, few people are aware of the guidelines.”

Jane Green, professor of epidemiology and co-director of the cancer epidemiology unit at the University of Oxford, said: “It is important to view these results in context.

“For both men and women in the UK, the lifetime risk of cancer is around 50 per cent.

“The authors estimate that lifetime risk is around one per cent higher for men and women who drink a bottle of wine a week, or who smoke five to 10 cigarettes a week, than for those who neither smoke nor drink.



“The average UK drinker reports drinking the equivalent of about a bottle-and-a-half of wine a week, and the average smoker smokes about 10 cigarettes a day, or 70 a week.

“This work confirms that, for most smokers, their smoking carries much greater risks for cancer than does alcohol for most drinkers.

“Moderate levels of drinking are in absolute terms particularly important for cancer risk in women, because they are associated with increased risk of breast cancer, which is very common [lifetime risk of 14 per cent].”

Sophia Lowes, from Cancer Research UK, said: “Smoking remains the biggest cause of cancer, so this comparison can be useful to raise awareness of less well-known risk factors like alcohol. It highlights that even low levels of drinking can increase the risk of cancer.

“Research is clear — the less a person drinks, the lower the risk of cancer. Small changes like having more alcohol-free days can make a big difference to how much you drink.

“But smoking causes over four times as many cases of cancer in the UK compared to alcohol. If you're a smoker, the best thing you can do for your health is stop completely, and you're most likely to be successful using support from your local free stop-smoking service.”

Susannah Brown, acting head of research interpretation at the World Cancer Research Fund, said: “This is a very interesting paper.

“By using a ‘cigarette equivalent’ to show how alcohol affects cancer risk, it conveys the findings in a way well understood by the public and could do a lot to increase public awareness of the link between drinking alcohol and cancer.”

(Source: The Independent)

Over 8.5 million visited Iran’s heritage museums during Noruz

HERITAGE DESK **TEHRAN** — More than 8.5 million people paid visit to heritage museums and historical sites across Iran during the New Year (Noruz) holidays, which ended on April 2.



“Over 8.5 million people toured Iran’s museums and other heritage sites (which have entry fees and are affiliated with the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization) during Noruz,” ISNA quoted Mohammadreza Kargar, the director of CHHTO museums and historical properties, as saying on Monday. The figure shows a 10 percent growth year on year, he said, adding that Tehran, Fars and Isfahan provinces hosted the highest numbers of visitors. Last September Kargar announced that some three million historical objects are being kept in the CHHTO-affiliated museums, adding “There are 600 museums across the country, some half of which are associated with private collectors or various institutions.”

Xinjiang’s tourism blooms with flower tours

URUMQI (Xinhua) — Tourists are swarming to northwest China’s Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region as flowers there are in full bloom.

“We received more than 10,000 tourists during the first day of the Tomb-sweeping Day holiday,” said Wang Ziyang, whose tourism company runs tours to a scenic area featuring apricot flowers in Xinyuan County. “We added helicopter tours this year to allow tourists to view the flowers at different angles and upgraded the tourism facilities at the tourist attraction.”

In the past few days, the area has welcomed more than 30,000 tourists, Wang said.

Ouyang Yiyu, a tourist from eastern China’s Fujian Province, came all the way to Xinjiang to admire the apricot flowers.

“It’s the blooming season, and my friends were amazed by the pictures I posted on social media,” she said.

The flower tours also help locals cash in on family inn businesses. Hizat, an official with Turgen Township, under the jurisdiction of Xinyuan, said that there are 28 rural family inns in the township, and one family inn can rake in more than 2,000 yuan (300 U.S. dollars) each day on average.

To cater to the tourism boom, Xinjiang launched special trains for the flower tours, taking visitors to the township.

This spring, Xinjiang authorities have launched 342 tourism activities to help power the local tourism economy.



ROUND THE GLOBE Western Ghats

The Western Ghats are internationally recognized as a region of immense global importance for the conservation of biological diversity, besides containing areas of high geological, cultural and aesthetic values.

A chain of mountains running parallel to India’s western coast, approximately 30-50 km inland, the Ghats traverse the States of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra and Gujarat.



Older than the great Himalayan mountain chain, the Western Ghats of India are a geomorphic feature of immense global importance. The Outstanding Universal Value of the Western Ghats is manifested in the region’s unique and fascinating influence on large-scale biophysical and ecological processes over the entire Indian peninsula.

The mountains of the Western Ghats and their characteristic montane forest ecosystems influence the Indian monsoon weather patterns that mediate the warm tropical climate of the region, presenting one of the best examples of the tropical monsoon system on the planet. The Ghats act as a key barrier, intercepting the rain-laden monsoon winds that sweep in from the south-west during late summer.

A significant characteristic of the Western Ghats is the exceptionally high level of biological diversity and endemism. This mountain chain is recognized as one of the world’s eight ‘hottest hotspots’ of biological diversity along with Sri Lanka. The forests of the Western Ghats include some of the best representatives of non-equatorial tropical evergreen forests in the world.

Of the total 325 globally threatened species in the Western Ghats, 129 are classified as Vulnerable, 145 as Endangered and 51 as Critically Endangered.

(Source: UNESCO)

Iran estimating flood damage to its historical sites, monuments

HERITAGE DESK **TEHRAN** — A number of Iran’s age-old cultural heritage sites and monuments have been affected by heavy rainfall, flash floods and extreme weather in various parts of the country in the past weeks.

Mohammad-Hassan Talebian, a deputy for the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, told reporters on Sunday that in Lorestan province, damages add up to more than 500 billion rials (nearly \$12 million) in the area of cultural heritage, while other provinces are also estimating the amount of losses.

A total of 730 historical structures have been suffered from the recent floods in 25 provinces, Talebian said, adding, based on surveys conducted so far, they need a credit worth of 3 trillion rials (around \$71 million) to be rehabilitated, ISNA reported on Monday.

In the wake of the floodwaters, cracks on the ancient reliefs in Naqsh-e Rostam in Fars province were widening in a criti-

cal way. Naqsh-e Rostam, six kilometers from the Persepolis, is an ancient necropolis that includes several relics and monuments such as rock-hewn tombs of four of Persian Achaemenid kings who reigned Persian Empire from 550-330 BC.

Waterfall made by the floods have washed away parts of the relics across Iran.

According to Talebian, the UNESCO-registered Persepolis remains intact as its ancient water ducts have drained flood water.

Reports say that parts of the Great Wall of Gorgan, that Iran hopes to get it registered on the UNESCO World Heritage list, has been damaged. The northern wall was built during the Sassanid period (224 CE - 651) to ward off invaders from Central Asia.

Talebian also broke the news about rising moisture in the one-millennium-old Gonbad-e Qabus in Golestan province, saying that the CHHTO is monitoring the situation. The Tower is one of the tallest brick towers in the world.



A view of the UNESCO-tagged Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System in southwest Iran.

Recent floods have slightly damaged Aq-Qala bridge in the north and UNESCO-tagged Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System in the southwest.

Other sites, including the UNESCO-registered Tchogha Zanbil are being monitored

by the Organization, the official said. The magnificent ruins of Tchogha Zanbil is amongst the topmost tourist attractions in southwest Iran as it is considered by many the finest surviving example of the Elamite architecture in the globe.

Flooding, rainfalls drop hotel occupancy in Noruz holidays

TOURISM DESK **TEHRAN** — Fewer people stayed in Iranian hotels during New Year (Noruz) holidays (March 21-April 4) compared to the same period a year earlier due to record flooding and rain showers, according to statistics released Monday by the head of Iran Hotels Association.

Average occupancy rate of the country’s hotels tumbled by 21 percent since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21) to April 4 (end of Noruz holidays) in comparison to the same period last year, Mehr quoted Jamshid Hamzezhadeh as saying.

“The statistics showed 15 percent slump by the end of March 30 but fell to 21 percent till April 4.”

“Of course, this decline has been calculated on average, (for instance) in some provinces such as Khuzestan, we have seen 40 to 50 percent decrease in occupancy rates. Also, in



A view of Abbasi Hotel in the historic city of Isfahan

some provinces such as Tehran, we witnessed an increase in the hotel occupancy rate,” he explained.

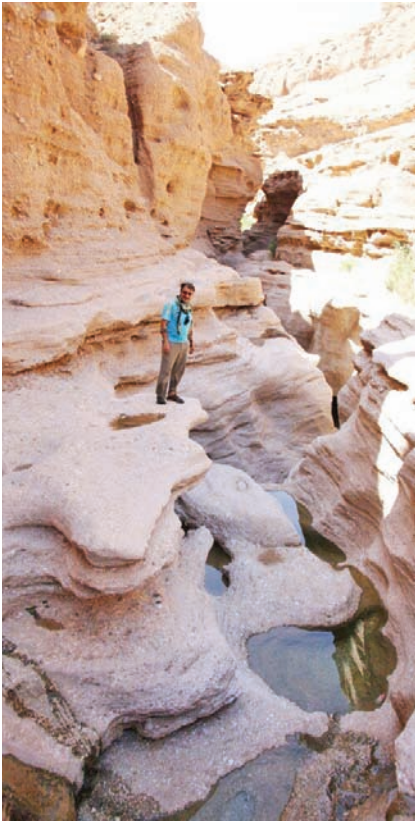
Hamzezhadeh also called government assistance saying, “At the time of flooding, we were one of the institutions that announced that travelers can cancel their stay without paying any costs, and now the government is expected to provide conditions or incentives for hoteliers to compensate for some of their costs.”

The catastrophic floods have hit 1,900 cities and villages in western, southwestern, northern and northeastern Iran, leaving 70 dead and hundreds displaced.

The flooding inflicted considerable damage to buildings and other structures, including bridges, sewerage systems, roadways, and canals as well as crops and livestock in many provinces, especially in Mazandaran, Khuzestan, Golestan, and Lorestan.

Kal-e Jenni: a mysterious valley in Iran you should not travel alone

By Mohsen Kazemi



TEHRAN (MNA) — Jinni Canyon, or as local people say Kal-e Jenni, is one of the most mysterious and stunning valleys in Iran, situated in Tabas, South Khorasan province.

Located some 30 kilometers north of the city of Tabas, a bunch of palm trees and marches in a wide valley, mark the scenic start of the journey, however, romance mixes with horror as the trip continues.

■ **Why is it called ‘Kal-e Jenni’?**

This name consists of two parts: Kal + Jinn. ‘Kal’ is referred to any valley which has been formed by water stream in the long run. And according to the Oxford Dictionary, ‘Jinn’ is “an intelligent spirit of lower rank than the angels, able to appear in human and animal forms and to possess humans.”

There are many reasons to attribute this 16-kilometer-long valley to jinnns. First, there are many mysterious-looking arcs, columns, and walls in the canyon which are basically made by erosion but local people could not find a better constructor than jinn for them.

The next reason is related to wind. When wind sweeps through the valley, it makes strange sounds due to the structure of walls which can really make you think that there are supernatural entities living around. Also, pebbles will hit your face as you walk in the valley in windy weather;

locals believed that jinnns are throwing the pebbles to defend their territory.

■ **Puzzling chambers add to the mystery**

Walking in the deep valley in around the middle of the way, you will see some holes in the walls. One may think that they are also the product of erosion in the first glance. But finding the courage to enter the bottom hole, which is some two meters above ground level, you will be amazed.

This is a vertical path to a group of chambers built by men some 8 meters above. The trace of ax can still be seen and felt. You have to climb this eight meters by placing your hands and feet on special steps devised on the wall to reach a hall. Here is another world; clam and relaxing. There are many rooms carved on both sides of the hall.

Some historians say that the chambers go back to the Sassanid era and have been carved by the followers of Zoroastrianism to do religious seclusion, known as Cheleh.

■ **Enjoy a modest temperature in a hot desert**

Setting aside the horrifying part, one can really enjoy the fresh and modest air temperature in the middle of a desert. There is water flowing in the valley in most sections; the water originates from Azmighan rural district and joins the aquifers later in the path. The depth of water reaches some two meters in some

areas and you find no way than swimming to continue your wonderful adventure.

The canyon takes the shape of V in some areas and U in others, and even sometimes just resembles ^ when you cannot even see the sky.

The site is also part of Tabas Geopark which is being studied to be inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

■ **The best time to begin the journey**

Although the region has its special beauties in every season, autumn is considered the best time for visiting Kal-e Jenni since the weather is mild and the sun will not burn your skin. There is normally little precipitation in the region but in springs, seasonal floods are waiting in ambush. It is better to fully review the weather forecast before starting the trip.

After all, it’s better to start the journey in the morning and finish it before the sunset or have all the required camping equipment at your disposal.

■ **A quick word about Tabas**

Tabas is a desert city full of surprises for its visitors. You hear ‘desert’ and unconsciously think of ‘water scarcity’; it is true but there is a region in Tabas called Azmighan in which locals cultivate rice to your surprise.

There are also many eco-lodges and hotels around which can add to your experience while visiting Tabas. Stay tuned with Mehr News Agency as we will cover more stories about Tabas in the near future.

Digging ancient signals out of modern human genomes

With new genome analysis tools, scientists have made significant advances in our understanding of modern humans’ origins and ancient migrations.

But trying to find ancient DNA, let alone prove that the ancient DNA is ancestral to a population living today is extremely challenging.

A new study in Molecular Biology and Evolution (MBE) adds to this understanding by reconstructing artificial genomes with the analyses of the genome of 565 contemporary South Asian individuals to extract ancient signals that recapitulate the long history of human migration and admixture in the region.

“All in all, our results provide a proof-of-principle for the feasibility of retrieving ancient genetic signals from contemporary human subjects, as if they were genomes from the past embedded in amber,” said Luca Pagani, the research coordinator of the study.

The study was led by Burak Yelmen and Mayukh Mondal from the Institute of Genomics of the University of Tartu, Estonia and coordinated by Luca Pagani from the same institution and from the University of Padova, Italy.

“The genetic components we managed to extract from modern genomes are invaluable, given the shortage of ancient DNA available from South Asian human remains,



and allow us to elucidate the genetic composition of the ancient populations that inhabited the area,” said Burak Yelmen, co-first author of the study.

While studying the mixing events that brought ancient human populations to form contemporary South Asians, the researchers also noted that some portion of the genomes had not mixed as expected, as if the genetic variants that evolved in South Asia or the ones that arrived from West Eurasia were important for adapting

to the local lifestyle through admixture.

“Among these variants, we found genes important for immunity and for dietary changes, as one may expect for human populations adapting to new sets of pathogens or food,” said Mayukh Mondal, joint first author of this work.

The human evolution of skin pigmentation also revealed many genetic variants for the population studied.

“Intriguingly we also noted that some genetic variants implicated in the skin pigmentation of West Eurasians were under opposite selective forces, some becoming highly frequent and others being almost lost after the admixture events. Skin pigmentation is surely a fascinating and complex subject and we are still trying to understand what, if any, would be the adaptive implications of the signal we detected.”

The study will add to the growing picture of the diversity of South Asians, and future studies of modern human population origins.

“These signals can complement the picture emerging from the booming field of ancient DNA by providing high quality genomic sequences especially for areas of the world where archaeological human remains are scarce or poorly preserved.”

(Source: phys.org)

Scientists now know that dark matter isn’t primordial black holes

For over fifty years, scientists have theorized that roughly 85% of matter in the Universe’s is made up of a mysterious, invisible mass. Since then, multiple observation campaigns have indirectly witnessed the effects that this “Dark Matter” has on the Universe. Unfortunately, all attempts to detect it so far have failed, leading scientists to propose some very interesting theories about its nature.

One such theory was offered by the late and great Stephen Hawking, who proposed that the majority of dark matter may actually be primordial black holes (PBH) smaller than a tenth of a millimeter in diameter. But after putting this theory through its most rigorous test to date, an international team of scientists led from the Kavli Institute for the Physics and Mathematics of the Universe (IPMU) has confirmed that it is not.

This theory posits that the majority of dark matter is made up of primordial black holes (PBH) formed shortly after the Big Bang. “What Professor Hawking predicted was that, if there were little patches of overdensity in the early Universe, such patches could create black holes ... once black holes are formed, they would behave like dark matter (because it is invisible and interacts with other particles only via gravity).”

■ **An attractive theory**
This theory is attractive because it does



not rely on the existence of any exotic (but as of yet, undiscovered) particles. What’s more, shortly after Hawking proposed this idea, astrophysicists discovered that cosmic inflation could generate patches of overdensity in the early Universe due to quantum fluctuations, which could have resulted in black holes.

The team tested this theory by using

the Subaru Telescope at the Mauna Kea Observatory in Hawaii to observe the neighboring Andromeda Galaxy, which is located about 2.54 million light years away. Unlike most galaxies in our cosmic neighborhood, Andromeda is one of only 100 or so that is approaching our galaxy – at a rate of 110 km per second (68 mi per second) – and is destined to collide with it.

The Andromeda galaxy is the largest, nearby galaxy containing many stars inside. For example, Andromeda is much bigger than the Magellan clouds that are dwarf galaxies.

The Andromeda galaxy is the largest, nearby galaxy containing many stars inside. For example, Andromeda is much bigger than the Magellan clouds that are dwarf galaxies.

■ **Black holes**
Hence, IF we can observe stars in Andromeda at one time, we could find microlensing events of a star, the flicker of its brightness, due to a foreground black holes that are passing in front of the star on the sky.”

If Hawking’s theory were in fact correct, the space between Andromeda and our galaxy would be filled with PBHs. This would result in a gravitational lensing effect, where the gravitational force of all these tiny black holes would cause the light rays coming from Andromeda’s stars to bend and become magnified.

This effect, which was first predicted by Einstein and his Theory of General Relativity in 1915, has been used many times by astronomers to view distant objects by taking advantage of the presence of massive objects in between them and Earth.

However, the opportunities for such events are rare, requiring a fortuitous alignment between the observer, the distant object and the intervening one.

(Source: universetoday.com)

Air temperatures in the Arctic are driving system change, researchers find



A new paper shows that air temperature is the “smoking gun” behind climate change in the Arctic, according to John Walsh, chief scientist for the UAF International Arctic Research Center.

The “Arctic system is trending away from its 20th century state and into an unprecedented state, with implications not only within but beyond the Arctic,” according to lead author Jason Box of the Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland in Copenhagen.

Several University of Alaska Fairbanks researchers are co-authors on the paper, which says that “increasing air temperatures and precipitation are drivers of major changes in various components of the Arctic system.”

The study is the first to combine observations of physical climate indicators, such as snow cover, with biological impacts, such as a mismatch in the timing of flowers blooming and pollinators working.

■ **The effect of things**
Climate indicators are key pieces of information that capture the essence of a system, according to Walsh. An example would be September sea ice extent, which summarizes the effects of things like temperature, winds, ocean heat and other variables.

“I didn’t expect the tie-in with temperature to be as strong as it was,” Walsh said. “All the variables are connected with temperature. All components of the Arctic system are involved in this change.”

Peaks of the southern Brooks Range along a stretch of the Dalton Highway, about 250 miles north of Fairbanks. Credit: UAF photo by Todd Paris

“Never have so many Arctic indicators been brought together in a single paper,” he said.

The authors correlated records of observations from 1971 to 2017 of nine key indicators: air temperature, permafrost, hydroclimatology, snow cover, sea ice, land ice, wildfires, tundra and terrestrial ecosystems, and carbon cycling. All the indicators correlate with rising temperatures, pointing to a warming climate and a fundamental change in the Arctic.

■ **The Arctic system**
The “Arctic system is trending away from its 20th century state and into an unprecedented state, with implications not only within but beyond the Arctic,” according to lead author Jason Box of the Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland in Copenhagen.

“Because the Arctic atmosphere is warming faster than the rest of the world, weather patterns across Europe, North America and Asia are becoming more persistent, leading to extreme weather conditions. Another example is the disruption of the ocean circulation that can further destabilize climate: for example, cooling across northwestern Europe and strengthening of storms,” said Box.

(Source: phys.org)

Organism with chlorophyll genes that doesn’t photosynthesize may help protect coral reefs



For the first time scientists have found an organism that can produce chlorophyll but does not engage in photosynthesis.

The peculiar organism is dubbed ‘corallicolid’ because it is found in 70 percent of corals around the world and may provide clues as to how to protect coral reefs in the future.

“This is the second most abundant cohabitant of coral on the planet and it hasn’t been seen until now,” says Patrick Keeling, a University of British Columbia botanist and senior researcher overseeing the study published in Nature. “This organism poses completely new biochemical questions. It looks like a parasite, and it’s definitely not photosynthetic. But it still makes chlorophyll.”

Chlorophyll is the green pigment found in plants and algae that allows them to absorb energy from sunlight during photosynthesis.

■ **At capturing energy**
“Having chlorophyll without photosynthesis is actually very dangerous because chlorophyll is very good at capturing energy, but without photosynthesis to release the energy slowly it is like living with a bomb in your cells,” Keeling says.

Corallicolids live in the gastric cavity of a wide array of corals responsible for building reefs, as well as black corals, fan corals, mushroom corals, and anemones.

They are an apicomplexan, part of a vast group of parasites that have a cellular compartment called a plastid, which is the part of plant and algal cells where photosynthesis takes place. The most famous apicomplexan is the parasite responsible for malaria.

More than a decade ago, photosynthetic algae related to apicomplexans were discovered in healthy corals, indicating they might have evolved from benign photosynthesising organisms attached to corals before turning into the parasites we know today.

Ecological data showed that coral reefs contain several apicomplexans, but corallicolids, the most common one, had not been studied until now. The organism has revealed a new puzzle: not only does it have a plastid, but it contains all four plastid genes used in chlorophyll production.

“It’s quite a head scratcher,” says Waldan Kwong, a UBC postdoctoral research fellow and lead author of the study. “We don’t know why these organisms are holding on to these photosynthesis genes. There’s some novel biology going on here, something we haven’t seen before.”

The researchers hope further research on corallicolids will provide a more sophisticated understanding of coral habitats and allow us to better preserve them.

(Source: sciencedaily.com)

Abrupt springtime showers quench Iran’s thirst

➔ The Caspian Sea watershed area, according to the charts, has received 425.8 millimeters of rainfall. The figure is almost 68 percent higher than that of the last year, when it stood at 253.6 millimeters.

The other catchment area sitting in the southern part of the country, the Persian Gulf and Oman Sea, has been fed with 486.1 millimeters of rainfall during the investigated time. The figure is 256 percent higher than the period last year, with 136.4 millimeters.

The Central Plateau, which does not regularly enjoy the abundance of rainfall, has received 235 percent more precipitation than last year. The watershed area enjoyed 169.3 millimeters of rainfall this year. This is while only 50.5 millimeters of rain was received by the catchment area last year.

The last watershed area, Qarequm in the northeast, has received 193.8 millimeters, showing a 142 percent increase compared to the last year’s figure which equaled 80 millimeters.

■ **Five-decade average**
More detailed analysis can be carried out comparing the current rainfall rate with the average precipitation rate during the past 50 years.

Accordingly, the Urmia Lake catchment area is currently at the best condition compared to the other watersheds. The area’s rainfall amount is 71 percent higher than the average rate, which equals 233 millimeters.

The next most blissful watershed area is the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman. Precipitation rate in the area is 54 percent higher than its 5-decade average, 315.1 millimeters.

With an ignorable distance from the previous, stands the Caspian Sea catchment area with 53 percent higher than the average figure, which equals 278.8 millimeters.

With 30 percent higher than 5-decade average precipitation, the Central Plateau is the next area, receiving a record-breaking amount of rainfall. The average figure for the Central Plateau is 130.1 millimeters.

The precipitation rate in Qarequm watershed is 21 percent higher than the average number 159.8 millimeters.

Still, the most deprived area among all is the Eastern Border watershed. Although the catchment area had the highest increase rate in precipitation, rising from 17.8 to 68 millimeters during the investigated period, it is 17 percent below the 50-year average, which is equal to 82.2.

The eastern Border watershed used to be the driest region in Iran during the past several years.

Researchers want to store excess renewable energy as methane

One of the major drawbacks to renewable energy sources like wind and solar is that we don’t have an effective way to store excess energy. When the wind blows, we might have more than enough energy to feed the grid, but we can’t store the surplus. Then, on breezeless days, we’re left powerless. As trite as that might sound, it’s unfortunately valid, and companies like Tesla have been trying to develop large battery storage solutions. Now, researchers at Stanford University are working on a biology-based battery alternative.

Their idea is to use microbes to convert excess renewable energy into methane, which could be burned as needed. In nature, the microorganism Methanococcus maripaludis consumes hydrogen and carbon dioxide and exudes methane. So, the researchers are using renewable energy-powered electrodes to split water and free its hydrogen atoms. Those hydrogen atoms are fed to the microbes, which then pull carbon dioxide from the air and release methane. The gas doesn’t dissolve in water, so it can be captured and stored.

Then, at times of peak demand or when renewables aren’t producing, the methane can be burned much like fossil fuel sources. It might seem backwards to turn renewable energy into methane, which releases carbon dioxide when it burns. But, this methane is produced by pulling carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, so the process is carbon-neutral. One significant advantage over battery storage systems, like Tesla’s Powerpacks, is that the methane can be converted into electricity using existing infrastructure.

The researchers are still working on the technology, but they believe this can be cost effective at scale. The Department of Energy has already committed funding, and the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and Southern California Gas are helping to develop more efficient designs. It’s hard to say if this can solve renewable energy’s biggest flaw -- its storage problem -- but it’s certainly a novel approach.

(Source: engadget.com)

Team says NASA’s glowing aurora research looks like an “alien attack”

Two successful rocket launches in Norway on Friday have left locals stunned, confused, and in awe of an incredible artificial light show.

After two orange dots launched through the air, expanding glowing clouds and colorful lights appeared suddenly – but it was not an alien attack, as some outlets have been suggesting.

Instead, the rockets were part of AZURE (Auroral Zone Upwelling Rocket Experiment) – a NASA-funded experiment to learn about the flow of particles in the ionosphere.

The AZURE mission successfully launched back-to-back aboard two sounding rockets in Norway tonight. These colorful clouds created a light show in the sky, helping researchers track the flow of neutral and charged particles in Earth’s ionosphere.

Auroras are a visible product of collisions as charged particles from space smash into Earth’s. Winds in regions of the ionosphere move these particles around, and although this vertical wind is an incredibly important part of our atmosphere, we currently don’t know much about how it works.

According to NASA, the AZURE rockets measured the atmospheric density and temperature, as well as deploying tracers such as trimethylaluminum and a mixture of barium and strontium – a combination that ionizes when exposed to sunlight.

“These mixtures create colorful clouds that allow researchers to track the flow of neutral and charged particles, respectively,” explain the NASA team back in 2018.

The “tracers will be released at altitudes 71 to 155 miles (114 to 250 kilometers) high and pose no hazard to residents in the region.”

The clouds were then tracked to measure the winds and flow of particles as the glowing spots dispersed.

Despite not causing any hazard, residents were definitely a little under prepared.

Norway news website VOL explained that the police received many reports about the lights, and Michael Theusner, who captured a timelapse of the footage while recording the Northern Lights explains that even he was a little nervous about the idea of aliens.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

Durability vs. recyclability: Dueling goals in making electronics more sustainable

The falling cost of solar power has led to a boom in recent years, with more and more photovoltaic panels popping up on rooftops and backyard solar farms around the world.

But what happens to all of those solar panels in a couple of decades when they reach the end of their useful life? And what about electronic devices with even shorter life spans?

Those questions are at the heart of new research released by a team at Georgia Institute of Technology, where researchers looked into the impact of government policies put in place to reduce the amount of electronics waste filling up landfills.

“There is a lot of concern in sustainability circles that manufacturers are making things with shorter and shorter life spans, and products are perhaps even intentionally made to become obsolete to induce replacement purchases,” said Beril Toktay, a professor at Georgia Tech’s Scheller College of Business.

■ **The product life cycle**
The study, which was published April 4 in the journal Management Science, focused on government policies used to encourage electronics makers to put more thought into what happens at the end of the product life cycle. Those programs, which are called extended producer responsibility (EPR) laws and are already in use in some states, have two common objectives: to have producers design their products to be easier to recycle or to boost their durability for increased device life span.

However, the researchers reported that those goals are often at odds.

“What we have found is that sometimes when you design for recyclability, you give up on durability, and when du-



rability is the goal, recyclability is sacrificed,” Toktay said.

In theory, a product that is both easy to recycle and more durable would be the pinnacle of environmentally responsible product design. The researchers pointed to automobiles with thicker metal frames that last longer and also have more recyclable materials.

■ **Impacting recyclability**
“Sometimes simple choices that product designers make, such as using glue or fasteners to put together a device, really impact recyclability at the end of life,” said Natalie Huang, a former graduate student at Georgia Tech and now an assistant professor at the University of Minnesota.

More often than not, however, there is no such synergy. In the case of photovoltaic panels, the researchers highlighted how thin-film panels are much more cost effective to recycle

than other panels because they contain precious metals. Meanwhile, crystalline silicon panels, which aren’t as cost effective to recycle, have much longer life spans because their components degrade much more slowly.

“These kinds of trade-offs are common, and so from a policy-making perspective, there’s not a one-size-fits-all approach that will work,” said Atalay Atas, a professor at the Scheller College of Business. “You really have to distinguish between different product categories to consider the recyclability and the durability implications and make sure that your policy isn’t conflicting with the objective.”

The researchers said that in some cases, EPR policies could actually lead to increased waste generation if product designers make products more recyclable but less durable, or lead to increased greenhouse gas emissions if products are made more durable but less recyclable.

To help determine how government policies could impact individual products, the researchers built a mathematical model to help predict the impact those policies would have on products based on their materials and design characteristics.

Among the factors the model takes into account are the base production cost of the product, the degree of difficulty in increasing recyclability and durability, the degree of interaction between recyclability and durability in the product design, and the recycling properties of the product.

“Ultimately what we’re after is to find a way to do scenario analyses to determine what would be the best policy for different product categories,” Toktay said.

(Source: eurekaalert.org)

Women diagnosed years later than men for same diseases

For a wide range of diseases, diagnosis comes later in life for women than for men, according to a large Danish study.

Researchers don't know whether the later diagnoses are due to genetics, the environment, possible biases in the healthcare system - or some combination of reasons.

The study of health data from 6.9 million Danish people found that across hundreds of diseases, women on average were diagnosed when they were about four years older than the age at which the conditions were recognized in men.

"We're not just looking at one disease here, we're looking at all diseases and we are looking at an entire population, from cradle to grave," lead author Soren Brunak from the University of Copenhagen told Reuters Health by phone.

On average, women received cancer diagnoses 2.5 years after men. They received diagnoses for metabolic diseases like diabetes 4.5 years later. "(This) actually surprised us quite a lot," Brunak said. "Men generally have a tendency to get to the doctor later... So presumably the difference in onset is even larger."

Brunak and his team considered incidence rates of diseases in the 18 broad categories of the ICD-10 diagnosis system managed by the World Health Organization.

The study wasn't designed to explain the causes of the differences. Another limitation is that researchers only looked at diagnoses made in hospitalized patients.

Dr. Noel Bairey Merz, director of the Barbra Streisand Women's Heart Center at the Cedars-Sinai Smidt Heart Institute, who was not involved in the study, pointed out to Reuters Health that the study therefore lacks information on age at diagnosis for people who didn't require hospitalization.

"On the other hand," she said, "being hospitalized is a sign of a serious illness, so (that) adds significance to the diagnosis and supports that disease onset may be later in women."

Brunak's study, published in Nature Communications, showed that the bone-thinning disease osteoporosis was a notable exception to the trend. Here, women were typically diagnosed before they suffered a fracture, while the opposite was true for men.

(Source: Reuters Health)

RECIPE OF THE WEEK Spring biscotti

"Fresh tasting biscotti with orange zest, dried cranberries, white chocolate, and pistachios. Very light and tasty."

Ingredients:



1/4 cup butter
3/4 cup white sugar
1 tablespoon orange zest
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 eggs
1 egg white
2 cups all-purpose flour
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 ounces white chocolate, chopped
1/2 cup dried cranberries
1 1/4 cups pistachio nuts

Directions:

In a large bowl, cream together butter, sugar, orange zest, and vanilla with an electric mixer until light and fluffy. Mix in eggs and egg white one at a time, beating well after each addition. Sift together the flour, baking powder, and salt; gradually blend into the creamed mixture using a wooden spoon. Stir in the white chocolate, dried cranberries, and pistachios. Cover, and chill for 30 minutes, or until dough is no longer sticky.

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F (165 degrees C). Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Turn dough out on a lightly floured surface, and divide into halves. Form each half into a flattish log about 12 inches long by 3 inches wide. Arrange logs at least 3 inches apart on baking sheet.

Bake for 30 minutes in preheated oven, or until pale gold. Allow logs to cool on the baking sheet until cool enough to handle. On a cutting board, cut logs crosswise on a diagonal into 1 inch thick slices. Arrange on baking sheet.

Bake for an additional 15 minutes, or until golden. Transfer biscotti to wire racks, and cool completely. Store in an airtight container at room temperature.

LEARN ENGLISH Animal Rights

A: You should have seen the T.V. show that was on last night, the topic it covered was really interesting; animal rights.

B: Do you really believe in that? If they are going to focus on something, they should do it on **civil rights**.

A: Yes, but we can't deny that animals are **vulnerable, defenseless**, and are completely **at the mercy of** human beings. B: I understand your point, but we continue to have **transgressions** against human rights. If so much attention wasn't devoted to the topic of animals, we would then concentrate more on saving a human being instead of protecting a koala.

A: You can't compare **apples and oranges**; I believe that both topics are important and that we can't ignore them, the mistreatment of animals can cause a great environmental imbalance. I believe that governments should prohibit activities like **poaching**. B: Well, you are right on that point. This is the reason that I don't buy leather and I try to buy **synthetic** products.

B: At least you're **doing your part**. My contribution is to have a pet in the house that I treat like a member of the family.

A: As long as you don't treat it better than your wife, it's fine.

Key vocabulary

civil rights: the rights people have

vulnerable: easily hurt or harmed

defenseless: defenseless

at the mercy of: in a position where you can be harmed

transgression: something that is not allowed

apples and oranges: an unfair comparison of two different things

poach: to illegally hunt protected animals

synthetic: not natural

do your part: to help accomplish a goal

Supplementary vocabulary

biodegradable: capable of being decomposed by natural means

famine: a severe shortage of food

biosphere: the part of the earth's surface and atmosphere inhabited by living things

cloning: a general term for the research activity that creates a copy of some biological entity

(Source: irlanguage.com)

Why Catholic mom implores girls to ditch leggings?

Maryann White's plea to girls not to wear leggings provoke backlash as modest dressing is losing its meaning

1 → How is modest dressing viewed in Islam?

But what White has rightly pointed out, is the basic idea of modest dressing not just in Islam but also in all other religions such as Christianity and Judaism.

Modesty does not only apply to attire but all aspects of life in Islam. Wearing hijab or dressing modestly is the manifestation of one's commitment to God.

Muslims believe that the true purpose of life is to worship God and follow his instructions and modest clothing is one of the key components of being a true servant of God.

In the meantime, as many believe that human beings should be allowed to act freely, Islam does not force anyone to be a Muslim as God says in the Quran, "Let there be no compulsion in religion" (2:256). According to Islam, a woman willfully chooses to commit to this act of worship.

Muslim women wear hijab to seek the pleasure of God and to uphold Islam's code of modesty. The majority of women who wear hijab consider it a constant reminder that they do not adorn their bodies for men.

There are women who feel they have to sexualize themselves to gain attention, but we don't see as many men wearing short bottoms and tighter tops. That's due to the fact that we have always given men a pass on their looks, demanding from them success and intellect instead, and that's what women can achieve if they try to look past the external and focus on the internal.



Maryam Mirzakhani's birthday marked world's Women in Mathematics Day

W O M E N d e s k **TEHRAN** — The birthday of late Maryam Mirzakhani, Iranian-born genius mathematician and Stanford University professor, was designated as a day for celebrating women in mathematics.

Vice president for women's and family affairs, Masoumeh Ebtekar, hailed nomination of Mirzakhani's birthday (May 12) as a day for celebration of women in mathematics, IRNA reported.

At 2018 World Meeting for Mathematics, Iranian Mathematical Society proposed designating Maryam Mirzakhani's birthday as day for celebrating women in mathematics, Ebtekar wrote on her Twitter account on Thursday.

"At the 2018 World Meeting for Women in Mathematics, (WM)*2 held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the Women's Committee of the Iranian Mathematical Society proposed designating Maryam Mirzakhani's birthday (May 12) as a day for celebrating women in mathematics," according to Forbes.

"The proposal was approved. Globally, several organizations for women in mathematics support the initiative, including European Women in Mathematics, the Association for Women in Mathematics, the African Women in Mathematics Association, the Colectivo de Mujeres Matemáticas de Chile (Collective of Women Mathematicians in Chile) and Indian Women and Mathematics."



"May 12th is a joyful opportunity for the mathematical community to celebrate women in mathematics. The celebration takes place every year, all around the world... The goal of the day is to inspire women everywhere to celebrate their achievements in mathematics, and to encourage an open, welcoming and inclusive work environment for everybody," according to the website for the initiative.

The Iranian winner of Fields Medal, also known as the Nobel Prize of mathematics, Mirzakhani, passed away at 40 in a hospital in the U.S. on July 14, 2017.

100 female rescuers helping flood-stricken people in Khuzestan

W O M E N d e s k **TEHRAN** — A number of one hundred female rescuers are helping people in flood-stricken areas of the southwestern province of Khuzestan, said Hamid Qavidel, a representative for the Relief and Rescue Organization of the Red Crescent Society.

The female rescue team provides the vulnerable flood-stricken women and children with relief services as well as social and psychological supports, IRNA quoted Qavidel as saying on Sunday.

Women are considered as the vulnerable group in the unexpected events for their physical situation, therefore, they should receive special help, noted the official.

He added that the female rescuers are present at the emergency camps in order to help young women and girls, pregnant women, women's child delivery and caring infants.

Following torrential rain in many regions across Iran 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 70 dead and hundreds of thousands displaced.

Extreme flooding inundating many provinces across the country have brought heavy financial losses amounting to 9.5 trillion rials (nearly \$226 million) to the agriculture sector in Khuzestan.

The Iranian Red Crescent Society says it has not received any cash for humanitarian aid from other countries for the flood victims in Iran as there are no monetary channel to receive such aid.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → چ

Education, labor ministries ink MOU on out-of-school children

The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare have signed a memorandum of understanding aiming to bring out-of-school children back to school.

The memorandum of understanding will pave the way for future steps, ISNA news agency quoted Education Minister Mohammad Bat'haei as saying on Sunday.

He made the remarks over the 8th session of council meeting for improving educational standards in underprivileged and underdeveloped areas at the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare. "The meeting is aiming to live up to educational standards, however, the current conditions are unjustifiable, and we should move faster," he added.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“amphi-”

■ **Meaning:** both or around

■ **For example:** A good museum in the castle is stuffed with antiquities, while a Roman **amphitheater** overlooks all.

PHRASAL VERB

Think something out

■ **Meaning:** to think about all the parts of something carefully before deciding or planning exactly what to do

■ **For example:** He went for a walk to think things out.

IDIOM

Cut to the chase

■ **Explanation:** to reach the most important points quickly

■ **For example:** Come on, cut to the chase already—what exactly are you trying to ask me?

تفاهم وزراء برای بازگرداندن کودکان بازمانده از تحصیل به مدارس

وزارت آموزش و پرورش تفاهم نامه مشترکی با وزارت رفاه برای بازگرداندن کودکان بازمانده از تحصیل امضا کردند.

به گزارش روز یکشنبه ایسنا، محمد بطحایی وزیر آموزش و پرورش گفت: امروز تفاهم نامه‌ای امضا می‌شود که نقشه کار برای ادامه مسیر کاملاً مشخص شود.

بطحایی در هشتمین جلسه شورای هماهنگی بهبود و ارتقای شاخص‌های آموزشی و پرورشی مناطق محروم و کمتر توسعه یافته که در وزارت رفاه برگزار شد گفت: هدف اصلی این برنامه و شورای هماهنگی ارتقای شاخص‌ها بود، هرچند این روند قابل قبول نیست و باید با سرعت بیشتری حرکت کنیم.

Syrian govt. troops attack terrorists' positions in Idlib, Hama

The Syrian government forces have carried out major operations against terrorists in the north and west of the country in response to the militants' breaches of the de-escalation zone agreement.

The government forces targeted positions of Nusra Front and other terrorist groups in Idlib and Hama, killing many of them.

Several terrorist leaders were reportedly among those killed, media reports said Sunday.

Earlier, five civilians had been killed and over a dozen others injured as terrorists shelled a hospital in Hama.

The attacks reportedly came after the terrorists violated a de-escalation zone agreement reached following a meeting between Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, in the Black Sea resort city of Sochi on September 17.

The Syrian government had earlier warned that it will not "stand idly by" while terrorist groups continue committing crimes against Syrian citizens and troops, breaching the de-escalation zone deal.

Under the safe zone deal, all militants in a demilitarized zone that surrounds Idlib and also parts of the adjacent provinces of Aleppo and Hama were supposed to pull



out heavy arms by October 17, and Takfiri groups had to withdraw by October 15.

The Syrian government's attacks on terrorists' positions in Idlib and Hama come in the wake of reports that 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, are mounting chemical warheads on more than a hundred missiles in

cooperation with European experts in 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, 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 Shaykhun to the region.

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 government forces. Since the beginning of the year, over 460 such incidents have been recorded," Zakharova said.

(Source: Press TV)

U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Nielsen resigns amid Trump anger over border

U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen, who oversaw President Donald Trump's bitterly contested immigration policies during her tumultuous 16-month tenure, resigned on Sunday amid a surge in the number of migrants at the border with Mexico.

A senior administration official said Trump asked for Nielsen's resignation and she gave it.

Trump, who has recently expressed growing anger about the situation at the border, said on Twitter: "Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen Nielsen will be leaving her position, and I would like to thank her for her service."

In another tweet, Trump said Kevin McAleenan, the current U.S. Customs and Border Protection commissioner, would become acting DHS secretary.

In a tweet late Sunday, Nielsen said that she would stay on until Wednesday.

"I have agreed to stay on as Secretary through Wednesday, April 10th to assist with an orderly transition and ensure that key DHS missions are not impacted," she said.

Nielsen's departure was first reported by CBS News. Nielsen, 46, had been DHS secretary since December 2017. Her departure had been repeatedly rumored over the past year, particularly after a wave of anger over the administration's 2018 family separation policy at the border with Mexico and most recently as U.S. border officials estimated that 100,000 migrants were apprehended at the southern border in March, the highest level in a decade.

Another senior administration official said Trump's national security adviser, John Bolton, after a blowup with Nielsen late last year, also recommended to Trump that she should go.

Trump has made a clampdown on illegal immigration a centerpiece of his two-year-old presidency, leading chants of "Build that wall" at his rallies as he has sought to cut back on the number of newcomers entering the United States without proper documentation.

Many of the migrants picked up last month were Central Americans seeking U.S. asylum.

Trump was so frustrated about the increase that he announced he would cut off U.S. aid to Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. He also threatened to close the border with

Mexico, although he later backed off that proposal with a threat to impose tariffs on auto imports.

In her resignation letter, Nielsen asked for more from Congress and the courts, which have opposed such Trump administration initiatives as his effort to limit immigration from Muslim nations and the border wall.

"I hope that the next Secretary will have the support of Congress and the courts in fixing the laws which have impeded our ability to fully secure America's borders and which have contributed to discord in our nation's discourse," she wrote to Trump.

Trump also took aim at Congress in another tweet later on Sunday, saying: "Country is FULL," and saying Democrats in Congress must "fix loopholes" and repeating his threats to close the border or impose tariffs if Mexico does not do more.

Nielsen's resignation was the latest high-profile departure from the Trump administration, and leaves just four women in his Cabinet. Among others, Trump currently lacks a permanent secretary of defense or chief of staff.

■ Lightning rod

Nielsen's departure was announced two days after the Republican president abruptly said on Friday he was dumping his nominee to be the top official at U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Ronald Vitiello, saying he wanted someone "tougher."

ICE is under the jurisdiction of DHS, which was formed following the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on New York and Washington.

Repeatedly subjected to tough questioning by Democrats at congressional hearings, Nielsen became a lightning rod for criticism of Trump's policies. She was confronted by protesters last year at a Mexican restaurant in Washington.

Last year, Nielsen came under increasing pressure by critics to step aside after the Trump administration adopted the policy of separating migrant children from their parents as part of its "zero tolerance" approach intended to deter families from leaving home in the hope of entering the United States.

After criticism as pictures of children in cages were spread across the world, Trump signed an executive order in June



ending family separations and requiring that families be held together in federal custody while the adults awaited prosecution for illegally crossing the border.

But the government reported that at least 245 children were taken from their families between that time and the first months of 2019.

Trump insists that the arrival of immigrants across the southern U.S. border constitutes a national emergency so important that he sidestepped Congress' refusal to provide him with billions of dollars he requested to build the border wall.

Representative Bennie Thompson, the Democratic chairman of the House of Representatives Homeland Security Committee, said Nielsen's tenure at DHS "was a disaster from the start."

He said in a statement, however, that she should not serve as a scapegoat, blasting Trump for "terrible and cruel policies." Noting that the department now has neither a permanent secretary nor deputy secretary, Thompson called on the administration to work with Congress "in good faith."

Before she was nominated as secretary, Nielsen worked as a deputy to former Marine General John Kelly, who headed DHS before becoming White House chief of staff.

Kelly resigned as chief of staff on Jan. 2 amid reports of a strained relationship with Trump.

(Source: Reuters)

Battle rages for Libya's capital, airport bombed

A warplane attacked Tripoli's only functioning airport on Monday as eastern forces advancing on Libya's capital disregarded global appeals for a truce in the latest of a cycle of warfare since Muammar Gaddafi's fall in 2011.

The fighting threatens to disrupt oil supplies, fuel migration to Europe and wreck UN plans for an election to end rivalries between parallel administrations in east and west.

Casualties are mounting.

The eastern Libyan National Army (LNA) forces of Khalifa Haftar - a former general in Gaddafi's army - said 19 of its soldiers had died in recent days as they closed in on the internationally recognized government in Tripoli.

A spokesman for the Tripoli-based Health Ministry said fighting in the south of the capital had killed at least 25 people, including fighters and civilians, and wounded 80.

The United Nations said 2,800 people had been displaced by clashes and many more could flee, though some were trapped.

"The United Nations continues to call for a temporary humanitarian truce to allow for the provision of emergency services and the voluntary passage of civilians, including those wounded, from areas of conflict," it said in a statement.

But that seemed to fall on deaf ears. Mat-

iga airport, in an eastern suburb, said it was bombed and a resident confirmed the attack. No more details were immediately available.

Haftar's LNA, which backs the eastern administration in Benghazi, took the oil-rich south of Libya earlier this year before advancing fast through largely unpopulated desert regions toward the coastal capital.

Seizing Tripoli, however, is a much bigger challenge for the LNA. It has conducted air strikes on the south of the city as it seeks to advance along a road toward the center from a disused former international airport.

■ Machine guns on pickups

However, the government of Prime Minister Fayez al-Serraj, 59, is seeking to block the LNA with the help of allied armed groups who have rushed to Tripoli from nearby Misrata port in pickup trucks fitted with machine guns.

A Reuters correspondent in the city center could hear gunfire in the distance southwards. Serraj who comes from a wealthy business family, has run Tripoli since 2016 as part of a UN-brokered deal boycotted by Haftar. His Tripoli government has reported 11 deaths in the last few days, without saying on which side.

UN envoy Ghassan Salame met Serraj in his office in Tripoli on Monday to discuss

"this critical and difficult juncture", the world body's Libya mission said.

The violence has jeopardized a UN plan for an April 14-16 conference to plan elections and end anarchy that has prevailed since the Western-backed toppling of Gaddafi eight years ago.

The UN refugee agency expressed anxiety about thousands caught in cross-fire and detention centers in conflict zones in a "rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation".

As well as the United Nations, the European Union, United States and G7 bloc have all urged a ceasefire, a halt to Haftar's advance and return to negotiations.

Haftar casts himself as a foe of extremism but is viewed by opponents as a new dictator in the mould of Gaddafi, whose four-decade rule saw torture, disappearances and assassinations.

■ Migrants and militants

The LNA says it has 85,000 men, but this includes soldiers paid by the central government that it hopes to inherit. Its elite force, Saiqa (Lightning), numbers some 3,500, while Haftar's sons also have well-equipped troops, LNA sources say.

Analysts say Haftar has swelled his ranks with Salafist fighters and tribesmen as well as Chadians and Sudanese from over the southern borders, claims

dismissed by the LNA.

Since NATO-backed rebels ousted Gaddafi, Libya has been a transit point for hundreds of thousands of migrants trekking across the Sahara in hope of reaching Europe across the sea.

ISIL staged some high profile attacks in Tripoli last year, but the militant group has largely retreated to the desert of southern Libya since the loss of its former stronghold in Sirte late in 2016.

France, which has close links to Haftar, said it had no prior warning of his push for Tripoli, a diplomatic source said.

France established close relations with Haftar under the Socialist government of Francois Hollande and his defense minister Jean-Yves Le Drian.

When President Emmanuel Macron named Le Drian his foreign minister, Paris doubled down support to Haftar, in close alignment with Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, which see him as a bulwark against extremists and have supported him militarily, according to UN reports.

France's stance has created tensions with Italy, which has sought a leading role to end the turmoil in its former colony that has played into the hands of militants and smugglers.

(Source: Reuters)

Pushing the world toward anarchy

I→ The Trump administration is also abusing inaction by the international community. It is not an exaggeration if we call the international community a group of indifferent countries who just care about their own interests and allow arrogant persons such as Trump do whatever they wish without facing any punishment.

The least thing that the countries could do toward such illegal acts was to adopt a resolution at the UN General Assembly condemning the U.S. for endorsing the stealing of Golan Heights or recognizing Jerusalem al-Quds as Israel's capital.

The world cannot excuse itself for being so passive in face of illegal moves by Trump, who is mistaking the world with a zoo.

Yemeni schoolchildren killed in latest Saudi airstrikes

I→ Hazzari also condemned the incident as a war crime, saying, "On the World Health Day, April 7, which carries the slogan 'Health for All', the Saudi-led coalition of aggression marked the event in its well-known manner."

He called on the international community to shoulder its responsibility for the crimes being committed by Saudi Arabia and its regional allies against Yemeni people.

Meanwhile, Yemeni Health Minister Taha al-Mutawakel said the massacre points to the Saudi-led coalition's total disregard for international and humanitarian treaties and laws.

Mutawakel reiterated that the failure of the international community to impose sanctions on the perpetrators of such crimes has emboldened them to continue targeting Yemeni people.

The official called on international humanitarian organizations to condemn the carnage, not to remain silent about the crimes being committed against the Yemeni nation, and exert pressure aimed at stopping the Saudi-led aggression.

The Yemeni health minister further stressed the importance of effective measures to hold the perpetrators of these crimes accountable at international courts.

Earlier in the day, a woman was killed and two others were injured when Saudi military aircraft struck a house in the Dimnat Khadir district of Ta'izz.

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

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

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

(Source: agencies)

Deadlock in London keeps Brexit hanging in the balance

Britain's exit from the European Union hung in the balance on Monday as Prime Minister Theresa May tried to coax the Labor Party into agreeing a divorce deal, two days before an emergency summit where she will try to delay the April 12 departure.

Brexit has already been delayed once but May is asking the EU for yet more time as she courts veteran socialist Jeremy Corbyn, whose Labor Party wants to keep Britain more closely tied to the EU after Brexit.

May heads to Berlin and Paris on Tuesday to meet Chancellor Angela Merkel and President Emmanuel Macron and will be phoning other leaders before setting out the case for another delay at Wednesday's EU summit in Brussels.

Nearly three years after the United Kingdom shocked the world by voting by 52 percent to 48 to leave the EU, May warned that Brexit might never happen, but said that she would do everything possible to make sure that it did.

Labor's Brexit point man, Keir Starmer, said May's government had so far not changed its position on Brexit and so no way forward had been agreed.

"Both us and the government have approached this in the spirit of trying to find a way forward. We haven't found that yet. We will continue to do that," Starmer said.

"The ball is the government's court," he added. "We need to see what they come back with and, when they do, we will take a collective position on that."

What Starmer termed exchanges of communication had taken place over the weekend and, while no talks were scheduled for Monday, he said things could develop. He said an agenda had been circulated that included the idea of a confirmatory referendum.

May's spokeswoman said she hoped further formal talks could take place later on Monday, adding: "The PM wants us to be able to agree with the opposition as soon as possible."

She said May wanted Britain to have an independent trading policy - something hard to reconcile with Labour's demand for membership of a customs union - and that both sides would need to compromise.

■ Brexit delay?

The 2016 referendum revealed a United Kingdom divided over much more than EU membership, and has sparked impassioned debate about everything from secession and immigration to capitalism, empire and what it means to be British.

Yet, more than a week after Britain was originally supposed to have left the EU, nothing is resolved as the weakest leader in a generation battles to get a divorce deal ratified by a deadlocked parliament.

EU leaders, fatigued by the serpentine Brexit crisis, must decide on Wednesday whether to grant May, who has asked for a postponement until June 30, a further delay. The decision can be vetoed by any of the other 27 member states.

Without an extension, the United Kingdom is due to leave the EU at 2200 GMT on Friday, without a deal to cushion the economic shock.

While the EU is not expected to trigger such a potentially disorderly no-deal exit, diplomats said all options were on the table - from refusing a delay to granting May's request or pushing for a longer postponement.

(Source: Reuters)

New Palestinian government to be formed in days

Palestinian Prime Minister-designate Mohammad Shtayyeh will announce the make-up of his new government in the coming days, Palestinian officials said Monday.

Shtayyeh has until April 14 to form a new government which is expected to exclude all supporters of Hamas, long-time rival to the Fatah movement of both Shtayyeh and

Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas.

Analysts say real decision-making power remains with 84-year-old Abbas, in power since 2005.

Abbas on March 10 charged Shtayyeh with forming the new government, replacing Rami Hamdallah's technocratic administration which had the nominal backing of Hamas.

The Islamic movement controls the Gaza Strip, while the Palestinian Authority Abbas heads is based in the West Bank, where Israel also maintains a military occupation.

Five smaller factions will also join Fatah in the new government, officials said.

(Source: AFP)

Sarri questions ‘strange’ Chelsea fixture list

Maurizio Sarri has questioned the Premier League’s “strange” decision to schedule Chelsea’s West Ham clash for Monday, just three days before their Europa League away match against Slavia Prague.

Chelsea, who are battling for a top-four finish, face a pivotal week, hosting West Ham before heading to Prague for Thursday’s game, then making the testing league trip to title-chasing Liverpool on Sunday.

And Sarri thinks Premier League bosses ought to do more to boost English teams’ chances in Europe.

“I am not able to understand the decision of the Premier League because we have to go to Prague as an English team,” he said.

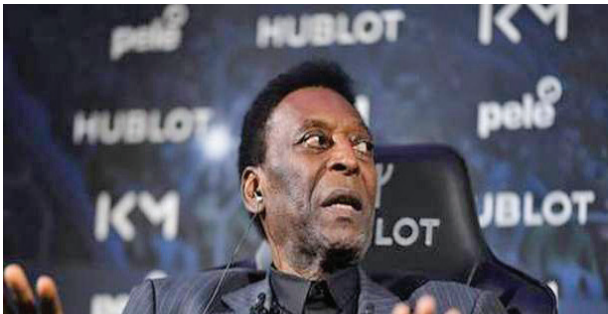
“So I’m not able to understand why we have to play on Monday. It’s very strange. I think they could have done more for the English teams in Europe.

“In Serie A teams play on Friday. Teams involved in the Europa League away from home, they can ask to play their next Serie A match on Monday.

“But this is the situation and we need only to adapt to this situation.”

(Source: AFP)

Pele to stay in Paris hospital for extra night: advisor



Brazilian football legend Pele will spend one more night in hospital in Paris “as a precaution” after being taken ill earlier this week, his advisor told AFP.

A date for the 78-year-old’s discharge has not been officially announced by the hospital which is based in the Paris suburbs.

“He will spend the night (Sunday to Monday), we do not want to take risks and we’re in no hurry,” said the advisor, having on Saturday morning announced that Pele would definitely return Monday to Sao Paulo.

“The doctors are making decisions daily and we will take maximum precautions until we leave.”

The three-time World Cup winner was admitted to a hospital with a urinary tract infection on Wednesday, the day after appearing at a promotional event with France striker Kylian Mbappe.

Brazilian news website G1 reported that Pele had intended to come out of hospital on Saturday to return to Brazil but had been delayed by further tests and would stay under observation until he was 100 percent.

The infection was not serious and was under control, according to members of Pele’s entourage.

“Thank you so much for all the love! The antibiotics are working,” Pele tweeted on Friday. “I’m feeling much better and I think I’m ready to play again!”

The event in Paris was originally scheduled for November but the Brazilian “was not in a position to travel”.

Pele has had several health issues in recent years.

A similar infection put him in intensive care in November 2014.

In 2016, Pele, who played 1,363 professional matches, scoring 1,281 goals, was unable to light the flame at the Rio Olympics because of severe pain in the hip.

“I was not physically fit to participate in the opening of the Games,” he said at the time.

In January 2018, he cancelled a trip to London fearing a “stressful” and “tiring” journey.

(Source: AFP)

Arsenal lacked fight in Everton defeat, admits Sokratis

Arsenal defender Sokratis Papastathopoulos bemoaned his team’s lack of fight after a costly 1-0 defeat at Everton extended a damaging sequence of results away from home.

Unai Emery’s team on Sunday missed out on the chance to move into third place in the Premier League, above Tottenham, in the race to qualify for next season’s Champions League, conceding in a 15th consecutive top-flight away game for the first time since February 1985.

Arsenal have won 14 out of their 17 Premier League home matches this season but they have won just once on the road in the league, at relegated Huddersfield, since late November.

Despite the problems, Sokratis said he did not feel the club’s poor away form was becoming a mental hurdle.

“I don’t think so because if you see big teams like (Manchester) United and Chelsea, they also lost a lot of points,” he said.

“It is very difficult. We are in the Premier League and the other teams are strong.

“I don’t have a reason. Other teams are the same, some days good, some days bad. We have to improve and look towards the next game.

“But I think we didn’t have the same fight (as Everton) so we didn’t win a lot of battles and we conceded a goal which was a little bit easy.”

A top-four place remains in Arsenal’s hands but they will have to do without Sokratis for the away game at Watford and the visit of Crystal Palace as a 10th booking of the season means he will serve a two-match suspension.

“Of course (it is frustrating). I like to play every game, to be there to help the team but it is not in my hands,” he added.

“I hope that Laurent Koscielny (injured for the trip to Goodison Park) is coming back. We need to win at least another four games and then we will see if we are in the top four.”

(Source: Sky Sports)

Ex-Scotland boss Strachan sorry for controversial racism comments

Former Scotland manager Gordon Strachan has apologized for his controversial comments comparing potential abuse of convicted sex offender Adam Johnson with racist chanting.

Strachan was accused of claiming racist abuse was the same as the situation that would face former Manchester City and England winger Johnson if he returns to football.

Johnson has recently been released after serving three years in prison for engaging in sexual activity with a 15-year-old fan, and has not ruled out resuming his career.

Appearing on a Sky Sports program last month, Strachan said: “If he goes on to the pitch and people start calling him names, have we got to do the same as it is to the racist situation?”

“Is it all right to call him names now after doing his three years -- have we got to allow that to happen?”

Racism is a hot topic at present after a series of incidents involving fans abusing players across Europe.

In a statement on Sunday, Strachan ad-



mitted his comments were unwise.

“Given the response in the last 24 hours to a point made on The Debate program on Sky Sports from over a week ago, and having reflected on it personally, it is important for me to address the issues that have arisen,” he said.

“In no way did I intended to confuse or conflate the very serious issue of racism targeted at footballers with the potential verbal abuse towards a player who has been convicted of a sexual offence.”

England players Danny Rose and Calum Hudson-Odoi were racially abused by Montenegro fans in a Euro 2020 qualifier last month, while Raheem Sterling has also been targeted in the Premier League this season.

Rising Italy star Moise Kean was the subject of racist chanting earlier this week at Cagliari, with his Juventus teammate Leonardo Bonucci then coming under fire for claiming the teenager was partly to blame.

(Source: AFP)

Muguruza retains Monterrey title as injured Azarenka retires



Spain’s Garbine Muguruza successfully defended her Monterrey Open title on Sunday when Victoria Azarenka retired injured from her first WTA singles final in three years.

Second seed Muguruza was leading the match between the two former world number ones 6-1 3-1 when Azarenka decided she was unable to continue because of an injury to her right leg.

“It’s unfortunate I couldn’t give my best today, but I tried my hardest,” a tearful Azarenka, who had not previously reached final since the birth of her first child in December 2016, said at the presentation.

“I want to say thank you to my son Leo, who is not with me here. I would love him to be here to share this with me because it is special.”

The crowd responded with a chant of “Vika! Vika! Vika!”.

Muguruza’s victory never looked in doubt and ensured that the record run of different women winning WTA titles this season would be extended to 16 tournaments.

The former French Open and Wimbledon champion broke the pained Belarusian three times in the first set and again in the fourth game of the second.

“It’s a great feeling to come back and defend a title,” Muguruza said in a courtside interview. “It’s never easy.”

Azarenka received treatment on her leg during a medical time-out between sets, but it became apparent as the second set began that her movement had become significantly hampered.

Azarenka was grimacing and stretching after nearly every point and, after Muguruza broke for a 3-1 lead, the two-time Australian Open champion decided to call it quits.

The Belarusian had entered the final full of hope after surprising top seed Angelique Kerber 6-4 4-6 6-1 in Saturday’s semi-finals.

Azarenka had won her only previous meeting with Muguruza in the round of 16 at the Miami Open in April 2016, when she went on to win the title in her most recent final before Sunday.

(Source: Reuters)

Williamson wins Naismith player of year honor



Duke forward Zion Williamson continued his collection of accolades on Sunday when he won the 2019 Citizen Naismith Trophy as the top college basketball in the country, the Atlanta Tipoff Club announced during a press conference in Minneapolis.

Williamson is the third freshman to win the honor, joining Kevin Durant of Texas in 2007 and Anthony Davis of Kentucky in 2012.

The other three finalists were Gonzaga junior forward Rui Hachimura, Tennessee junior forward Grant Williams and Murray State sophomore point guard Ja Morant.

Williamson won the Oscar Robertson Trophy and Associated Press Player of the Year honors on Friday. He also was the Atlantic Coast Conference Player of the Year.

Williamson averaged 22.6 points, 8.9 rebounds, 2.1 assists and 1.8 blocks per game.

Williamson is the eighth Duke player to win the prestigious award.

“I want to thank the Citizen Naismith Trophy committee for selecting me as the Player of the Year. It is truly an honor to receive this and join such an elite list of former Blue Devils to have also won the award,” Williamson said in a statement.

“There were so many great players who could have won this award this year. I can’t thank my teammates, coaches and family enough for helping me. This is a team award, and it’s an honor for me to accept this on behalf of my brothers.”

Williamson led Duke to a 32-6 record. The Blue Devils advanced to the Elite Eight, where they lost to Michigan State.

“Zion is absolutely deserving of this year’s Citizen Naismith Trophy. He handled himself with such class and humility this season, especially given what he accomplished, both individually and with his team,” Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski said in a statement. “Zion is a great representative of the game and is a pleasure to coach.

“Duke has a long history of Naismith winners, and Zion certainly belongs in that elite company.”

Duke’s most recent Naismith winner was JJ Redick in 2006. The other Blue Devils to earn the honor are Jason Williams (2002), Shane Battier (2001), Elton Brand (1999), Christian Laettner (1992), Danny Ferry (1989) and Johnny Dawkins (1986).

(Source: Reuters)

Sevilla coach Joaquin Caparros reveals leukaemia diagnosis

Sevilla coach Joaquin Caparros said after his side’s 2-0 win at Real Valladolid on Sunday that he had been diagnosed with leukaemia, but vowed to continue in his job.

“Everyone knows I have Sevilla in my blood but there has been a problem with my white

and red blood cells and I have been told that I have chronic leukaemia,” Caparros, 63, told a news conference.

“It does not impede me from doing my job and I’m carrying out a normal life day to day. I am not receiving any treatment so everyone should remain calm.

“I want to keep enjoying my job, and I thank the club for allowing me to continue with this opportunity. I’m not going to talk any more about this.”

Caparros took charge of Sevilla for the third time last month when he switched from sporting director to head coach after Pablo

Machin was sacked.

His side climbed to fifth in La Liga after the win at Valladolid, which lifted their hopes of qualifying for the Champions League by taking them to within one point of fourth-placed Getafe.

(Source: ESPN)

Manchester City Quadruple ‘almost impossible’ - Pep

LONDON, England — Pep Guardiola insists that winning the Quadruple will be “almost impossible” after he suffered another injury setback as Manchester City reached the FA Cup final.

Kyle Walker was taken off at half-time in the 1-0 victory over Brighton while the City boss revealed that Sergio Aguero, who missed the game through injury, has not trained since last Sunday.

“I will announce something to you, it is almost impossible to win the Quadruple, almost,” Guardiola told a news conference.

“Put it in the headlines, guys. It is almost impossible to win the Quadruple. Surviving in that stage of the competitions is already a miracle. [No club has gone to April 17 still in contention] that is why it is incredible what these players have done last season when you achieve 100 points. Neither Liverpool nor Manchester City can repeat that. The year after, when you have the tendency to be arrogant or a little more presumptuous or think you are something that really you are not. And still, we are there. That’s why it’s incredible what these players have done before.

“Every game we lose players but that is normal when you play a lot of games. We are going to try until the end, every game.”

City struggled to a 1-0 win with Gabriel Jesus’s fourth-minute header from Kevin De Bruyne’s dangerous cross the de-



fining moment. But while it wasn’t as impressive of a victory as recent performances, Guardiola insisted it is ridiculous to expect his side to play well in every match.

“Do you believe we can play 60 games in a season and win 5-0 and have a good performance in every game?” he added. “Which team can do that? Even the teams for Trebles in other countries.

“I don’t remember, I didn’t see, but I think when Sir Alex Ferguson won the Treble, in that case not all the games were fantastic and winning 4-0 or 5-0.

“Normally semifinals and finals are games like this. You can analyse how many chances we create, but people expect

from how good we are that we have to score I don’t know how many goals. In this game, in this job, it doesn’t work in that way.”

Brighton boss Chris Hughton praised his players for running City close and said defender Walker should have been sent off for a red card.

The England international was shown a yellow card for brushing his head against Brighton winger Alireza Jahanbakhsh and the decision was backed by the Video Assistant Referee.

“In my opinion, it was a red card,” Hughton said. “We ask players to be honest and Ali doesn’t make a big meal of it. We certainly would have seen in the past players going down clutching their head and rolling on the floor.

“There will have been numerous circumstances where that action would get somebody a red card and the action was sufficient to warrant it.

“Everyone is pushing for [VAR]. I am one that has been converted a little bit, although I am not sure how far it is going to take things. It’s even more disappointing that it was a VAR.

“Ali did the correct thing. We can’t want the game to be a better game and take simulation out of the game and expect your players to be any different.

“It’s not Ali’s responsibility to make the right decision. That is down to the officials.”

(Source: Soccernet)

Iran basketball invited to three European events

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iran national basketball team have been invited to three European tournaments as part of preparation for the 2019 FIBA World Cup.

Team Melli have been drawn along with world's second-ranked Spain, Puerto Rico and Tunisia in Group C.

The competition will be held in China from August 31 to September 15.

The top eight teams, including Japan as the hosts of the 2020 Summer Olympics (and the top two teams from each of the Americas and Europe; and the top team from each of Africa, Asia and Oceania) in this competition will qualify for the men's basketball event in the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo.

The tournament will be played in three stages. During the first stage, the

32 qualified teams will be sorted into eight groups of four (A-H) and each team in a group will play the other three teams once. The top two teams from each group will then advance to the second group stage. In the second group stage, there will be four groups of four (I-L) made up of the teams that advanced from the first round, again playing each other once. The top two teams from groups I to L will qualify for the final knockout phase.

The Persian skyscrapers have been invited to a tournament which will be held in Portugal from July 26 to 28.

Team Melli have been also invited to two more events in Russia and Greece, scheduled for Aug. 2 to 4 and Aug. 8 to 12, respectively.

Iran basketball federation have also received invitations from China and Jordan.



Higuain: On-loan Chelsea striker intends to be at Stamford Bridge next season

Chelsea striker Gonzalo Higuain says it is his "intention" to be at Stamford Bridge next season.

The Argentina international, 31, joined the Blues on loan until the end of the season from Italian giants Juventus in January.

Last week, Chelsea boss Maurizio Sarri said Higuain - who has scored three goals in eight Premier League appearances - needs "time to improve".

"I want to do as well as I can so I can be here for next season," Higuain said. "I came here and I wanted to stay. It's a good city, you live well and you can be relaxed but also enjoy yourself - so my intention is to stay here."

Higuain scored twice on his home debut against Huddersfield in February, but has not netted since the Blues' 2-1 win over Fulham in March.



Chelsea have the option to buy him for 36m euros (£31.3m), or to extend his loan deal until June 2020 for 18m euros (£15.6m).

"I'm happy here," Higuain told the Chelsea website. "It's always nice to try a new league and it's my first taste of the Premier League."

"Obviously it's a period where I'm adapting but I'm hoping that, although I've only got a short time, I can finish well."

"The best thing we can do is qualify for the Champions League and hopefully win the Europa League too."

Chelsea are fifth in the Premier League but can move up to third if they beat West Ham at home on Monday (20:00 BST kick-off). They then travel to Slavia Prague for the first leg of their Europa League quarter-final on Thursday (20:00). (Source: BBC)

Preview - Group D: Persepolis FC (IRN) v Al Ahli FC (KSA)



Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli and the Islamic Republic of Iran's Persepolis will go head-to-head in Group D of the AFC Champions League at Al Wasl Stadium on Tuesday.

Al Ahli won their opening game of the competition 2-0 against Qatar's Al Sadd, but suffered a 1-0 defeat to Uzbekistan's Pakhtakor four weeks ago ahead of the double header with the Iranian champions.

The Jeddah side defeated Al Shabab 4-0 in the Saudi Pro League on Friday and remain in fifth place in the standings, but well off the pace of the front two - Al Nassr

and Al Hilal.

Persepolis, who eliminated Al Ahli at the quarter-final stage of the 2017 edition, have picked up just one point from two games after going down to Al Sadd 1-0 on Matchday Two.

The Tehran team have been on strong form domestically, though, and have won their past three Iranian Pro League games, including a 2-0 victory over Paykan last week that maintained their place at the top of the table.

(Source: the-afc)

Preview - Group D: Pakhtakor (UZB) v Al Sadd SC (QAT)



Pakhtakor will look to make it back-to-back home wins when they take on Al Sadd in Group D of the AFC Champions League at Pakhtakor Stadium on Tuesday.

After drawing their opening game away at the Islamic Republic of Iran's Persepolis, Marat Bikmaev scored the only goal of the game as the Uzbek side defeated Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli 1-0 four weeks ago.

The Tashkent team, who are without the suspended Khumoyunmirzo Iminov, also lead the way in the Uzbek Super League as Friday's 2-1 win over Nasaf made it three

victories from three since their domestic championship kicked off in mid-March.

Baghdad Bounedjah scored deep into added time as Al Sadd claimed what could prove a vital 1-0 victory over Persepolis on Matchday Two as they rebounded from an opening-day defeat to Al Ahli. Since their last game on the continent, Al Sadd wrapped up their first Qatar Stars League title since 2013 following a 2-2 draw against Al Duhail, and they go into Tuesday's game on the back of a 7-2 victory over fellow Doha side Al Ahli last week.

(Source: the-afc)

Barcelona couldn't compete with Man United to sign Pogba in 2016

Josep Maria Bartomeu has told ESPN FC that Barcelona could not afford to compete with Manchester United to sign Paul Pogba when he left Juventus in 2016.

Pogba and United face Barcelona in the Champions League at Old Trafford on Wednesday, but the France international could have been playing for the La Liga leaders had things worked out differently.

Barca held meetings with Juventus and Pogba's agent, Mino Raiola, in 2015, reaching an agreement that allowed them to match any offer Juve accepted.

But when United agreed to pay £90 million for Pogba a year later, they dropped out of the race.

"In the summer of 2015, Paul Pogba was playing in Turin and we simply told Juve that, if one day they decide to sell the player, we would be interested," Barca president Bartomeu said.

"When they sold the player, they told us what the offer would have to be and we couldn't afford that amount of money at the time. So he went to United, and he's making them better as a team because he's one of the stars of the world of football right now."

Real Madrid and Barca have been touted as possible destinations should Pogba leave United in the future, but Bartomeu said: "I prefer not to talk about players from other teams because I am sure there are also players at Barca that can make other teams better."



"What I have to recognise is that United, in the last few years, have created a very good group, good players that are coming through. I am sure next season they will be candidates for the Premier League, and this year for the Champions League."

United faced Barca in the 2009 and 2011 Champions League finals, losing both, but this is only the second time they have reached the quarterfinals since Sir Alex Ferguson retired in 2013.

Although they have also failed to win the Premier League

since Ferguson's departure, they remain one of the game's richest clubs, and Bartomeu said Barca had learned from their commercial success.

"I joined Barca in 2003 with [Joan] Laporta and, at that time, the revenue was very low," he said. "One of the models we were looking at was United: how they were marketing, how they were signing sponsorship [deals] with other companies and, of course, when you learn from the best..."

"The gap we had before with United, we don't have this gap right now. Now we are on similar levels."

"So, United, for us, have always been a reference in terms of finance and revenue, but they have also been a reference in terms of performance."

"It's true that United's performance isn't now what it was before but we have to take care [against them] because in the Premier League there are six, seven very strong clubs. The Premier League is not an easy competition. It's the strongest football competition as a league in the world -- well, second to La Liga."

"That's why in this competition, sometimes you are up, sometimes you are down. I know that United are working on coming up again."

"We haven't played at Old Trafford since 2008, so to go back is an honour. We have a lot of respect for United as one of the biggest clubs in Europe."

(Source: ESPN)

Persepolis coach Ivankovic wary of Al Ahli threat

S P O R T S TEHRAN

d e s k — Persepolis coach Branko Ivankovic ranked Al Ahli among Saudi Arabia top four teams and said they will have a difficult task against the team.

Persepolis, who eliminated Al Ahli at the quarter-final stage of the 2017 edition, will meet the team at Al Wasl Stadium in Group D of the AFC Champions League in Dubai on Tuesday.

The Iranian giants, who are on strong form domestically and have won their past three Iranian Pro League games, have picked up just one point from two games after going down to Al Sadd 1-0 on Matchday Two.

Al Ahli sit second in the group with three points. "First, I would like to thank Al Wasl officials for providing the conditions for us to host Al Ahli. We know how strong Al Ahli are but Persepolis are ready to take the team," Ivankovic said.

"I had said Persepolis and Esteghlal have been drawn in tough groups. In this match, Hossein Mahini and Mohammad Ansari will be absent and the other players are fit," the Croat added.



Saipa beat Paykan in Iran Professional League

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Saipa football team defeated Paykan 3-1 in Iran Professional League (IPL) on Monday.

In the match held in Tehran's Shahr-e Qods Stadium, Mohammad Sadegh Barani gave the visiting team the lead in the 29th minute and Arman Ramezani made it 2-0 three minutes later.

Mahan Rahmani pulled a goal back in the 54th minute but Amir Hossein Hosseinzadeh was on target in the dying moments of the match.

Saipa moved up to sixth place with 31 points, 20 points adrift of leaders Persepolis.

Paykan remained 12th with 25 points.

Four Iranian para taekwondokas at top of world ranking

IRNA — Four Iranian para taekwondokas ranked first in their weight categories globally, according to the latest world ranking by International Taekwondo Federation.

Mahtab Nabavi, gained 110 points to rank first in women's -58kg weight class.

Saeed Sadeqian collected 289 points to remain in the first rank of men's -61kg weight category.

Ahmad Narimani, another Iranian para taekwondoka remained at top of men's +75kg weight category with 252.60 points.

Mehdi Pour-Rahnama gained 281.12 points to stand in the first place of -75kg weight category of world ranking.

Iran win 12 places in OCA committees

IRNA — Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) announced the final list of the members of its 18 committees on Sunday, 11 of which were Iranians so that with Reza Salehi Amiri who had been previously appointed as a member of OCA executive committee, Iran has now 12 representatives in OCA.

Reza Salehi Amiri, the chairman of Iran's National Olympic Committee, was elected as a member of OCA executive committee in the 38th OCA General Assembly meeting a month ago.

Three of the Iranians who were announced members of OCA committees are women.

Hiroyuki Kimura to officiate Persepolis v Al Ahli

Tasnim — Japanese referee Hiroyuki Kimura has been chosen to officiate the match between Persepolis of Iran and Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli.

The 30-year-old referee, who started his work from 2006, has refereed in J- League and A-League

Branko Ivankovic's team will face Al Ahli on Tuesday at the Zabeel Stadium in Dubai, the UAE on Matchday Three of the competition.

Persepolis sit bottom of Group D of the AFC Champions League with just one point, while Al Ahli are second with three points.

Mohammad Alavi appointed Esteghlal Khuzestan coach

Persianfootball — Mohammad Alavi was named the new head coach of Esteghlal Khuzestan football team on Sunday.

The ex-Iran midfielder replaced Sirous Nematinejad in the Ahvaz-based football team.

Alavi was a member of the Iran national football team and played 22 times for Team Melli from 2004 to 2006.

Alavi is Esteghlal Khuzestan's sixth coach in this season. The team started the season with Dariush Yazdi and were also headed by Sirous Pourmousavi, Karim Boostani, Karim Ghanbari and Nematinejad.

Esteghlal Khuzestan sit bottom of Iran Professional League (IPL) table with 10 points from 24 matches.

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

The Friendship of fathers brings their children closer together and the need of proximity to friendship is greater than the need of friendship to proximity.

Imam Ali (AS)

Friedrich Durrenmatt’s “Visit” on stage at Tehran theater

A R T
d e s k

TEHRAN — Swiss dramatist Friedrich Durrenmatt’s 1956 play “The Visit” is currently on stage at Tehran’s City Theater Complex.

Parsa Piruzfar is the director of the play, which is about a wealthy old woman, who returns to her hometown after forty-five years to exact revenge on the man who betrayed her when she was young.

She asks townspeople to kill the man and in exchange, she promises to provide enough money to revitalize the decrepit town.

Reza Behbudi, Pantea Panahiha, Siavash Cheraghipur and Hooman Kiai are the main members of the cast for the play, which will be on stage until May 3.

A poster for director Parsa Piruzfar’s “The Visit”, which is on stage at Tehran’s City Theater Complex.

Iranian director to stage “Chairs” in Canada

A R T d e s k TEHRAN — Jafar Mahyari, the artistic director of the Zendegi Theater Company in Iran, is scheduled to stage “The Chairs” at Theater Encounter in the Canadian city of Calgary on April 24 and 25.

“The Chairs” is a performance art that brings together people from different nationalities, the Zendegi Theater Company has announced.

Music plays a major role in this play, and singer Farshad Nedai and setar player Amin Sheikhii collaborate in this project, while Mahyari will also play santur.

Robert Greenwood, the artistic and managing director of Sun Ergos Company of Theatre and Dance in Canada, also is collaborating with Mahyari in this project.

A cast of Iranian and Canadian actors will be cooperating in the performance.

NEWS IN BERIF

Parisian gallery showcases sculptures by Iranian artists

A R T
d e s k

TEHRAN — The Nicolas Flamel Gallery in Paris is showcasing a collection of sculptures by Iranian artists Hamed Rashtian and Behdad Lahuti in an exhibition that opened on April 4.

The artworks focus on the aesthetic aspects of Iranian weapons, including daggers and swords, which were used during the 18th century.

The exhibit named “Another Face” will continue until May 2.

Chinese journalist’s travelogue of Iran to be unveiled at Tehran book fair

A R T
d e s k

TEHRAN — Chinese journalist Wang Wen’s travelogue of Iran “Iran against Demonization” will be unveiled during a ceremony at the 32nd Tehran International Book Fair on April 23.

Translated into English and Persian by the Pol Literary and Translation Agency, the trilingual book has been published by Nahl Publications in Tehran, the agency announced on Monday.

China is the special guest of the 32nd edition of Tehran book fair, which will be held from April 24 to May 4.

Nominees for Islamic Revolution Artist of the Year title announced

A R T d e s k TEHRAN — The Art Bureau of the Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization has selected its nominations, which will be competing for the title of the Islamic Revolution Artist of the Year.

Reza Amirkhani, the writer of the bestselling novel “Salvation”, and Ebrahim Hatamikia, director of the acclaimed movie “Damascus Time”, are among the figures, the director of the 5th Islamic Revolution Art Week, Majdeddin Moallemi, said in a press conference on Monday.

Writer Hedayatollah Behbudi received a nomination for “Alef, Laam, Khomeini”, a book that chronicles a number of major events during the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Documentarian Mehdi Naqavian was nominated for his films “Out of View”, “Against the Storm” and “Iran 20”, “which feature the honors and achievements of the Islamic Revolution.”

Graphic designer Masud Nejabati, who is also a director in the Visual Arts Department at the Revayate Fat’h Cultural Foundation, has also been nominated for the title.

He received the nomination for contributions to a number of cultural and art events held about the Islamic Revolution over the past few years.

The Islamic Revolution Artist of the Year will be announced during the closing day of the Islamic Revolution Art Week on April 15.



(L to R) Hedatollah Behbudi, Mehdi Naqavian, Ebrahim Hatamikia, Reza Amirkhani, and Masud Nejabati were nominated for the title of the Islamic Revolution Artist of the Year.

The week is scheduled to open today with the organizing of a memorial ceremony for documentarian Morteza Avini at his grave in Tehran’s Behesht Zahra Cemetery.

Several cultural sessions will be organized during the week, which was established to commemorate the martyrdom anniversary of Avini who was killed by a landmine in 1993

during his last trip to the former Iran-Iraq war zone in southwestern Iran while making a documentary about soldiers who were still listed as missing in action.

“Wind from Iran” comes to New York theater

A R T d e s k TEHRAN — Spectacle Theater, a volunteer-run microcinema in New York, is reviewing four documentaries by Iranian filmmaker Kamran Heidari in a program entitled “Wind from Iran: Four by Kamran Heidari”.

The documentaries are “My Name Is Negahdar Jamali and I Make Westerns”, “Dingomaro”, “None of Your Business” and “Ali Aqa”, the theater has announced on its website.

The four films insist on the specificity of Shiraz and the south of Iran. At the same time, they exist in a dialogue that acknowledges national boundaries as well as the power of culture to bypass narrow nationalism.

Paraphrasing a famous John Ford quote, the film “My Name Is Negahdar Jamali and I Make Westerns”, profiles Negahdar Jamali, a director who lives in Shiraz and makes



A scene from “Ali Aqa” by Iranian filmmaker Kamran Heidari.

micro-budget Westerns in the desert outside the city.

“Dingomaro” is a wind that sweeps Iran from the African coast. It’s also the nickname

of musician Hamid Said, adopted it proudly to reflect his African heritage.

“None of Your Business”, which has its world premiere in New York, is named after a song that is played in several versions during the film, and was written by poet Ibrahim Monsefi from the southern region of the country.

“Ali Aqa” returns to a sympathetic treatment of male obsession. Heidari chose Ali Aqa, a man devoted to the pigeons whom he keeps on the roof of his apartment building.

Born in 1977 near the city of Shiraz, Heidari began directing films after graduating from college. Parallel to that work, he has built up a substantial body of work as a photographer.

Filmmaker and critic Steve Erickson has collaborated in organizing the screening program, which began on April 5 and will be running for one month.

Family to donate Jamshid Mashayekhi’s memorabilia to Film Museum of Iran

A R T d e s k TEHRAN — Jamshid Mashayekhi’s family plans to donate a collection of the legendary actor’s memorabilia to the Film Museum of Iran.

“Earlier Actor Reza Kianian had asked us to donate the awards and memorabilia of my father to the museum. All the family members welcomed the proposal and we are planning to do it in the near future,” Mashayekhi’s elder son, Nader, told the Persian service of ISNA on Monday.

Mashayekhi, the star of the acclaimed movies “Kamalolmolk” and “Chrysanthemum”, died last Tuesday at the age of 85.

“I must thank the dear people of Iran who actively participated in my father’s funeral ceremony. People

are so kind and had come such long ways from other cities to attend the ceremony,” he said.

Nader, who was the former conductor of the Tehran Symphony Orchestra, also expressed thanks to different organizations that collaborated in organizing the funeral ceremony.

“I also give my special thanks to Tehran City Council member Ahmad Masjed-Jamei who helped us a lot, as well as my father’s longtime friends Iraj Rad and Ali Nasirian,” he added.

The Tehran City Council gave its approval on Sunday to rename Jeem Street in the Velenjak neighborhood, the location of the late Jamshid Mashayekhi’s house, after the legendary actor.



Jamshid Mashayekhi holds the award for best supporting actor for his role in director Yadollah Samadi’s “My Lady” during the 7th Iran Cinema Celebration at Tehran’s Vahdat Hall on September 11, 2003. (IRNA)

Avengers help unveil \$5m donation for seriously ill children

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) — Some of Marvel’s top Avengers have assembled to support a \$5 million donation to benefit seriously ill children in hospitals around the globe.

Robert Downey Jr., Chris Hemsworth, Scarlett Johansson, Jeremy Renner, Paul Rudd and Brie Larson helped unveil the donation of money and toys to benefit charities and children’s hospitals at Disney Resort in Anaheim, California, on Friday.

“More than any time, it’s a time to give back to these courageous kids who inspire us,” said Downey Jr., who stars as Tony Stark aka Iron Man.

After the announcement, several of the “Avengers: Endgame” stars — including Johansson, Renner, Rudd and Hemsworth — visited kids from the local Boys & Girls Clubs to play at the LEGO store in downtown Disney, where toys with their characters’ likenesses were unveiled.

“It’s not a bad day in the office when you get to come to Disneyland,” said Johansson, who plays Black Widow. “I’ve been a huge fan of Disney for like forever. I come from a big, Disney loving family. To be here with my fellow Avengers and all these kids, it’s just great. It’s such a great way to spend the day.”

Toys and products from the new Marvel superhero film will be sent to children’s hospitals throughout the country as well as Give Kids the World, a non-profit resort in central Florida.



“Avengers: Endgame” cast member, Paul Rudd, foreground from left, Scarlett Johansson, Robert Downey Jr., Brie Larson, Chris Hemsworth and Jeremy Renner appear with Disney CEO, Robert Iger, background center, at an event announcing the Universe Unites Charity at Disney California Adventure Park on Friday, April 5, 2019, in Anaheim, Calif. (Photo by Richard Shotwell/Invision/AP)

Disney donated \$1 million to the Starlight Children’s Foundation, which brings entertainment and education to children facing life-threatening conditions in several countries, including the United States and Great Britain. The LEGO group, Hasbro, Funko and Amazon collaborated to donate more than \$4 million to children’s hospitals around the country.

Rudd, who stars as Ant-Man, said he is grateful to be a part of the initiative. The actor said he has worked closely to help raise money for the Children’s Mercy Hospital in Kansas City, Missouri.

Country stars shine in Vegas at Academy of Country Music awards

NEW YORK (Reuters) — Country music royalty turned out in force on Sunday for a glittering night of live performances and honors at the 54th annual Academy of Country Music awards.

Host Reba McEntire, marking a record 16th time in the job, wasted no time in addressing one of the evening’s touchy subjects - the lack of women nominees in some top categories.

Noting recent snow in Las Vegas, where the awards were held in a live, performance-heavy broadcast, McEntire quipped “it was so cold it froze us women out of entertainer of the year.”

Grammy award album of the year winner Kacey Musgraves was glaringly absent from the all-male nominees top category.

The honor went to Keith Urban, whose wife actress Nicole Kidman appeared genuinely shocked at his win.

But Musgraves took home both the album of the year and female artist of the year awards.

Accepting the latter, Musgraves said “I’m so thankful for the chance to share my political perspective,” dedicating the award to women who felt pressure to silence themselves.

And women ruled the MGM Grand Garden Arena stage as Chrissy Metz, of hit NBC show “This Is Us,” made her live TV performance debut, alongside country stars Lauren Alaina, Mickey Guyton and Maddie & Tae for a stirring rendition of



Kix Brooks and Ronnie Dunn of Brooks & Dunn present the entertainer of the year award to Keith Urban at the 54th Academy of Country Music Awards Show in Las Vegas, Nevada, U.S., April 7, 2019. (Reuters/Mario Anzuoni)

“I’m Standing with You.”

Jason Aldean and Florida Georgia Line opened the show with a rousing performance of “Can’t Hide Red,” but some on social media took offense to Tyler Hubbard’s American flag suit, branding it a “disgrace” besmirching a sacrosanct national symbol.

Dan + Shay scored three straight early wins, for song of the year and single of the year for “Tequila”, also winning duo of the year.

Male artist of the year went to Thomas Rhett.

The star-laden three-hour show marked an upbeat return to celebrating country music after last year’s awards assumed a somber note following the October 2017 mass shooting, also in Las Vegas, that killed 58 people at a country music festival.