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Iran plans to double exports to neighboring countries by 2021

TEHRAN — Iranian industry, mining and trade minister said the country plans to double its exports to the neighboring countries by the Iranian calendar year of 1400 (which starts in March 2021), Tasnim news agency reported on Friday.

According to Reza Rahmani, currently the value of exports to the neighboring countries stands at \$25 million and it should increase to at least \$50 million in two years.

Mentioning the fact that only two percent of the total imports of Iran's neighbors comes

from the Islamic country, Rahmani noted that his ministry is going to focus on developing domestic production and defining new projects to manufacture all the industrial equipment needed inside the country.

The official further pointed to some of the potent areas which could be worked on in order to increase exports including home appliances, apparel industry, petrochemicals, and marine industries, basic metals such as steel, aluminum and copper as well as agriculture.

Zarif writes to Guterres: U.S. responsible for consequences of anti-IRGC move

TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that the United States shall bear full responsibility for the consequences of its naming the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps a terrorist organization. Zarif made the remarks in a letter he wrote on Thursday to Antonio Guterres, the secretary-general of the United Nations.

Following is the full text of his letter:

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful
Excellency,
I wish to bring to your attention the unprecedented, unlawful and dangerous designation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps official branch of the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran—as a so-called **→2**

Sudanese defy curfew by post-coup junta, call for civilian rule

Sudanese protesters have defied a curfew, holding angry demonstrations after army commanders took control of the country following a palace coup against President Omar al-Bashir. The protesters on Friday dismissed the transitional military council formed by top brass as the "same old faces" from the old regime which had ruled the country for three decades.

Most shops and offices were closed on Friday which is the day of prayer and rest in Sudan as demonstrators demanded a civilian body to lead the transition to democracy. The ruling military council, which is now running Sudan under Defense Minister Mohammed Ahmed Awad Ibn Auf, promised the country would have a new civilian government. **→13**



EDITORIAL
Mohammad Ghaderi
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What is the common purpose of London and Brussels?

Britain's departure from the European Union is still unknown! Many analysts believe that extending the British government's deadline to leave the EU complicates the existing situation.

This is while European parliamentary elections are scheduled to take place soon. Meanwhile, some European and British officials are also seeking a new referendum in the UK. The same shows that the six-month extension of the London-Brussels negotiations has not been coincidental by the European authorities! This action has been quite purposeful.

As CNBC reported, Theresa May managed to convince EU leaders to grant the U.K. more time before it leaves the bloc, but experts say her days in office are now numbered. "A six-month period is clearly enough for the Conservative Party to contemplate a change in leadership while still allowing some time for the incoming PM to seek to negotiate with the EU," J.P. Morgan economist Malcolm Barr said in a research note Thursday. "One could even cram a general election into that time frame too if PM May were to resign by roughly the end of May."

More tumult in British politics is expected despite a reprieve from Brussels on Wednesday night, with EU leaders agreeing to a "flexible extension" of the Brexit deadline until October 31, following a request from May. Despite the Brexit extension Wednesday evening, May will still work to get her deal passed (which would allow the U.K. to leave earlier) and would like to do so before a May 22 cut-off point — after which the U.K. must take part in EU Parliamentary elections.

The fact is that many British officials are planning to make the situation in the country more politically complicated.

They believe that the complexity of the situation will lead to a new referendum in this country. The six-month deadline for European officials to England will also provide the ground for a new referendum in Britain. Everyone knows well that senior officials and supporters of the British Labor Party and the British Conservative Party are opposed to the exit from the European Union. **→7**

Iran's IRGC leading anti-Terror force in region: U.S. analyst

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — An American political commentator described US President Donald Trump's move to blacklist the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) as "insane" and "self-defeating", saying that the force is the "leading regional force fighting against the actual terrorists".

"Iran's IRGC ... does not intentionally or systematically target civilians. On the contrary, it is the leading regional force fighting against the actual terrorists, the groups that really do intentionally and systematically target civilians, namely, Israel and Daesh. So to be accurate, the (US) State Department should change its statement and designate the IRGC as the world's leading anti-terrorist group," Kevin Barrett told Tasnim in an interview.

The following is the full text of the interview.
Tasnim: The Trump administration on Monday

labeled IRGC as a terrorist group and said, "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". What is your take on the move?

Barrett: Reckless, absurd, insane, self-defeating...there are no words to describe it. Undoubtedly, all of the actual Iran experts in the State Department opposed the move. But Trump's political appointees, supported by however many Israeli agents have infiltrated the State Department—presumably quite a few of them—were apparently able to override truth, logic, and the US national interest and hand another gift to Trump's boss Netanyahu.

The word terrorism once actually meant something: "A military tactic consisting of intentionally

targeting civilians to spread fear." But since the neocon-Zionist orchestrated false flag event of September 11 2001, the word terrorism has been systematically abused by the Zionist-dominated Western media. Today, terrorism means whatever the Zionists want it to mean. It is an empty slur used against everyone the Zionists perceive as an enemy.

And what makes the situation so Orwellian is that the Zionists are themselves the world's worst terrorists. The book State of Terror by Thomas Suarez makes it clear that the settler colonial project known as "Israel" was created by terrorism and persists by terrorism. The entire Zionist project is one ongoing long-term systematic terror attack on a civilian population. And the Zionists are masters of false flag terror against their own people and their own supposed allies as well. **→7**

'Syria refused to recognize Israel in exchange for Golan'

Egypt's former dictator Hosni Mubarak has revealed that an Israeli proposal to give the occupied Golan Heights to Syria was turned down by Syria's then-President Hafez al-Assad in 1998 to avoid recognizing Israel.

Speaking to the Egyptian al-Hayat network, Mubarak said the rejected offer included establishing formal relations and opening embassies. "I contacted the Israelis to try to recover the Golan Heights, but they demanded the opening of an Israeli embassy in Damascus and a Syrian one on the occupied land as a kind of Syrian recognition of Israel" he said.

Mubarak added that United States President Donald Trump's recognition of the occupied Golan

Heights as Israeli territory last month "was the result" of Syria's refusal of the offer.

In 1967, Israel waged a full-scale war against Arab countries, during which it occupied a large swathe of Syria's Golan and annexed it four years later - a move never recognized by the international community. Israel has since built dozens of illegal settlements in the Golan Heights in defiance of international calls for the regime to stop its illegal construction activities.

Earlier this month, reports suggested that Israel is planning to settle some additional 250,000 settlers over the next 30 years.

Tel Aviv has also admitted using the occupied part of Golan to prop up terrorists operat-

ing against the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Having defeated terrorist enclaves in the country following the years-long foreign-backed militancy, Damascus has vowed to retake the Israeli-occupied territory by every means possible.

Speaking last week, Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Muallem said "Syria will liberate the occupied Golan by all means, and all choices are on the table."

"Israel mustn't go [too] far... We have the will and determination," he added.

The renewed tension over the Golan Heights comes as Trump's so-called "deal of the century" is expected to be released in the near future. **→13**



© Tehran Times/ Raheleh Hesari

Reconstruction of flood-hit houses begins in Golestan

Reconstruction of houses damaged in recent floods in villages of Minudasht, northeastern province of Golestan, started.

Seyyed Kazem Nourmofidi, representative of the Leader of the Islamic revolution in Golestan province, attended the ground breaking ceremony.

Following heavy rainfalls and devastating floods in some provinces across the country including Golestan, Mazandaran, Lorestan and Khuzestan 78 people died and 1,137 were injured. As many as 295,787 people have been displaced.



ARTICLE
Martin Love
Political analyst from
North Carolina

U.S has further shot itself in the feet and will bleed out in time

On a day of infamy, April 11th, Julian Assange was kicked out of the Ecuador Embassy in London and arrested after more than six years of asylum. He was under threat of arrest for years after a U.S. court issued a sealed indictment that actually is rather weak. This intrepid Australian journalist did nothing wrong but publish truthful information that he had collected about U.S. military misdeeds and war crimes in the Middle East and political misdeeds and corruption in the U.S.

An American doctor I know well managed to visit Assange twice in 2018 and subsequently wrote up a report about Assange in the British Medical Journal about his health problems and what for years amounted to isolation and torture in the embassy. So the matter of Assange is something that I am familiar with. Assange has not had medical treatment or even a visit to a dentist in years, though he has been ailing and in virtual prison in the embassy until now. It all seems unbelievable.

But what does it mean? In essence, with Assange's arrest, what it means is that any journalist anywhere of whatever nationality can be prosecuted by the U.S., even if they reveal truths. In the eyes of U.S. authorities, the greatest alleged crime of Assange was his exposure of America as apparently the foremost criminal and cancer on the international stage. It means that in the U.S the truth does not set you free, but can well land a journalist in prison.

It means that the cornerstone of "democracy" in the U.S., a free press and free speech, has effectively been murdered. It means that international laws have been sabotaged and the reputation of the U.S., already horrific, has been further and perhaps irreparably damaged to freedom loving, honest people the world over, and that includes Iranians. **→7**

Condolences

Dear Mostafa Mousavi Sabet,
We express condolences over the death of your brother.
May his soul rest in peace.
Tehran Times staff and management

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Army to skip military parades in flood-stricken areas

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Military parades to mark National Army Day will not be held in flood-stricken areas this year so that army forces can continue providing relief to victims of the floods, Army Chief Abdolrahim Mousavi said on Friday.

Major General Mousavi said as Iran is faced with floods in different areas and people are struggling with flood-related damage, the Army will stage “parade of services” in the flood-hit areas this year instead of military parades, IRNA reported.

Devastating floods which followed unprecedented rainfalls in northern, western and southwestern provinces killed at least 71 people, and left hundreds of thousands displaced.



Zarif: Targeting IRGC won't revive ISIS and Nusra

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Thursday that targeting the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) won't revive ISIS and al-Nusra terrorist groups.

“Losers of our region’s War on Terror cannot rescind history. Targeting #IRGC won’t revive ISIS and Nusra—their clients and very creations,” Zarif tweeted.

“Come over, ladies and gentlemen: time to face the fact that you’ve exhausted every wrong choice and scapegoating won’t be your panacea,” he added.

The tweet came days after the United States blacklisted the IRGC as a terrorist organization, a move which was widely condemned by Iranian authorities and the public. The move was just welcomed by Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.



Bahram Qassemi bids farewell to media outlets

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi in a message bade farewell to media outlets, marking his last day as the spokesman.

In his message, Qassemi said he was honored to serve as the spokesman and thanked Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif for his support, ILNA reported.

He said during his tenure, he put every effort to establish a constructive dialogue with media outlets, some of which had totally different outlooks.

Last month, Qassemi was named Tehran’s new ambassador to France.

He has been serving as spokesman and head of the Foreign Ministry’s Public and Media Diplomacy Center since mid-2016.



Tehran condemns terrorist attack in Pakistan’s Quetta

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi on Friday condemned the terrorist attack in the Pakistani city of Quetta and expressed his condolences to families of the victims of the incident as well as the Pakistani government and nation.

“We hope that the government and nation of Pakistan will be able to maintain unity and vigilance to thwart the plots orchestrated by their opponents and enemies of the region,” Qassemi said in a statement, Mehr reported.

At least 20 people have been killed and another 40 wounded as an explosion ripped through a market in the southwestern Pakistani city of Quetta, marking the latest attack to target the city’s minority Hazara community.



Moscow describes as ‘baseless’ U.S. claims against IRGC

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Russian Foreign Ministry has described the U.S. claims against the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps as baseless, rejecting Washington’s move to list the IRGC as a terrorist organization.

Its spokeswoman Maria Zakharova suggested that Iran can bring a case to the International Court of Justice for the illegal act, IRNA reported on Friday.

Zakharova rejected Washington’s Iranophobia policy and described it as unacceptable.

On Monday, U.S. President Donald Trump designated the IRGC as a terrorist organization, sparking fierce reactions from Iranian officials and the people as well. In a reciprocal measure, Iran also added American forces in the Middle East to its list of terror groups.



IRGC designation increases risk of confrontation: China Plus

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Labeling the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organization is a destructive action for world peace and increases the risk of confrontation between the U.S. and Iran, IRNA reported, citing an article published on China Plus.

Since U.S. President Donald Trump assumed office, a number of radicals took control over Washington’s affairs, with the aim of controlling the U.S. policy in the Middle East, the article read.

The measures taken by the radicals are in fact aimed at strengthening Israel and at the same time consolidating ties with Israel while oppressing the Palestinians, it added.

‘I’m a Guard too’: Iranians respond to IRGC blacklisting

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranians on Friday took to the streets across the country to protest against the U.S. designation of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) as a foreign terrorist organization.

The rallies were held after Friday prayers, when protesters chanted slogans and carried signs reading “I’m a Guard too”, “Down with USA” and “Down with Israel”.

At the end of their march, the protesters issued a statement denouncing the designation as a move against the Iranian nation and the country’s national interests, Tasnim reported.

The statement referred to U.S. atrocities in Yemen, Nigeria, Bahrain, Palestine, Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq as an example of state-sponsored terrorism and called for an all-out confrontation with the U.S. and its servants, including the “bloodthirsty Zionist regime and Al Saud.”

On April 8, U.S. President Donald Trump decalred the IRGC as a “foreign terrorist organization”, marking the first time the U.S. has formally labeled another country’s military a terrorist group.

Responding to the move, Iran’s Supreme National Security Council immediately declared the U.S. as a state sponsor of terrorism and U.S. forces in the region as terrorists.

The SNSC said it has put the United States Central Command (CENTCOM) on its terror list as a “reciprocal measure” against the U.S.



Ayatollah Movahedi Kermani addresses worshippers in IRGC uniform

“illegal and unwise” move.

■ **‘IRGC can raze Tel Aviv to the ground if Leader allows it’**

Tehran Friday prayer leader Ayatollah Mohammad-Ali Movahedi Kermani warned Trump about the consequences of the provocative action, saying “the Guards can raze Tel Aviv to the ground if the Leader gives permission.”

Addressing worshippers while dressed in an IRGC uniform, Movahedi Kermani said the U.S. move has unified all factions within

Iran. “The idiots do not know that all of Iran are the Guards Corps and all of us are the Guards of the Revolution,” he said.

■ **‘America is mother of terrorism’**
He added, “Today, for the people of the world, especially the people of the region, it has been proven that America is the mother of terrorism.”

“Many countries in the world have called into question America’s move because they think it can complicate the situation in the

An Iranian view of the U.S.

Iran today is a 100-year-old democracy whose population’s participation in the 2017 presidential election was more than 70 percent: a full, competitive election in a region where real elections are scarce.

In addition, after almost two decades since the United States invasions in the region, at least one of Mr. Hook’s bright promises

for a future Iran has not been made with either Afghanistan or Iraq: There are no direct flights between New York and Baghdad or Kabul, and President Trump has to travel there under cover of darkness at midnight. Why is that?

Mr. Hook’s protestations that he would like nothing more than to open an embassy and

facilitate travel for Iranians won’t be taken seriously by the Iranian people, especially as one of the first measures of the Trump administration was the Muslim travel ban, which includes all Iranians who can no longer travel to the United States.

Concerning his proclaimed readiness to start new talks, a recent survey suggests

Middle East,” the senior cleric said, adding that even some American analysts have described it as “a dangerous act that would endanger American soldiers’ lives.”

“They know that this was a very stupid action,” he stated.

In a commentary on CNN on April 9, Jonathan Cristol, a research fellow in the Levermore Global Scholars Program at Adelphi University, wrote, “The designation of the IRGC as an FTO will do little to reverse Iran’s influence in Iraq. But it will make life more difficult for American forces and diplomats in Iraq, which is why many inside the State Department and Defense Department have opposed this decision.”

Cristol also said, “And while the United States may not work directly with Iran in Iraq, the two states have a shared interest in ensuring that ISIS does not reemerge and that other radical groups do not gain a foothold.”

The scholar said Iraqis prefer Iran as a regional power over the United States.

“If Iraqis need to choose between doing business with the United States, or doing business with Iran, they may well decide to maintain a good relationship with the regional power that isn’t going anywhere, rather than with a Washington that seems eager to withdraw from the region,” noted Cristol who also serves as senior fellow at the Center for Civic Engagement at Bard College.

Army: U.S. endangers security of its forces by naming IRGC terrorist

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Commander of Iran’s Army Ground Forces Brigadier General Kioumars Heydari said on Friday that the White House has endangered security of its forces, especially the United States Central Command (CENTCOM), by designating the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organization.

During a speech addressing worshippers in Tehran, Heydari said, “Army and the Guards are hand in hand... and American must know that they put the security of their forces, especially CENTCOM, in danger forever.”

The commander said coordination and integrity between the Army and the IRGC have angered the enemies, adding the “enemy resorts to every ploy to weaken our defense structure and create division but it is making a mistake.”

He described the United States, Israel and certain Arab countries as “stupid” for branding the IRGC as terrorist.

“I should say that you committed the stupidest thing by this act.”

U.S. President Donald Trump labeled the IRGC as a foreign terrorist organization on Monday.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said the decision was an “election gift” to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Bahrain and Saudi Arabia welcomed the move by Trump.

Immediately after the announcement, the Iranian Supreme National Security Council named the CENTCOM a terrorist organization, and the U.S. government a sponsor of terror.

President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday that the U.S. is aware of the consequences if it takes more steps than “slogans” against the IRGC.

Iran calls on Sudanese to practice self-restraint

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said on Thursday that the Sudanese should practice self-restraint and follow their demands peacefully.

“Iran has always wanted stability and security in the Muslim countries and we hope that all the Sudanese sides would practice self-restraint and follow their demands through dialogue and peaceful ways,” he said.

Qassemi noted that Iran’s principled policy is non-interference in other countries’ internal affairs.

Sudan’s military announced on Thursday Omar Hassan al-Bashir, who was president, have been ousted.

Sudan’s Defense Minister Awad Mohamed Ahmed Ibn Auf was sworn in on Thursday as the chief of the new military council that replaced Bashir amid growing calls for a civilian government,

according to Press TV.

■ **Iran welcomes Egypt’s withdrawal from Arab NATO**

Qassemi also said that Iran welcomes Egypt’s withdrawal from the proposed Arab NATO.

“This news report has not been confirmed yet, however, Iran welcomes it once it is confirmed,” he said.

“Egypt is an important and powerful country both in the Arab world and the world of Islam that can play important role in creating peace, stability and security in the West Asia region,” Qassemi stated.

He added that Egypt can play important role in maintaining unity in the world of Islam through a realistic view.

“We hope that Egypt, as an unquestionable power of the Arab world, will be able to fulfil its historic mission under the current circumstances of the world,” Qassemi explained.

‘IRGC’s influence has frustrated enemies’

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Islamic propagation for coordination council issued a statement on Friday saying the influence and power of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) in protecting the Islamic Revolution has made the enemies frustrated.

The statement was issued as a response to the U.S. act

in designating the IRGC as a terrorist organization on April 8. It was the first time that America formally labels another nation’s military as a terrorist group.

The statement described the act as “shameful” and “unwise”.

The statement added that Iran will increase its de-

terrence power and will support advances of the IRGC.

Immediately after the Trump administration labelled the IRGC as terrorist, Iran’s Supreme National Security Council included the U.S. Central Command, which is responsible for American military activities in the Middle East and Central Asia, on Iran’s list of terrorist organizations.

Diplomat says IRGC terror designation is just rhetoric

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran’s Ambassador to the UK Hamid Baeidinejad has said that designation of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps as a terrorist organization by the U.S. is just a rhetoric.

“I think this is a part of the rhetoric because in fact the realities show that they are not at

all interested to see what are the implications of making such decisions for example in the region and within the Iranian nation,” he said in an interview with CNN.

“The leaders in the region are very concerned and they have contacted the people in Washington and ask for revision of this kind

of decision. They are objecting this policy by the U.S.,” the ambassador added.

He noted that the IRGC enjoys great support among the people and it has a very solid position in terms of receiving support from the people.

Elsewhere, he called the act a gift to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who was

facing reelection on April 9.

“They are not interested to see the consequences and just want to help Netanyahu,” he said.

U.S. President Donald Trump labeled the IRGC as a foreign terrorist organization on April 8.

Zarif writes to Guterres: U.S. responsible for consequences of anti-IRGC move

➔ “Foreign Terrorist Organization” by the current lawless administration of the United States of America. The Islamic Republic of Iran strongly condemns this baseless and provocative move; and deems this a hostile act against the Islamic Republic of Iran as well as a grave threat to the regional and international peace and security. This action which is without precedent—even for this U.S. regime, which has engaged in many illegal unilateral measures and designations—constitutes a breach of generally recognized principles of international law and of the Charter of the United Nations, including the principle of sovereign equality of states.

This provocative move will increase tensions to an uncontrollable and confrontational level and increases the danger of accidents and incidents in a region already

facing numerous challenges. It is self-evident that the U.S. regime—along with those who have publicly acknowledged agitating this designation, as well as the two or three client regimes that have supported this—shall bear full responsibility for all consequences of this adventurism.

Unlike the U.S. and its regional clients which have always supported extremist groups and terrorists in the West Asia region—as manifestly admitted, including by the current U.S. president during his election campaign—Iranian armed forces, including and especially the IRGC, have consistently been at the forefront of the fight against terrorism and extremism in the region. The role Of the IRGC in the battles against Security Council-designated terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda, ISIS, the al-Nusra Front and

other terrorist groups in the region, has always been noted and praised by the affected people and governments.

In a reciprocal response to the unlawful and unwise move by the U.S., the Islamic Republic of Iran announced that it designates the U.S. regime a “State Sponsor of Terrorism” and the U.S. Central Command or “CENTCOM” and all its affiliated forces a “terrorist group”.

CENTCOM is responsible for implementing the terrorist policies of the U.S. administration against the West Asia region by willfully targeting civilians in order to advance hostile U.S. policies. CENTCOM has endangered the national security of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the lives of innocent Iranians and non-Iranians, including with its brutal and intentional attack on an Iranian passenger

plane in 1988, as well as its complicity in the slaughter of Yemeni people and other civilians in West Asia.

The Islamic Republic of Iran would also like to make clear that despite numerous examples of acts with a terrorist nature implemented directly or indirectly by CENTCOM, designation of this government body as a terrorist organization by Iran is solely based on reciprocity; and shall not be construed as a shift in Iran’s legal position with regard to the principle of sovereign equality of states, and the definition of terrorism.

It would be highly appreciated if this letter were circulated as a document of the General Assembly and of the Security Council.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

M. Javad Zarif

Noise of fighting echoes through Tripoli as thousands flee homes

More than 8,000 flee Libya fighting: UN

Gunfire and blasts echoed through downtown Tripoli in the small hours of Friday as the eastern Libyan LNA force pushed against the forces of the internationally recognized government around the disused international airport and the Ain Zara district.

Fighting between the eastern force of General Khalifa Haftar and troops loyal to the Tripoli government of Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj has displaced 9,500 people in the capital, the United Nations said.

But the World Health Organization (WHO) said it had made contingency plans in case “thousands if not hundreds of thousands” were displaced.

Haftar’s push on Tripoli in Libya’s north-west is the latest turn in a cycle of factional violence and chaos dating back to the 2011 uprising that overthrew veteran dictator Moammar Gadhafi.

After sweeping up from the desert south, Haftar’s Libyan National Army (LNA) has been held up in the southern suburbs of Tripoli, about 11 km from the center.

The UN humanitarian agency OCHA said 3,500 people had left their homes in Tripoli in the previous 24 hours, and that



90 percent of those who had requested evacuation could not be moved to comparatively safer areas.

Late on Thursday, the European Union urged the LNA forces to stop their offensive.

As well as the toll on civilians, the renewed conflict threatens to disrupt oil supplies, increase migration across the Mediterranean to Europe, derail a UN peace plan and encourage Islamist militants to exploit the chaos. Libya

is a main transit point for migrants who have poured into Europe in recent years, mostly trafficked by smuggling gangs.

The LNA forces swept out of their stronghold in eastern Libya to take the sparsely populated but oil-rich south earlier this year before heading towards Tripoli, where Sarraj’s UN-backed government sits.

Dr. Syed Jaffar Hussain, WHO representative in Libya, told a Geneva news briefing by telephone from Tripoli that he feared outbreaks of tuberculosis, measles and diarrhoeal diseases due to poor sanitation, especially among the displaced.

The WHO said it had two weeks of medical supplies available for Tripoli’s hospitals.

Haftar was among the officers who helped Gadhafi seize power in a 1969 coup before parting ways with him later. Critics call Haftar another strongman in Gadhafi’s mold.

He has so far resisted UN pressure to accept a power-sharing settlement to stabilize Libya, using his leverage as an ally of the West in attempts to stem Islamist militancy in North Africa.

(Source: agencies)

Taliban announce annual spring offensive in Afghanistan

Taliban announce ‘ban’ on Red Cross, WHO in Afghanistan

The Taliban launched their annual spring offensive Friday, calling on Afghan soldiers and police to abandon the government in a statement that points to further violence before peace negotiations with Washington bear any fruit.

Fighting has intensified across Afghanistan in recent weeks, killing and wounding hundreds of Afghan troops and civilians, making the announcement of the Al-Fath (“Victory”) operation largely symbolic. The Afghan government launched its own offensive, dubbed Khalid, in March.

However, after repeated rounds of negotiations between U.S. and Taliban representatives over recent months, it underlined how far Afghanistan still remains from peace more than 17 years after U.S.-backed forces drove the Taliban from power in 2001.

A Taliban statement said Al-Fath’s objective would be “eradicating occupation, cleansing our Muslim homeland from invasion and corruption, establishing a system along with defending and serving our believing fellow countrymen.”

“Even as large parts of our homeland have been freed from the enemy yet the foreign occupying forces continue exercising military and political influence in our Islamic country,” it said.

As well as assurances that civilians would be protected, it called on Afghan government soldiers and police, who have been suffering thousands of casualties a month, to abandon

their posts and join the insurgency.

“A key part of Al-Fath Operations is peeling away of countrymen serving in the military ranks of army, police and militias and being used by invaders for their own objectives,” the statement said.

“On this basis we again call on troops working in enemy ranks to shun senseless hostility and futile resistance, to join the Mujahideen and gain guarantees of safeguarding life and wealth.”

The announcement came days before the expected resumption of talks between U.S. special peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad and Taliban officials in Doha. Representatives from a variety of Afghan groups are also expected to be present but the talks will once again exclude the Afghan government, which the Taliban dismiss as a U.S.-appointed “puppet” regime.

U.S. President Donald Trump was reported last year to be planning to withdraw around half of the 14,000 U.S. forces in Afghanistan, adding pressure to secure a peace agreement with the Taliban to prevent the country collapsing.

The Taliban have made increasing gains as moves towards a possible peace deal have continued, with government forces in control of just over half the country, according to U.S. estimates cited by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, a congressional watchdog.



There has been a reduction in high-profile attacks in cities such as the capital, Kabul, over recent months, but heavy fighting has carried on in the provinces. There were 3,804 civilians killed last year, the highest number recorded, according to United Nations figures.

Afghan security forces have suffered the brunt of losses, with more than 45,000 killed since 2014, but three U.S. service members were killed this week by a roadside bomb near Bagram air base, north of Kabul.

(Source: Reuters)

Terrorist bombing hits Hazara market in Pakistan’s Quetta

A bomb hidden among bags of potatoes at a Pakistani market killed at least 18 people, half of them ethnic Hazaras, officials said, in an attack apparently aimed at minority Shia Muslims.

At least 30 people were wounded in the blast in the southwestern city of Quetta, capital of Baluchistan province, officials said.

The attack came after a lull of at least a year in attacks against Hazaras, though there have been isolated shootings.

The blast took place at Hazar Ganji, a fruit and vegetable market on the outskirts of Quetta. “So far, I have confirmation of 16 martyrs - eight belong to the Hazara community, seven others who worked here one is from the Frontier Constabulary,” Abdul Razzaq Cheema, Deputy

Inspector General of Quetta, told reporters. The explosive device was hidden between



sacks of potatoes, he said.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack.

Hazaras have been frequently targeted by Taliban and Daesh militants and other Takfiri militant groups in both Pakistan and Afghanistan.

In 2013, three separate bombings killed more than 200 people in Hazara neighborhoods.

After a series of attacks, security forces started escorting Hazara buses to the market. On Friday, the same practice was followed but the blast took place inside.

Baluchistan is the focus of projects in the \$57 billion China Pakistan Economic Corridor, a transport and energy link planned to run from western China to Pakistan’s southern deepwater port of Gwadar.

(Source: APP)

Israel has no sovereignty on Golan: Auon to U.S. delegation

Lebanese President Michel Aoun says his country does not recognize Israeli “sovereignty” over the occupied Golan Heights.

During a meeting with a U.S. congressional delegation at the Presidential Palace in Baabda on Friday, Aoun said Beirut’s stance regarding the status of Golan is absolute rejection of Israeli “sovereignty” over the territory, especially as part of it includes the Shebaa Farms and Kafrrshuba hills.

Earlier, the Lebanese president had condemned U.S. President Donald Trump’s recognition of Syria’s Golan Heights as “sovereign Israeli territory,” saying the measure was in blatant violation of international law.

“This threatens not only the sovereignty of a brotherly country and brotherly nation, but also the sovereignty of the Lebanese state, which possesses land gradually annexed by Israel, particularly in the Shebaa Farms, Kafrrshuba hills and the northern section of Ghajar [village],” Aoun said at a joint press conference with his Bulgarian counterpart Rumen Radev in Beirut on April 9.



On March 25, Trumped signed a proclamation, formally recognizing Israel’s “sovereignty” over Golan. The announcement came as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited the White House.

The Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, in a statement, called the U.S. decision a “blatant attack on the sovereignty and territorial integrity” of Syria.

“The liberation of the Golan by all available means and its return to the Syrian motherland is an inalienable right,” according to the statement carried by Syria’s official news agency SANA, which added, “The decision ... makes the United States the main enemy of the Arabs.”

The Arab League condemned the move, saying that “Trump’s recognition does not change the area’s status.”

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said it was impossible for Turkey to accept the U.S. decision.

Israel seized the Golan Heights from Syria after the 1967 Six-Day War and later occupied it in a move that has never been recognized by the international community. The regime has built dozens of settlements in the area ever since and has used the region to carry out a number of military operations against the Syrian government.

(Source: Press TV)

International Criminal Court judges on Friday rejected a request by the prosecutor to open an investigation into possible war crimes during the conflict in Afghanistan, citing

a lack of evidence and a poor outlook on state cooperation.

“The chamber hereby decides that an investigation into the situation in Afghanistan at this stage would not serve

the interests of justice and accordingly rejects the request,” the decision said.

(Source: Reuters)

Angry Ecuadoreans protest ‘scoundrelly’ arrest of Assange



Ecuadoreans have taken to the streets in the capital Quito against the arrest of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange in the country’s embassy in London.

The arrest came after Quito suddenly revoked his seven-year asylum and handed him over to British authorities.

Police were invited into the embassy by Ecuador’s ambassador on Thursday, dragging Assange out of the building, where he had been holed up for years in fear of extradition to the US.

Protesters gathered outside Ecuador’s foreign ministry building on Thursday, chanting against President Lenin Moreno and calling for Assange’s release.

“As Ecuadorean citizens we support Julian Assange, a man who has given his life to the truth, a man who has sacrificed himself and his family to tell the truth to the world. It was a source of pride that he was Ecuadorean,” said a protester.

Assange was granted asylum by Ecuador’s former president Rafael Correa, after he took refuge in the country’s embassy in 2012. President Moreno, however, revoked the asylum and allowed police to arrest him.

Moreno on Thursday called Assange a “spoiled brat” and “miserable hacker”, saying that his country “will be more careful in giving asylum to people who are really worth it.”

‘President Moreno betrayed a higher order’

Shortly after the arrest, Correa took to Twitter and slammed his successor for “betraying” a higher order.

“Moreno is a corrupt man, but what he has done is a crime that humanity will never forget,” said Correa.

Correa also described Moreno’s decision as a “scoundrelly, cowardly and ‘heinous’ act which is the ‘fruit of servility, vileness and vengeance.’”

“From now on worldwide the scoundrel and betrayal can be summarized in two words: Lenin Moreno,” said Correa.

■ **Assange aide arrested**

Ecuador’s Interior Minister Maria Paula Romo said authorizes had also arrested a “collaborator” of Assange in Quito’s airport as he prepared to board a flight for Japan.

Citing a senior Ecuadorian official, the Washington Times identified the person as Ola Bini, a Swedish software developer, who was living in Quito.

■ **World reacts to Assange arrest**

Russia reacted to the arrest, with President Vladimir Putin’s spokesman Dmitry Peskov saying Moscow hopes “that all his rights will be respected.”

“All countries and political organizations that are interested in the development of democracy should take part in deciding this man’s fate,” he added.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova also condemned the arrest, saying, “The hand of ‘democracy’ squeezes the throat of freedom.”

Russian deputy chairman of the International Affairs Committee of the State Duma, the lower house of Russia’s Federal Assembly, called for international support for Assange’s rights.

“We need to use all international opportunities to protect the person who tried to expose the truth and bring information to the public that some entities carefully concealed,” said Alexey Chepa.

Assange first went to Ecuador’s London embassy when he faced a warrant for arrest following allegations of sexual assault and rape from the Swedish government. He has denied the allegations, and the investigation was closed last year.

The 47-year-old Australian computer programmer later stayed in the embassy out of concern that he would be extradited to the US to be prosecuted for publishing classified documents that were leaked by American whistleblower Chelsea Manning.

■ **‘Europe should prevent extradition’**

A senior member of Germany’s opposition Left party called on Europe to protect Assange from being extradited to the United States.

Sevim Dagdelen said the withdrawal of Assange’s political asylum which led to his arrest was a “scandal, a violation of international law, and at the same time a severe blow to independent journalism.”

She said it is the German government’s “duty” now to prevent Britain from extraditing Assange to the US, “where he faces life imprisonment or even the death penalty for exposing US war crimes.”

■ **Australia not to provide special assistance to Assange: PM**

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said the charge against Assange is a “matter for the United States” and has nothing to do with Australia.

“Look, Julian Assange will get the same consular support and assistance that any other Australian would receive,” said Morrison.

Several dozen protesters gathered in the center of Sydney, holding signs, reading “UK, Don’t Extradite Assange to US.” They also chanted “free the truth, free Assange, don’t shoot the messenger.”

■ **‘Assange arrest threatens press freedom’**

Meanwhile, journalists and free speech advocates across the world described the arrest as “a serious threat to press freedom.”

An American journalist and political analyst told Press TV Assange’s arrest indicated that the West has no respect for the freedom of press.

“The freedom of press does not exist in the US or in the EU. If you publish materials exposing criminal activity by the powerful, the publisher, and not the criminal who has been exposed, would be criminally prosecuted,” Don DeBar said.

The arrest has concerned journalists and free speech advocates about how his prosecution could affect the rights of journalists around the world.

They worry that US prosecution of Assange would pave the way for Washington to launch criminal investigations into other news organizations.

(Source: agencies)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	193978.3
IFX	2470.26

Sources: tse.ir, ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,363 rials
GBP	55,019 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$71.58/b
WTI	\$64.45/b
OPEC Basket	\$70.31/b
Gold	\$1,295.20/oz
Silver	\$15.11/oz
Platinum	\$902.85/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



Mousavi appointed new head of OIETAI

ECONOMY

desk

TEHRAN — Seyed Ali-Mohammad Mousavi was appointed as the new head of Organization for Investment, Economic and Technical Assistance of Iran (OIETAI), Shada news agency reported.

Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejpasand appointed Mousavi to the post replacing Mohammad Khazaei.

Policy making and making coordination for development of economic ties with other countries is one of the prioritized responsibilities Dejpasand has assigned to his new deputy.



Tehran hosting Green Trade Fair 2019

ECONOMY

desk

TEHRAN — The fourth edition of Iran Green Trade Fair which kicked off at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds on Thursday will wrap up on Saturday, IRNA reported.

The three-day exhibition is to display the latest services and products in Iran's agriculture industry and hosts exhibitors from other countries including the Netherlands, Germany, Spain, Azerbaijan and Jordan.

The international exhibit follows fulfillment of Iranian Agriculture Ministry's goals in line with sustainable production.

Brussels paves way for start of trade talks with Washington

EU governments are set to back the opening of trade talks with the U.S., despite France pledging to oppose the negotiations on the grounds that Donald Trump has rejected global efforts to fight climate change.

Capitals have agreed that mandates empowering the European Commission to open negotiations with Washington will be voted on by ministers on Monday without discussion, paving the way for the start of work on a deal that will largely focus on removing tariffs on industrial goods.

The move is a boost for EU efforts to avert a trade war with the U.S., with President Donald Trump and his administration ratcheting up pressure on Europe in recent days.

A longstanding transatlantic dispute over state support for Airbus and Boeing led the U.S. this week to threaten punitive tariffs against \$11bn of EU products, while Trump is separately considering whether to impose additional duties on imports of cars.

The trade talks on industrial goods were agreed last year by Trump and Jean-Claude Juncker, European Commission president, as a way to boost commercial ties and ease tensions. They were part of a broader deal that included regulatory co-operation and assurances from Brussels of the EU's intention to buy more U.S. soybeans.

Paris on Thursday abandoned attempts to delay the start of the talks until after European Parliament elections in May, but a French government official said that the country would nevertheless vote against the start of negotiations at Monday's meeting.

The official said that France could not support the idea of a trade deal with a country that has pulled out of an international agreement to fight climate change that was brokered in Paris in 2015.

The scheduling of the vote on the mandate comes after intensive efforts by Brussels and Berlin to tackle French concerns about the negotiation plans, such as objections from Paris to including fisheries within the scope of the talks. France has also sought guarantees that older plans for a wide-ranging trade deal with the U.S., pursued by the EU during the Obama administration, are dead.

But this was not enough for Paris. The French official said: "It is a question of values. Europe must be exemplary and firm in its defense of the climate."

The stance prompted bewilderment from EU diplomats. While Brussels has committed not to sign trade agreements with countries that refuse to sign up to the Paris climate deal, it has argued that the proposed U.S. talks are different because their scope is narrow.

(Source: Financial Times)

A year with positive performance for Iranian exchange markets

By Mahnaz Abdi

Based on the already released reports and data, Iran's exchange markets witnessed fruitful performances and results in the past Iranian calendar year 1397 (ended on March 20, 2019).

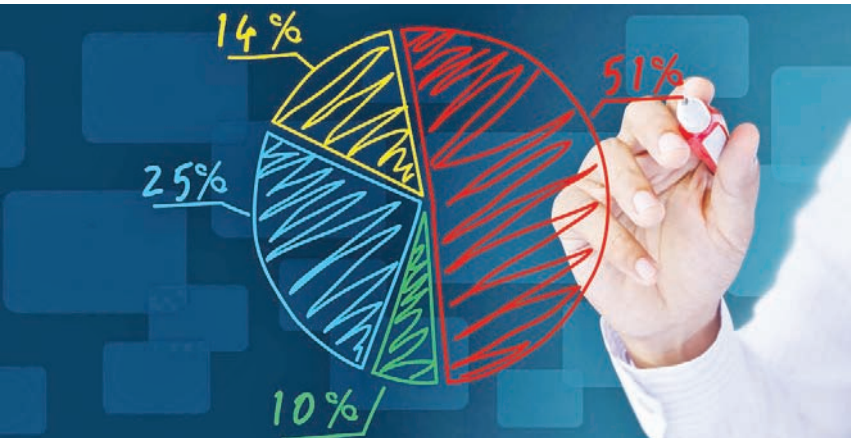
IFX, the main index of Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market, known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), touched a new record high in the past year, as it gained more than 100% to stand at 2,258 points on March 19, 2019.

This index had started the previous year at 1,161 points.

As reported, the number and worth of trades at IFB increased 89 percent and 71 percent, respectively, in the past year compared to its preceding year.

Monthly average value of trades at the First and Second markets of Iran Fara Bourse amounted to 287.622 billion rials (about \$6.8 million) and worth of trades at the Base Market accounted for 170.418 billion rials (about \$4.05 million). This year total volume of trades at the First, Second and Base markets (i.e. IFB stock market) reached 165,586 million shares; all witnessed an increase of 75 percent-191 percent.

Also, the value of trades at Iran Mercantile



Exchange (IME) rose 52 percent in the past calendar year from its previous year.

As reported, the worth of trades at three markets of IME, i.e. physical market, derivatives market and financial market, hit 1.786 quadrillion rials (about \$42.5 billion) in the past year.

Over 24.84 million tons of commodities valued at 884.3 trillion rials (about \$21.05 billion) were traded at the physical market of IME, showing seven percent fall in the amount and 77 percent rise in the worth of

trades year on year.

In addition, in a move to tackle the U.S. sanctions on the country's oil exports, Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX) held seven rounds of offering crude oil during the past year.

Since the U.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.

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.

During each round of offering, National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) offered one million barrels of crude oil at the IRENEX with 35,000 barrels as the least amount of sales.

Applying new financial instruments in Iranian capital market was another achievements of the exchange markets during the past year, as Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) officially launched "futures" in mid-December 2018 for more risk management and IME launched "option" in early March 2019 in an approach to diversify financing methods for agricultural products.

Futures contracts (more colloquially, futures) are financial contracts obligating the buyer to purchase an asset or the seller to sell an asset at a predetermined future date and price.

And option is a contract which gives the buyer (the owner or holder of the option) the right, but not the obligation, to buy or sell an underlying asset or instrument at a specified strike price prior to or on a specified date, depending on the form of the option.

Europe is running out of economic policy options to boost growth: UBS chairman

Both emerging markets and the U.S. appear poised to recover from last year's economic stumbles, but problems persist for Europe, according to the head of global financial giant UBS.

The continent is predicted to only achieve a slow rebound, Axel Weber, chairman of the Swiss investment bank, told CNBC's Joomanna Bercetche in Washington D.C. on Thursday.

"We're a bit skeptical about the ability of Europe to use stimulus to come out of this," he said. "I think there is some downside risk in Europe and you have to acknowledge that. So, whilst I do have the main outlook to be a sort of L-shaped recovery, stabilization at a lower level, growth below potential, I don't have the main scenario of a recession."

The International Monetary Fund recently downgraded growth in the euro zone. It now expects the bloc to grow at 1.3 percent in 2019 — lower than its forecast had been six months ago.

In many European countries, including Italy and France, there's very little room for governments to use fiscal policy to stimulate the economy, Weber said. That's because their fiscal deficits are near the upper limit of the 3 percent of GDP that the European Central Bank allows. Only Germany has room for additional fiscal measures, but Berlin will only use it to boost the domestic economy, the UBS chief said.

On the monetary policy front, the ECB has pumped trillions of euros into the economy over the past few years to boost inflation and promote growth. Earlier this week, the



ECB held interest rates steady.

"What you have to ask yourself is: After years of quantitative easing, is adding more of the same really going to have the same impact on the economy that it did have when they started this? My answer to that is, probably not," Weber said.

Other challenges for Europe

Europe's challenges, according to the UBS chief, go beyond the effectiveness of fiscal and monetary policies to boost growth. He pointed out three areas: First, European infrastructure and technology developments lag behind the U.S. and China.

"It needs to improve, and therefore needs investment into infrastructure, into digital economy, into 5G technology in order to catch up. They need to catch up fast and therefore they need to start investing now," he said.

As Beijing and Washington inch closer to a trade deal, U.S. President Donald Trump recently took a swipe at the European Union. On Twitter, he called the EU a "brutal trading partner with the United States," and declared that "will change."

Weber said Trump's shift in focus to Europe may invite renewed debate on trade relations.

"That all will not help the recovery in Europe because, as we have seen, if there are trade tensions, there's a higher uncertainty. It impacts negatively on investment and consumption and, therefore, it drags out any possible recover," he said.

Brexit is also set to prolong uncertainty in Europe.

While it presently looks unlikely that the UK will leave the EU without a deal in place (a so-called hard Brexit), the road ahead remains unclear, according to Weber. Brexit, he said, is still characterized by a huge amount of uncertainty on investment decisions, trade and location decisions.

Earlier this week, EU leaders and the UK government agreed to a 'flexible extension' of the Brexit deadline until Oct. 31. The UK was initially meant to leave the bloc on March 29 but was granted an extension to April 12 while the British Parliament failed to agree on any exit deal.

"So, this uncertainty is weighing down on European growth and it cannot be resolved by monetary or fiscal policy," Weber said.

(Source: CNBC)

China's 2019 growth seen slowing to 6.2% despite policy support

China's economic growth is expected to slow to a near 30-year low of 6.2 percent this year, a Reuters poll showed on Friday, as sluggish demand at home and abroad weigh on activity despite a flurry of policy support measures.

The median forecast was slightly lower than the 6.3 percent economists had predicted in the last poll in January.

While the world's second-largest economy has shown some signs of steadying recently, analysts caution it is too early to tell if the newfound momentum can be sustained.

Policy stimulus thus far has also been more restrained by Chinese standards than in past downturns, which could mean a more gradual recovery.

Most of the 88 institutions covered in the survey do not expect growth to bottom out until later in the year as looser monetary condition and fiscal stimulus take time to percolate through the economy and revive domestic demand.

"We expect the economy will slow further in second quarter as exports likely remain under pressure as global demand deteriorates and the property market stays in a downward cycle, while stubbornly weak consumption for durable goods caps demand," said Ting Lu, chief China economist at Nomura.

The full-year forecast of 6.2 percent would still fall within the government's target of 6.0-6.5 percent, but it would mark the weakest pace of growth China has seen in 29 years, and spell a further deceleration from 6.6 percent in 2018 and 6.8 percent in 2017.

Growth next year will likely cool further to 6.0 percent, the poll showed.

Multi-year regulatory campaigns to curb debt risks and pollution have deterred fresh investment, while a year-long trade war with the United States has hurt China's exporters.

First-quarter growth was seen cooling to 6.3 percent from a year earlier, the same as in the previous poll, from 6.4 percent in the fourth-quarter of 2018, the weakest pace since the global financial crisis.

China will post its first-quarter gross domestic product (GDP) and March activity



data on April 17.

Support measures

Beijing has stepped up fiscal stimulus this year, announcing more spending on roads, railways and ports, along with trillions of yuan of tax cuts to ease pressure on corporate balance sheets.

It has also pressed banks to keep lending to struggling smaller, private companies, and on more affordable terms, even though they are considered higher credit risks than state-backed firms.

Investors are hoping for more signs of economic recovery in China to cushion worries about slowing global growth, after the IMF this week downgraded its 2019 world outlook for the third time citing U.S.-China trade tensions.

Optimism has increased that Washington could reach a deal with Beijing soon. The two sides have largely agreed on a mechanism to police any trade agreement they reach, including establishing new "enforcement offices," U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said on Wednesday.

President Donald Trump said last week that a deal could be ready around the end of April.

But economists warn that even if a trade deal is reached, and tit-for-tat tariffs are removed, Chinese exporters will still have to contend with weakening demand globally.

Analysts expect the central bank will ease policy further this year to spur lending and reduce the risk off a sharper slowdown. But they do not expect a cut in the benchmark lending rate, which would risk adding to a mountain of debt left over from past stimulus campaigns.

(Source: Reuters)

As China trade war cools, Japan braces for its clash with Trump

Japan is finally stepping into the ring for a fight it had managed to dodge for more than two years: Bilateral trade talks with U.S. President Donald Trump.

The world's third-biggest economy has a lot at stake in the talks, which are expected to start next week in Washington just as the U.S.'s negotiations with China appear to be winding down. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is desperate to avoid tariffs or quotas on lucrative auto exports, while Trump wants to crack open Japan's agricultural market and reduce a \$60 billion trade deficit.

Abe has poured energy into courting Trump to maintain a strategic relationship that secures his country against potential threats from North Korea and China. But that doesn't mean Japan will roll over on trade: Abe's government is determined to avoid giving the U.S. a better two-way deal than the multilateral pacts he's negotiated with Europe and Pacific Rim nations.

"It's the U.S. who asked for these bilateral negotiations," said Ichiro Fujisaki, a former Japanese ambassador to the U.S., who's now president of the Nakasone Peace Institute. "So, it's the U.S. who should put to us what they want, rather than us offering this and that before being asked."

The talks add to worries among investors as Trump turns his gaze from China to trade grudges elsewhere. The U.S. leader, who will face questions on his success in rebalancing America's trade relationships in next year's presidential campaign, has signaled a willingness to continue market-disrupting tariff threats despite growing economic concerns.

Abe only agreed to bilateral talks after Trump hit Japan's steel and aluminum exports with punitive tariffs last year and later threatened to impose levies of as much as 25 percent on all imported cars, including those made in Japan. Trump faces a decision in May on how to proceed with the auto tariffs.

"Japan is now negotiating," Trump told reporters last month. "They haven't wanted to negotiate for many years, but now they're negotiating. It's called 'tariffs.'"

Still, Abe's economy minister, Toshimitsu Motegi, has been able to observe the Trump



administration's previous battles with South Korea, Canada, Mexico and China before sitting down next week with U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer. In each fight, the U.S. adopted extreme positions that threatened to upend economic ties only to drift toward more modest changes.

Abe has also fortified Japan's position by sealing trade pacts with the European Union and 10 other partners jilted by Trump when he abandoned the Trans-Pacific Partnership shortly after taking office. Those deals have left U.S. farmers, including beef and pork producers, at risk of losing their 22 percent share of Japan's food import market to rivals with lower tariffs.

"For Japan, the government has no reason to hasten, to quickly wrap up the negotiations," said Junji Nakagawa, a professor who researches trade issues at Chugoku University in Chiba prefecture near Tokyo. "The impetus for wrapping up negotiations quickly comes from the U.S. side, especially agricultural lobbyists."

The scope of talks will be key. If the U.S. can accept parity with Europe and TPP nations on agriculture — as the two sides suggested in a Sept. 26 joint statement — Abe might settle quickly. Trump is expected to visit Tokyo next month for a state visit with the incoming emperor, Crown Prince Naruhito, and Japan doesn't want trade disputes marring the pageantry.

"We will further expand trade and investment between Japan and the United States in a mutually beneficial manner," Japanese Finance Minister Taro Aso told the U.S. Chamber of Commerce on Thursday in Washington, citing the September statement.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Iranian heavy crude oil price rises \$2.78 per barrel in March: OPEC

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** — Iranian heavy oil price increased \$2.78 in March, according to OPEC's latest monthly report published on Tuesday.

The country's average heavy oil price was \$64.17 in March, up 4.5 percent from \$61.39 in February.

According to the report, Iran produced 2.698 million barrels per day (bpd) of oil in March, a 28,000 bpd decrease from 2.726 million bpd in the preceding month.

The report put average Iranian crude output for the Q1 2019 at 2.714 million barrels per day indicating a near 264,000-bpd fall compared to the figure for Q4 2018.

The country's average heavy crude price was also reported to be \$60.53 since beginning of 2019 up to the report's publishing day.

Iranian oil industry has been under pressure from the U.S. efforts to isolate the country by reimposing sanctions.



The new round of sanctions targeting Iran's oil sector were put in action on November 4, 2018.

However, soon after the sanctions took effect the U.S. government agreed to let eight countries, including close allies South Korea and Japan, as well as India, keep buying Iranian oil.

The waivers expire around May 4 and Iranian oil buyers including India, Japan, and South Korea are trying to convince the U.S. government to get another round of exemption from U.S. sanctions to be able to keep buying Iranian oil.

Earlier on Tuesday, South Korean news agency Yonhap reported that the Asian country is negotiating with the United States for extending the sanctions waiver on Iranian oil imports.

Platts also quoted a Japanese official on Wednesday that Japan is seeking to get exempted from the sanctions for the second time.

Russia cashes in as European oil refiners pay for U.S. sanctions

European refiners are paying the price for U.S. oil sanctions on Venezuela and Iran as they scramble to replace the sour crude Washington has blocked from the global market with increasingly expensive Russian oil, trading sources said and data showed.

Compounding the impact of sanctions, OPEC members have mainly cut sour crude output as part of their deal with allied producers to boost oil prices while a large, new refinery, designed to run on sour oil, has just started up in Turkey.

U.S. output is soaring and exports are set to jump later this year as new infrastructure comes online but it is not an alternative, being mainly light and sweet.

As a result, European refiners have been left competing to secure as much medium, sour Russian Urals as they can, pushing the differential of that oil to levels not seen since 2013.

"Urals is anchored in a positive zone versus dated Brent and there is no indication it will fall to a discount any time soon," a trading source at a European oil major said.

In the Mediterranean, the differential for Urals typically trades at a discount of at least a dollar to benchmark dated Brent but since early November, the level has spiked and now stands at a premium of 70 cents a barrel.

For a 600,000-barrel cargo of Urals, that rise translates to an extra \$1.35 million cost.

Thanks to the higher premiums, Russia made an additional \$140 million in March from seaborne and pipeline deliveries versus October prior to the sanctions coming into effect.

Initially, Europeans gravitated to heavy, sour Venezuelan oil when sanctions on Iran hit in early November but then Washington also placed sanctions on the Latin American country in late January in a bid to oust President Nicolas Maduro.

Even though sanctions on Venezuelan crude will not come into effect until the end of April, the oil is effectively



already untouchable as the U.S. State Department has exerted direct pressure on foreign companies to stop all dealings.

The two sets of sanctions combined have taken at least 800,000 barrels per day (bpd) out of the market, which is as much as what the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries agreed to cut.

The United States granted waivers on Iranian oil to six jurisdictions including three countries in the region - Italy, Greece and Turkey - but only Turkey was able to continue purchases. It remains unclear whether the current waivers will be extended in May.

■ The sour rush

The situation is set to worsen as European refiners emerge from their springtime maintenance just as Persian Gulf sour crude producers increasingly favor Asia, where refining capacity in the near term is set to jump.

Saudi Arabia, a major sour crude producer, is shouldering the bulk of the OPEC and non-OPEC cuts. Between October

2018 and March this year, the kingdom slashed its exports to Europe by nearly half, Refinitiv Eikon data shows.

Iraq reduced its contracted volumes for European refiners in 2019 and increasingly sells its oil to the highest bidder via tender.

Iraqi supplies to Europe fell by over 40 percent to 355,000 bpd in March compared with 615,000 bpd in October 2018, Refinitiv Eikon data showed.

Meanwhile, Azerbaijan's 200,000-bpd STAR refinery in Turkey is slowly ramping up and will be a new competitor for dwindling sour oil.

Designed to run on sour grades such as Russian Urals and Iraqi Basra and Kirkuk, the refinery took 184,000 bpd of Urals in March, Refinitiv Eikon data showed.

"One expected STAR's launch to be a serious jolt for the market, but little did we know it would make the sour shortage this bad ... refiners are rushing for sour," a European trader said.

As the supply-side structure has changed, the spread between sour and the historically far more expensive light, sweet crude has thinned and even flipped in some instances.

In the Mediterranean, the light grade Kazakh CPC Blend trades at a discount to Urals and Kurdish crude, which used to be one of the region's cheapest oils.

The Urals price out of the Black Sea has also increasingly traded at a premium to Urals out of Baltic ports - previously a rare occurrence. The trend has prompted commodity price-reporting agency S&P Global Platts to start an industry consultation on changing how the Urals market is assessed.

"All refiners are looking for Urals or an Urals replacement," said a third trader in an international trading firm. "And we see that it won't be enough for everyone."

(Source: Reuters)

Aramco's \$12 billion bond deal fizzles as sell-off extends

The bonds issued by Saudi Aramco in this week's unprecedented offering sank for a second day, marking a quick sell-off that calls into question the depth of the deal's \$100 billion of investor orders.

Risk premiums on the oil giant's \$12 billion of bonds climbed amid a mild decline in oil prices and rising yields on the company's sovereign parent. For the most actively traded piece of the offering -- \$3 billion of 3.5 percent bonds due in 2029 -- the extra yield investors demanded to own the debt widened to as high as 1.2 percentage points more than U.S. Treasuries in trading Thursday, according to the Trace bond-price reporting system. That's up from a spread of 1.05 percentage points when the deal priced Tuesday.

The trading sheds light on a long-held reality in the corporate bond market: that orders on highly anticipated deals are often padded by investors who fear losing out on allocations. It can create a "vicious cycle" that inflates demand, said Lon Erickson, a portfolio manager at Thornburg Investment Management.

The sell-off is "a little bit surprising given the supposed over-subscription," he said in an interview Thursday. "You can't trust the final order book."

Aramco issued the debt to investors globally after, at one point, receiving more than \$100 billion of orders, people with knowledge of the deal said at the time. That allowed the energy giant to borrow at a lower yield than its sovereign parent, even though credit-rat-

ings firms assigned the same grades as the kingdom's debt.

About half the deal was allocated to U.S. investors, according to the banks managing the sale. European investors took 24 percent of the offering, with investors in Asia and the Middle East lending the rest. Asset managers like mutual funds and exchange-traded funds took down 60 percent of the offering. Banks and insurers and pension funds received 15 percent and 14 percent of the deal, respectively.

The way banks divvy up hot corporate bond sales has long been criticized by investors and even has in the past come under the scrutiny of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission and the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority.

"When people see big order books, they pile in thinking that there's fast money to be made," said Scott Kimball, a Miami-based fixed-income portfolio manager at BMO Global Asset Management. But if they get a small allocation that would fail to generate meaningful returns, he said, those investors decide to sell.

Thursday's declines came as oil prices in New York fell from a five-month high. Crude slipped 1.2 percent Thursday to \$63.82 per barrel.

JPMorgan Chase & Co. and Morgan Stanley managed the bond sale along with Citigroup Inc., Goldman Sachs Group Inc., HSBC Holdings Plc, and NCB Capital Co.

(Source: Bloomberg)

IEA highlights demand concerns amid oil market tightness

The global oil market is tightening due to sharp production falls in Saudi Arabia and Venezuela, the International Energy Agency said Thursday, but cautioned there are still "mixed signals" over the outlook for oil consumption and stock levels.

In its monthly oil market report, the IEA kept its estimates for global oil demand unchanged at 1.3 million bpd in 2018 and 1.4 million bpd in 2019, but warned "risks are currently to the downside".

With Brent oil futures having recently risen above \$70 a barrel this month from a nadir of \$50 at the end of 2018, the Paris-based agency was keen to point out that "the IEA has regularly warned of the dangers of prices rising even higher." While demand in China, India and the U.S. is estimated to have grown by 1 million bpd in January-February, it was a very different story for the OECD economies, the IEA noted.

"Overall demand in the OECD countries fell by 0.3 million bpd year on year in the fourth quarter of 2018, the first such fall for any quarter since the end of 2014, and it is likely to have fallen again in the first quarter of 2019 due to weakness in some European economies, with perhaps more to come if there is a disorderly Brexit," it said.

The IEA also pointed to uncertainties in Argentina and Turkey and that higher oil prices had not yet given the Middle East



economies a substantial boost in terms of demand.

■ Supply turnaround

Global supply dropped 340,000 bpd in March due to the OPEC-led production cut deal and a sharp drop in output at sanctions-hit Venezuela, the IEA said.

The agency estimated that OPEC production in March fell 550,000 bpd to 30.1 million bpd as Saudi Arabia's output fell to its lowest level in two years, boosting compliance with supply cuts to 153%.

Saudi Arabia's production fell 320,000 bpd to 9.82 million bpd in March the IEA

said, and noted indications are that output could stay close to this level in April, with exports down sharply.

Meanwhile, Venezuela's production goes from bad to worse, with the IEA estimating output dropping to 870,000 bpd, from 1.14 million bpd the previous month. The IEA said the call on OPEC rises to 30.9 million bpd in Q2 2019.

While U.S. supply has been offsetting some of the cuts elsewhere, the IEA sounded a cautionary tone: "At 99.2 million bpd, global output was 3.1 million bpd below a November 2018 peak".

The IEA added that "while non-OPEC supply is expected to rebound from Q2 2019 onwards, the pace of growth is set to ease further." It highlighted a weaker U.S. supply outlook due to a slowdown in drilling activity at the start of the year and lower capital budget allocations.

■ Taking stock

The IEA suggested that the stocks picture was a little foggy and that there was still some way to go before they return to "normal".

OPEC measures its success in bringing the market back to balance by stocks returning to their five-year average, with the IEA noting that in February stocks were above the average by 16 million barrels.

Interestingly, the IEA points out that "however, in terms of days of forward demand cover, which is a more relevant assessment, they are below it, and have been for some time."

The IEA said that the 0.5% cap on sulfur in marine fuels being introduced at the start of 2020 under new International Maritime Organization fuel specifications could have repercussions for middle distillate stocks.

"If half the increase in marine gasoil demand resulting from the regulations were in OECD countries, about 540,000 bpd, current middle distillate stocks would represent 29.3 days of forward cover, about 3.5 days below the average," it said.

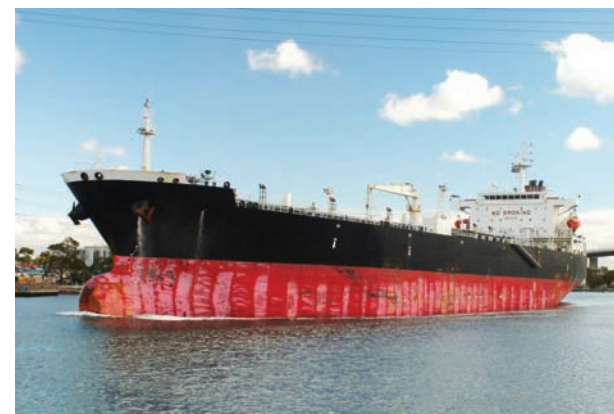
(Source: Platts)

Iranian oil exports rise to pre-sanctions level: Platts

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** — Oil exports from Iran have increased significantly in March to once again reach to near pre-sanctions level, S&P Global Platts reported citing shipping and provisional tanker tracking data.

Based on the report, Iranian crude and condensate exports increased by 12 percent to 1.7 million barrels per day (bpd) in the mentioned month.

As expected, the surges in Iran's oil exports came after the country's Asian buyers rushed to use the opportunity that the waivers on U.S. sanctions has provided.



Since the first round of waivers expires on May 4, Iranian oil buyers including India, Japan, and South Korea are trying to convince the U.S. government to get another round of exemption from U.S. sanctions to be able to keep buying crude from Iran.

Earlier on Tuesday, South Korean news agency Yonhap reported that the Asian country is negotiating with the United States for extending the sanctions waiver on Iranian oil imports.

Platts also quoted a Japanese official on Wednesday that Japan is seeking to get exempted from the sanctions for the second time.

According to Platts, China's demand for Iranian crude has also rebounded in recent months. Flows to China averaged 627,710 bpd last month from levels of 571,464 bpd in February.

Reduced output has pushed oil market into deficit, OPEC says

OPEC's supply cuts and involuntary declines from Venezuela and Iran have pushed the oil market into a deficit, the cartel said on Wednesday, with supply now running below the group's estimated demand for its crude.

In March Opec production plummeted by 534,000 barrels a day to stand just above 30m bpd, the group's analysts said in its monthly market report, led by voluntary cuts by Saudi Arabia and Iraq and a further drop in Venezuela's sanction-hit supplies.

That compares with an estimated demand for OPEC's crude of 30.3m bpd in 2019, the report said.

The supply shortfall is one reason why Brent crude oil has recovered to above \$70 a barrel for the first time this year, with the market now facing a supply deficit despite growing output from the U.S. shale industry.

OPEC has had to sacrifice market share, however, to tighten the market and boost prices. The group estimates that demand for its crude will have fallen by 2.6m bpd between 2017 and 2019.

Last month Opec kingpin, Saudi Arabia, cut production to 9.8m bpd from 10.1m bpd, according to secondary sources used by the group to assess member's output, while Iraq's output declined by 126,000 bpd to 4.5m bpd.

Venezuela's output, which has been hit by U.S. sanctions and the economic and political crisis in the country, plummeted to just 732,000, a decline of 289,000 bpd compared to February.

(Source: Financial Times)

How Uzbekistan plans to take on the world's oil majors

Uzbekistan's state oil and gas company has a bold aim — to become the next Royal Dutch Shell or BP and join the ranks of the world's energy majors.

It is early days but Uzbekneftegaz, which contributes 15 percent of the country's gross domestic product, has taken the first steps towards its ambitious goal by gaining the freedom from the government to act as an independent corporate entity.

The company has also appointed a new chairman, 39-year-old Bahodirjon Sidikov, to oversee its planned transformation as the group aims to take advantage of reforms implemented across the country under president Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

Challenging the oil majors is not an unrealistic fantasy either, as Uzbekneftegaz has the size and resources to become an international force. It has 100,000-plus workers, about 30 percent more than Shell, and the country has large energy reserves.

"Uzbekneftegaz from now on, I hope, will only play the role of a business entity and it intends to make profit," Sidikov said, referring to his first tentative moves to turn the company into a serious rival of the big groups.

"I am certain this decision will make Uzbekneftegaz a transparent international company that will prove itself not only in Uzbekistan, but also on the international markets."

His modernising hopes have been helped by the determination of the president, who came to power in 2016 vowing to liberalize the previously closed-off autocracy of a country that is now free from Soviet-era shackles.

One of Sidikov's aims is to gain an international credit rating, which will enable the company to raise money in the bond markets.

"We are concentrating on the first stage [the international rating], but eventually we still see us going out into the market," Sidikov said.

The company expects to raise \$1bn in corporate bond placement — the same amount as the country's bond issue earlier this year — which would help it pay for business projects as well as developing operations in geological exploration and oil and gas production.

Sidikov must also make the company more efficient. This is critical to allow the group to use the vast resources at the country's disposal.

(Source: Financial Times)



Turkey must choose between the U.S. and Russia

If Turkey accepts delivery of a Russian S-400 missile system, it will be sanctioned as required by American law

By Jim Inhofe, Jack Reed, Jim Risch and Bob Menendez

By the end of the year, Turkey will have either F-35 advanced fighter aircraft on its soil or a Russian S-400 surface-to-air missile defense system. It will not have both.

The choice made by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey will have profound consequences for his country's place in the world, its relationship with the United States and its standing in NATO.

The F-35 program is the world's largest fifth-generation fighter aircraft program, with more than a trillion dollars in investment from a dozen international partners, including Turkey, and customers.

In large part, the ability of the United States and its allies to maintain a military advantage in the skies is riding on the program.

In July 2017, Turkey announced that it would purchase the S-400 surface-to-air missile defense system from Russia.

The S-400 is the most advanced system produced to date in Russia's quest to defeat stealth technology — the system Russia built to shoot down the F-35 fighters.

The Russian S-400 Triumph medium-range and long-range surface-to-air missile system could be redesigned to shoot down American made F-35 fighter jets.

The Russian S-400 Triumph medium-range and long-range surface-to-air missile system could be redesigned to shoot down American made F-35 fighter jets.

■ Interoperability with allies

Turkey's purchase of the S-400 would be incompatible with its commitments to NATO and reduce its interoperability with allies.

Purchasing the S-400 would create an unacceptable risk because its radar system could enable the Russian military to figure out how the F-35 operates.

That threat compelled the Pentagon to suspend some activities associated with Turkey's F-35s last week.

Turkey has legitimate air defense needs. The United States, since 2012, has offered the Patriot air defense system as an alternative to the S-400, but Turkey has rejected that offer.

With the S-400 scheduled to arrive in Turkey in July and the F-35s scheduled to arrive in November, it is time for President Erdogan to choose. It is our hope he will choose to abandon the S-400, defend Turkish skies with the Patriot system and save the F-35 arrangement.

If President Erdogan fails to make this choice and accepts delivery of the S-400, Turkey will be sanctioned as required by United States law under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act.

If President Erdogan fails to make this choice and accepts delivery of the S-400, Turkey will be sanctioned as required by United States law under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act.

Sanctions will hit Turkey's economy hard — rattling international markets, scaring away foreign direct investment and crippling Turkey's aerospace and defense industry.

Further, no F-35s will ever reach Turkish soil. And Turkish participation in the F-35 program, including manufacturing parts, repairing and servicing the fighters, will be terminated, taking Turkish companies out of the manufacturing and supply chain for the program.

We are committed to taking all necessary legislative action to ensure this is the case. Turkey is an important partner in the F-35 program, but it is not irreplaceable.

Abandoning the F-35 will have severe consequences for Ankara. Turkey has already invested more than \$1.25 billion in the F-35 program, and that will be squandered. It will not receive the more than 100 F-35s it planned to purchase, and it will be forced to settle for a less-capable fighter aircraft that will not arrive for many years.

Turkish companies that produce parts for the F-35 will see their orders dry up completely. Its F-35 engine maintenance, repair, overhaul, and upgrade facility will see all its work go to other facilities in Europe.

■ President's Erdogan's hope

President Erdogan's hope to make the Turkish defense industry a key pillar of economic growth for the future will be dashed.

We do not seek to harm our Turkish friends. Indeed, we hope it will be possible to enhance American-Turkish cooperation on Syria, the Black Sea, counterterrorism and other issues of mutual concern. We seek only to protect the F-35 program and the capabilities of the NATO alliance, including allies like Turkey.

We understand that Turkey has a relationship of necessity with Russia — on Syria, energy, agriculture, tourism and more.

If President Erdogan walks away from the S-400, Mr. Putin may retaliate in one or more of these areas. In that unfortunate event, we commit to do all we can to assist Turkey as it weathers the storm.

Paying tribute to the Kremlin with the purchase of the S-400 is not in Turkey's interests. Mr. Putin is not an ally of Turkey any more than the Soviets or the czars. His aggression in Georgia, Ukraine and Syria has made Turkey less safe. Now Mr. Putin is trying to divide Turkey from the West with the S-400s.

If he succeeds, what little regard he has for Turkey's interests will shrink further. The more isolated Turkey is from its allies, the more power Mr. Putin will have in the relationship: Russia does what it can, Turkey suffers what it must.

Mr. Putin fears and respects a Turkey strategically anchored in the West and committed to NATO. We hope President Erdogan will choose that future for Turkey by rejecting Mr. Putin's divisive S-400 ploy, meeting its air defense requirement with the Patriot system and moving forward as a critical partner in the F-35 program.

(Source: The NYT)

Julian Assange might have already won

The government's case is a narrow one — and gives him the kind of platform he craves

By Jack Shafer

British police arrested him on Thursday at the Ecuadorian Embassy in London, where he has been living in external exile since 2012. The arrest was prompted by an extradition warrant filed by the United States, which has charged him with conspiracy to commit computer intrusion.

In the immediate aftermath of the arrest, Assange partisans like journalist Glenn Greenwald have fulminated about the government's heavy-handedness, saying this represents a dangerous crackdown on freedom of the press.

If Assange goes down this way, they warn, our constitutional freedoms are going with him.

But if you look at the indictment, on a very narrow charge of computer hacking conspiracy, it's evident that the government stayed well clear of the dangerous notion of prosecuting a publisher for publishing.

And, if anything, Assange might get exactly the fight he's looking for, served up to him by the government he purports to loathe.

■ Get a platform in Britain

If the case plays out as expected, he'll first get a platform in Britain to argue to a world-wide audience that it's all a political setup.

And if he loses that round, and the case does come back to the United States, he might well get the government to serve him up, by law, the kind of massive document haul he loves.

Given the broad constellation of charges prosecutors have contemplated throwing at Assange, including the Espionage Act, Wednesday's indictment is very weak tea.

Unless prosecutors charge Assange with bigger crimes — something Reuters reports the Justice Department may do — the former fugitive could succeed in using British extradition proceedings to avoid U.S. prosecution.

Criminal defense lawyer Ken White was among the first to note the narrowness of the indictment.

The government's bare-bones indictment has avoided First Amendment issues by not charging Assange with publishing government secrets.

Instead, it's accusing him of computer crime — of agreeing to help former Army Pvt. Chelsea Manning hack the password on a classified government computer system containing classified information. (Manning had previously downloaded and shared classified files with WikiLeaks, which had published them.)

Did Assange actually perform the offered assistance? The indictment is cagey on this



If U.S. prosecutors bring no additional charges against Assange, he will surely argue in extradition proceedings that the United States is attempting to deceive British authorities about their true motives, charging for crime A (computer hacking) when their real intention is to punish him for an unindicted crime B (helping to steal classified documents).

point. "Cracking the password would have allowed Manning to log onto" unauthorized computers, the indictment says.

"Such a measure would have made it more difficult for investigators to identify Manning as the source," it continues.

The government's belief that Assange offered Manning help with password cracking isn't news — it was aired during Manning's 2011 trial.

As my colleague Josh Gerstein reported, prosecutors presented chat logs from Manning's personal computer in which she asked a user named "Nathaniel Frank" for advice on cracking passwords, and that prosecutors linked that identity to an email address used by Assange. "Frank" replied that he had "rainbow tables" that could assist her.

■ Instead of espionage charges

Prosecutors probably brought a standard-issue computer crime against Assange instead of espionage charges for two reasons. Because

computer crimes are punished under the law in both the United States and the United Kingdom, extradition cases involving them are relatively straightforward.

Bringing espionage charges, on the other hand, would have complicated extradition by allowing a defendant to directly invoke the "political offense exception," arguing that the treaty signed by the U.S. and the UK stipulates that a person shall not be extradited to be prosecuted of an offense of political character.

Fethullah Gulen, a Turkish dissident currently living in the United States, is prepared to shield himself from any attempt by Turkey to extradite him using this exception.

If U.S. prosecutors bring no additional charges against Assange, he will surely argue in extradition proceedings that the United States is attempting to deceive British authorities about their true motives, charging for crime A (computer hacking) when their

How the courage of a few Rwandan women changed the world

By Sara Darehshori

Twenty-five years ago, April 7 marks the start of the Rwandan genocide. Over a few short months in 1994, up to a million people were killed primarily on the basis of their ethnicity. Soldiers and militia raped thousands of women.

Though rape had been defined as a war crime, it had never been prosecuted. Like looting, rape was considered a spoil of war. It was accepted as inevitable and not recognized as the weapon of war it was. That was about to change.

In 1995, when I arrived in Kigali as an investigator for the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (the United Nations institution created to address the atrocities in Rwanda), it did not appear to be a promising venue for landmark court decisions.

The prosecutor's office was virtually deserted. The few people on staff were away looking for witnesses abroad because of security concerns in Rwanda.

When police officers lent by the Dutch government arrived a few weeks later, they removed doors from hinges to use as desks and sat on upturned rubbish cans.

The court in Arusha, Tanzania was still under construction and investigations were barely under way when we got a rare call on the one unreliable phone extension in the office: it was the Zambian government letting us know they had arrested several people from our "most wanted" list. Since we did not have such a list, the call was quite a surprise.

One of those arrested, Jean-Paul Akayesu, was the mayor of a commune called Taba. In the communes, the mayor plays a crucial role in many aspects of the residents' lives: he or she resolves disputes, decides who goes to school and gets civil service jobs, and is responsible for assigning required weekly community service.

■ Massacred by their neighbors

Our investigation revealed that during the genocide, Akayesu had initially prevented killings but then had a change of heart and ordered all Tutsis to be killed. Within



days, over 2,000 Tutsis in the area were massacred by their neighbors. Women and children sought safety in front of the bureau communal where Akayesu had his office.

Our indictment initially focused on the killings and establishing genocide. When Human Rights Watch brought widespread rapes in the commune to our attention, we sent female investigators and interpreters to see what we could find, but we still could not link the rapes to Akayesu. It was not until a witness testified during the trial that Akayesu was present during the assaults that we realized we might be able to hold him accountable for the rapes.

Several women in Taba had been following the trial closely on the radio. When they heard the testimony about the rape, they decided to tell their stories too. One of them, Victoire Mukambanda, sought shelter with her sister and young babies in front of the bureau communal where they were systematically assaulted.

While she was being raped, Akayesu told her assailant, "Never again ask me what a Tutsi woman tastes like." Despite having just given birth, and being feverish with malaria, she was determined to give evidence.

Mukambanda, her surviving sister, and several other women overcame their fear of flying and the daunting prospect of appearing in a foreign court before robed foreign judges who did not speak the same language.

She said of her decision "In speaking out, I hoped to restore my dignity and that of other women in my community who had suffered as I had."

■ A weapon of war

At the time, she did not realize that rapes had happened throughout Rwanda and that it is used as a weapon of war in many conflicts. She did not know her testimony would help set a precedent that would be used to prosecute rape in conflicts around the world and that her courage would encourage others to speak about their experiences.

She only knew that not speaking out was killing her slowly and by speaking out, she was able to move forward.

Since the 1998 decision, international criminal justice has developed rapidly. A permanent International Criminal Court was established in The Hague in 2002. Hybrid national and international courts were set up to address horrific crimes in Cambodia, Sierra Leone, and Bosnia. Fifty convictions for rape have been handed down in international courts.

Yet as we have seen in Myanmar, Iraq, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Syria and elsewhere, rape is still all too often used as a weapon of war. Accountability will only meaningfully deter sexual violence when the threat of arrest is real.

The International Criminal Court has no ability to execute its arrest warrants and has limited jurisdiction. To make real progress, the international community must ensure accountability in places beyond the reach of international courts and require the arrest of indicted suspects.

Governments must vigorously condemn and prosecute gender-based violence domestically, even in times of peace, to demonstrate that this behavior will not be tolerated. Only then will the promise of the Akayesu judgment be realized.

(Source: aljazeera.com)

Republicans already ran a campaign blasting Democrats as socialists. It didn't work.

With Bernie Sanders leading the Democratic pack and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez turning congressional hearings into viral sensations, Republicans can hardly wait to turn 2020 into a referendum on "socialism."

But the GOP already tried that very strategy in a swing state that was essential to President Donald Trump's 2016 victory — and it flopped.

In Pennsylvania last year, Republicans tagged Democrats up and down the ticket as socialists or sympathetic to socialism: Gov. Tom Wolf, congressional candidates

and state representative hopefuls all got the hammer-and-sickle treatment. The strategy was deliberate and coordinated, emanating from the state's Republican Party chairman, Val DiGiorgio.

But come Election Day, Democrats flipped three House seats and 16 more in the state General Assembly. Wolf easily won reelection, as did Democratic Sen. Bob Casey.

"Their attacks backfired," said Democratic state Rep. Jennifer O'Mara, a first-time candidate who won a GOP-held seat in the Philadelphia suburbs. "They protested an

event I was at and handed out fake \$10,000 bills that said 'In Socialism We Trust' with my face on it. They went really low, and it didn't work."

The election in Pennsylvania serves as a case study of a campaign strategy that could prove critical to Trump's reelection — or undoing — in 2020.

The president and his allies have made it no secret they plan to brand the eventual nominee — no matter who it is — as a socialist on the fringe of the political spectrum. If centrist voters are uncomfortable with Trump,

think about the radical experiment the other side is offering, the theory goes.

■ Democrats' tactic failed

But Democrats say the tactic failed in Pennsylvania partly because it didn't ring true: Many of the party's candidates ran as moderates, they said, and even most progressives who campaigned for office were far from socialists.

Plus, they argue, the GOP has cried wolf for years when it comes to socialism, including by labeling the Affordable Care Act as far left.

U.S has further shot itself in the feet and will bleed out in time

➡ Two years ago the current Secretary of State in the U.S., Mike Pompeo, delivered a speech to the Center for Strategic and International Studies about the vendetta against Assange and Wikileaks. He said: "We have to recognize that we can no longer allow Assange and his colleagues the latitude to use free speech values against us. To give them the space to crush us with misappropriated secrets is a perversion of what our great Constitution stands for."

It ends now." This is a bizarre perversion of thought. The Constitution stands for free speech, period, especially if that free speech is truthful. Simply, if "free speech values" can't be used by honest journalists, in this case Assange, then free speech is NOT a value the U.S. government holds dear any longer.

Indeed, in the past year the Trump Administration has shown no regard for anything but its own dictatorial ambitions. Trump trashed the JCPOA, moved the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, alleged that the Golan Heights belonged to Israel, and even declared that the IRGC is a terrorist organization. All this is illegal, or at least in contravention of international norms. Regarding the latter, the U.S. putting the IRGC on any kind of "terror" list is equivalent to the U.S. Marine Corps being put on a similar



list, as now it should be, because the U.S. military, particularly since invading Iraq in 2003, and with various U.S. sanctions against other countries, especially Iran and now Venezuela, has been engaged in the vilest, most murderous actions around the globe in complete defiance of international laws and proper respect for other countries and cultures. And one must note that to

foreigners, the fact that the entire Iranian Parliament donned IRGC uniforms in a show of support for the IRGC, has in fact been heartening. Nothing ought to bind Iranians together as much as such a vile and dishonest designation by the U.S.

The U.S. in fact, it should be utterly clear, wants nothing more than chaos in the Middle East where NO country, especially a predomi-

nately Islamic one, retains its sovereignty and freedom from becoming a puppet to the U.S. and to the Zionists, who just reelected Bibi Netanyahu to a fifth term as Israel's Prime Minister even though he has been indicted for corruption.

But Iranians must note this: Iran has many more friends than the U.S. does now. Real friends, even among U.S. citizens, who are empathetic to Iran's recent troubles and challenges, including the floods blanketing parts of the country. The U.S. has few if any friends, although it still has cowed, cowardly vassals in Europe especially.

The condemnations of Assange's arrest and possible removal from Britain to the U.S. are worldwide and mounting. Something, somewhere, someday and somehow is going to break the U.S. "Empire of Chaos". Whatever suffering that may exist until then is bad, but Iranians and the good people of the planet can rest assured that the U.S. and the Zionists and even the Saudis are going to lose and fall. Above all, it should be obvious that countries like Iran must stay cool and calm as much as possible and at the same time institute internal policies that amplify democracy and free speech and reduce repression as examples of how best to govern and prosper eventually.

Iran's IRGC leading anti-Terror force in region: U.S. analyst

➡ Today the Zionists routinely and as a matter of policy drop bombs and white phosphorous on schools, hospitals, ambulances, UN installations, and other civilian targets. Their snipers routinely and as a matter of de facto policy lure children within reach of their guns and murder them for sport, as Chris Hedges describes in his article "Gaza Diary."

Iran's IRGC, by contrast, does not intentionally or systematically target civilians. On the contrary, it is the leading regional force fighting against the actual terrorists, the groups that really do intentionally and systematically target civilians, namely, Israel and Daesh. So to be accurate, the State Department should change its statement and designate the IRGC as the world's leading anti-terrorist group.

Tasnim: Later in the day, Iran's Supreme National Security Council in turn designated US forces in West Asia, known as the United States Central Command (CENTCOM), as a terrorist organization. What are your thoughts on this?

Barrett: CENTCOM is not quite as obviously a terrorist organization as Israel and DAESH are. Israel systematically assaults civilians in pursuit of its policy of ethnic cleansing. Massacring and terrorizing civilians is its main mission. Likewise, DAESH systematically assaults and terrorizes civilians. These are "pure" terrorist groups.

CENTCOM's official policy is to try to avoid or at least limit civilian casualties, which it euphemistically calls "collateral damage." But because its main mission is to force entire peoples into subjugation to the US empire, it inevitably finds itself fighting civilians and guerrilla forces that enjoy mass support among civilians. So it ends up murdering far more civilians and becoming a bigger terrorist organization, than even the born-and-bred terrorists like Israel and DAESH.

According to Chomsky and Vltcheck's On Western Ter-

rorism, the US has murdered roughly 60 million people in military and CIA invasions and interventions since World War II. And according to Australian scientist Dr. Gideon Polya, the US has murdered 27 million people in predominantly Muslim countries since the 9/11 false flag event, which was a carefully designed psychological operation whose purpose was to trigger that very wave of mass murder.

So despite CENTCOM's protestations that it doesn't "intentionally" target civilians, it could accurately be called the most murderous and destructive terrorist group on earth.

Tasnim: As you know, Trump announced the decision on the eve of Israel's election. Netanyahu took credit for the move and said, "Thank you, my dear friend, President Donald Trump." Netanyahu tweeted in Hebrew, "for answering another one of my important requests". What do you think?

Barrett: For once in his life, Netanyahu is telling the truth. He really does own Donald Trump, whose entire career has consisted of serving as a front man for Jewish-dominated organized crime.

Prior to the 1990s, organized crime in the US and much of the Western world was controlled by the "boss of bosses," the banker to the mob, Meyer Lansky. The young Donald Trump was anointed in the 1960s by Lansky's New York lieutenant Roy Cohn and set up in the money laundering business. (Trump's hotels and casinos are primarily devoted to money laundering, not hospitality or gambling.)

In the 1990s the Jewish-Russian mob took over America including most of what had previously been Lansky's domain. The best book on this is Red Mafia by Robert Friedman, a brave Jewish investigative journalist who was murdered by the people he exposed. The "Russian" (really Zionist-Israeli) mob's headquarters is the top section of Trump Tower.



Trump's kosher nostra handler is his son-in-law Jared Kushner. Trump's main political/financial backer is Sheldon Adelson, the Las Vegas Godfather who is very close to Netanyahu.

"Russia-gate" was in reality a smokescreen designed to hide Israel-gate. Michael Flynn's real crime was to act as an agent of Israel, not Russia, as he tried to undermine Obama's Middle East policy prior to Trump taking office. In this, Flynn was obviously acting under orders from Trump and his Zionist handler, Kushner.

So yes, Netanyahu is right about his total control of Donald Trump. But if the Israeli and Jewish people think that is good for them in the long term, they are very sadly mistaken. As more and more people in the US and around the world learn the truth about these matters, popular anger is rising. Sooner or later, there will be hell to pay.

What is the common purpose of London and Brussels?

➡ The authorities seem to have sent signals to the European Union on a six-month extension of the talks. Meanwhile, one cannot ignore the role of politicians such as former British Prime Minister Tony Blair (the main

opposition to leaving Europe).

At present, many British citizens are confused about the political situation in this country. This confusion is the result of the joint London and Brussels game. The

"automatic exit from the European Union" option, if the negotiations were not successful, was previously raised by French President Emmanuel Macron but he and other European officials retreated. The secret purpose

of some European officials and most British officials is clear: to hold a referendum again in Britain and stay in the EU! The purposeful game started two years ago and approaches its end point.

Kusai Kedri: Spain upholds Catalans' right to protest as fundamental Human Right

TEHRAN (FNA) — Kusai Kedri, journalist and political commentator, says Madrid violates the Spanish Constitution by suppressing the protests in Catalonia, which he believes has often expressed its demands by means of peaceful demonstrations.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with FNA, Barcelona-based political commentator said Spain's snap election is the blowback of Madrid's policies against pro-independence Catalans, who in return joined Conservatives and voted down the national budget for 2019.

Kusai Kedri, DEA from Sorbonne Nouvelle, is a lecturer at the University of Barcelona, Catalonia. Also, he is a senior broadcast journalist working on a freelance basis for different news networks.

Below is the full text of the interview:

■ There seems to be no end to the protests in Catalonia. Why do Catalans protest?

A: Like any Western democracy, Spain upholds the right to protest as a fundamental human right. The Spanish Constitution of 1978 guarantees the right to peaceful demonstration under article 21. Throughout its troubled history with Spain, Catalonia has often expressed its political, economic, and cultural aspirations and demands by means of social protests.

However, the general strikes staged by pro-independence trade unions with the support of the regional government drew strong criticism in the Spanish mainstream media and among unionist forces which denounced the violent clashes that permeated the protests across the region and they blamed the militant branch of the Catalan pro-independence movement for the disturbance. Besides, the failure of the strikes to block the region and draw large numbers out onto the streets questioned the effectiveness of systematic protesting to force a change in attitude in Madrid.

Those who oppose the strike denounce a deliberate move by pro-independence forces to impose their political views and blame the central government for not taking appropriate action to forbid what they consider as a "political strike" rather



than an "industrial action". They accuse militant CDRs of damaging public property and putting public safety at risk.

■ What is the destiny of the 12 Catalan leaders imprisoned on the grave charges of rebellion and misuse of public funds?

A: Catalonians are divided. The pro-independence camp believes that the right to vote on leaving or staying with Spain is an inherent right upheld by international law and backed by a majority of people in the Spanish northeastern region. They regard the charges against their leaders as baseless, saying the trial is politically motivated while those who oppose Catalonia's split from Spain - and who are often referred to as Unionists or Constitutionals - argue that the 2017 referendum was in breach of Spain's Constitution and threatened to break up the unity and territorial integrity of the Kingdom. They view the declaration of independence of October 27 as no less than a coup d'état.

The trial of the 12 pro-independence leaders is likely to further entrench Catalonia's unionists and separatists in a bitter spat whose underpinnings are shaped by decades of misunderstanding and resentment on both sides of the divide. Spain's Supreme Court, which upheld its competence in trying the case at the expense of Catalonia's high court, will eventually decide between the two blocs. It will have to decide whether the allegations of rebellion, sedition and misuse of public funds were constitutive of crimes against

the country's laws. The verdict which is expected in June or July, will be an unprecedented case in Spanish jurisprudence and will have deep political, and social ramifications. The trial is unlikely to be laid to rest soon because the defense team is planning to take to the case to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg (ECHR).

■ How do you view the current socialist administration's approach to Catalonia independence?

A: When the socialists came to power in June 2018 thanks to the support of Catalan pro-independence parties, they undertook a series of measures aimed at deflating the crisis in Catalonia, particularly after seven years of conservative rule marked by intransigence vis-a-vis the pro-independence movement. Pedro Sanchez opted for what described as a "softer approach" in Catalonia. He relaunched bilateral commissions between central and regional governments which were inactive since 2011, integrated Catalonia's police (Mossos d'Esquadra) into Spain's intelligence agency (CITCO), and increased the region's spending budget. In a symbolic gesture, he acceded to a request from the separatists to relocate 9 jailed leaders awaiting trial to regional prisons and even considered amnesty if they were to be sentenced by Spain's courts for their alleged role in the 2017 referendum.

But the measures were not enough to secure the backing of Catalonia's separatists in the Spanish Congress on the eve of a vote on the socialists' national budget for 2019. They wanted Sanchez to agree to a new referendum on independence in the region and demanded that the charges against their leaders in jail and in exile be dropped. Talks hit a brick wall and the separatists joined the Spanish conservatives to vote down the budget. Pedro Sanchez was forced to call a snap election.

The socialist pre-campaign slogan for Catalonia is "dialogue within the framework of the law". The party of Pedro Sanchez advocates a reform of Catalonia's Statute of Autonomy of 2006 which granted the region stronger autonomy but was later rewritten by Spain's Constitutional Court sparking a stiff opposition from pro-independence parties that culminated in the 2017 referendum.

Assange's arrest means that any journalist can be extradited to U.S. for publishing the truth



By Jake Johnson

The U.S. Justice Department on Thursday indicted WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange for a "computer hacking conspiracy," a charge some corporate talking heads and reporters immediately touted as evidence that journalism is not under threat.

"Indictment of Assange charges him with hacking, not publishing, a crucial difference for First Amendment concerns," tweeted David Lauter, Washington bureau chief for the Los Angeles Times.

But press freedom advocates, Assange's attorneys, WikiLeaks staff, and other critics warned that the exact opposite is the case—and argued Assange's extradition to the U.S. would set a dangerous precedent for journalists everywhere.

"There is no assurance that there would not be additional charges when he is on U.S. soil. And I think that this was an angle in the approach to increase the likelihood of him being extradited. That is obvious."

■ **Kristinn Hrafnsson, WikiLeaks editor-in-chief**

"This precedent means that any journalist can be extradited for prosecution in the United States for having published truthful information about the U.S.," Jen Robinson, Assange's attorney, told reporters during a press conference in London on Thursday.

Speaking alongside Robinson, WikiLeaks editor-in-chief Kristinn Hrafnsson argued the Justice Department's seemingly narrow indictment of Assange for "hacking"—rather than a more sweeping charge for the act of publishing classified information—is an "obvious" ploy to boost the likelihood that the U.K. will extradite him to the United States.

"It is quite obvious the U.S. authorities have picked just one element of what they have been working on for a long time," Hrafnsson said. "There is no assurance that there would not be additional charges when he is on U.S. soil. And I think, and I believe, that this was an angle in the approach to increase the likelihood of him being extradited. That is obvious."

British authorities confirmed that Assange was arrested in part due to "an extradition warrant on behalf of the United States authorities."

The Justice Department alleges in its indictment (pdf) that Assange conspired with U.S. Army whistleblower Chelsea Manning to hack into a Pentagon computer network.

The indictment also states that Assange "encouraged Manning to provide information and records" from U.S. agencies, worked to "conceal Manning as the source of the disclosure," and used an encrypted chat service to "collaborate" on the release of classified information related to Guantanamo Bay as well as U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"The United States should finally seek to come to terms with the war crimes in Iraq that it has committed rather than attack and imprison those who sought to expose the truth of it."

■ **Center for Constitutional Rights**

In a statement, Trevor Timm, executive director of the Freedom of the Press Foundation, noted that while the Justice Department "has so far not attempted to explicitly declare the act of publishing illegal, a core part of its argument would criminalize many common journalist-source interactions that reporters rely on all the time."

"Requesting more documents from a source, using an encrypted chat messenger, or trying to keep a source's identity anonymous are not crimes; they are vital to the journalistic process," added Timm. "Whether or not you like Assange, the charge against him is a serious press freedom threat and should be vigorously protested by all those who care about the First Amendment."

The Intercept's Micah Lee—an Assange critic—echoed Timm's warning:

Despite these ominous warnings from press freedom advocates, many reporters and cable news pundits continued to loudly parrot the Trump Justice Department's line, claiming the indictment is not a threat to journalism.

"The indictment makes it clear that this has nothing to do with the publishing of materials," tweeted NBC News journalist Tom Winter.

Glenn Greenwald, co-founder of The Intercept, was quick to push back.

"I'm not surprised to see NBC journalists uniting behind Trump DOJ to justify the criminalization of WikiLeaks—NBC is fully aligned with the CIA/NSA long obsessed with destroying [WikiLeaks]—but this tweet is false: the indictment also charges Assange with encouraging his source," Greenwald tweeted.

In a statement, the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) decried Assange's arrest and possible extradition to the U.S. "a worrying step on the slippery slope to punishing any journalist the Trump administration chooses to deride as 'fake news.'"

"The arrest sets a dangerous precedent that could extend to other media organizations such as the New York Times, particularly under a vindictive and reckless administration," CCR said. "The United States should finally seek to come to terms with the war crimes in Iraq that it has committed rather than attack and imprison those who sought to expose the truth of it."

In a column late Thursday for the Washington Post, veteran journalist and editor Margaret Sullivan warned her industry colleagues against ignoring the principles this case calls into question. "Before we turn our backs on Assange," Sullivan wrote, "we ought to think deeply about what's at stake."

While "casting him to the wolves as nothing but a narcissistic, bad actor—'not like us,' of course—may seem tempting," she added, the consequences could be dire.

"The gray area here is bigger than it looks," she concluded, "and so are the dangers to traditional journalism and the public interest."

And HuffPost journalist Ashley Feinberg put it this way: "Assange is a piece of shit which is exactly why this is the perfect case for [the U.S. government] to set a very dangerous precedent with." (Source: www.juancole.com)

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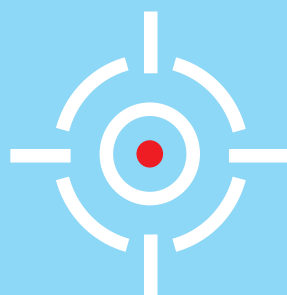
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The Tehran Times new pocket-sized glossary is now available on the market. The reader-friendly is a rich source of the most common journalistic terminology collected by the daily's retired staff.

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

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Why a balanced diet beats nutritional supplements

Go to any convenience store and you'll find rows upon rows of dietary supplements.

That's because vitamin and mineral use has skyrocketed over the past decade as the nation has experienced a massive health and wellness boom.

More than 75 percent of adults in the United States currently take health supplements, according to a survey from the Council of Responsible Nutrition (CRN). It found 87 percent trust the safety, quality, and effectiveness of dietary supplements.

However, up until recently, researchers have been unsure as to what kind of health benefits most dietary supplements provide, if any.

Now, new research suggests that nutrients from supplements do little to lower your risk for death.

On the other hand, nutrients sourced from foods appear to significantly reduce your risk for death, according to the study, which was published in *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

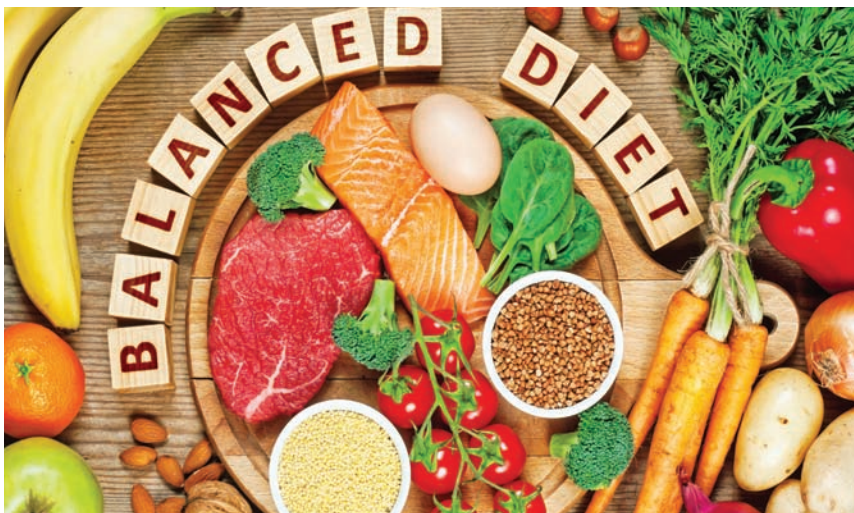
"The main takeaways of this and similar studies are that healthy, whole foods should always be the first place we turn to when we want to obtain a balanced diet with optimal nutrient levels," Suzanne Dixon, a registered dietitian with The Mesothelioma Center in Orlando, Florida, told *Healthline*.

"This doesn't mean supplements are always harmful, but it does suggest people should carefully consider whether they need dietary supplements before adding them into their daily routine," she said.

■ Nutrients from food, not supplements, lowers risk for death

To measure the benefits and harms of dietary supplements, researchers from the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University studied the diets of more than 27,000 U.S. adults aged 20 and older.

The dietary data was pulled from six two-year cycles of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, which calculated participants' daily supplement doses



along with their dietary intake of nutrients from foods.

The research team then looked at death outcomes for each participant through the National Death Index.

The team found that adequate intakes of vitamin K and magnesium from food sources, not supplements, were associated with a lower risk of death.

They also discovered those with higher intakes of vitamin K, magnesium, and zinc — again, from nutrients in foods, not supplements — had a lower risk of death from cardiovascular disease.

Additionally, excess calcium intake was associated with a higher risk of death from cancer in participants who took supplemental doses of at least 1,000 milligrams (mg) per day. There was no association between cancer and calcium intake from foods.

"Our results support the idea that, while supplement use contributes to an increased level of total nutrient intake, there are beneficial associations with nutrients from foods that aren't seen with supplements," Dr. Fang Fang Zhang, an associate professor at Friedman School and the senior and corresponding

author on the study, said in a statement.

"This study also confirms the importance of identifying the nutrient source when evaluating mortality outcomes," she said.

■ The supplement industry is largely unregulated by the FDA

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has a very limited role in supplement regulation.

Under the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act (DSHEA), the FDA isn't authorized to review dietary supplements for safety and effectiveness before they go to market.

Rather, the FDA's role in monitoring supplements is more reactionary, only pulling a supplement from shelves or curtailing use of it once a significant number of people report adverse side effects from the product, says Dixon.

"In other words, the burden of proof that a supplement may cause harm lies with the consumer, not the FDA," Dixon noted.

Furthermore, DSHEA allows certain language on supplement packaging labels that many consumers find confusing, such as "supports immune health" or "works better

than a prescription drug." According to the FDA, if a claim seems too good to be true, it probably is.

"All of this has led to an environment in which many people place more faith in dietary supplement safety and efficacy than is warranted by available research evidence," Dixon said.

■ Supplements shouldn't replace a well-balanced diet

In general, our diets should be our main source for vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants, health experts believe.

"Dietary supplements can't compensate for a poor diet," said Dr. Jonathan Stegall, an integrative oncologist and medical director of The Center for Advanced Medicine.

"Dietary supplements should be reserved for special circumstances to address measurable deficiencies within the body and not a source for mega-dosing in an attempt to somehow create health," he said.

Our bodies are designed to absorb and use nutrients as they naturally occur in foods, says Dixon. When we take in high levels of nutrients from dietary supplements, our vitamins and minerals start to compete for absorption, which can eventually lead to dangerous nutrient imbalances.

Rather than load up on dietary supplements, most health experts recommend following a healthy, plant-based diet rich in vegetables, fruits, legumes, and grains.

If you're considering taking a supplement, be sure to first consult your doctor. They can determine if the supplement would be safe and helpful for you.

■ The bottom line

A new study from Tufts University found that nutrients from food, not supplements, are linked to a lower risk of death.

In fact, excess calcium intake from supplements increased people's risk of death from cancer. Health experts agree that while not all supplements are harmful, a well-balanced, healthy diet is the best way to get your nutrients.

(Source: *healthline.com*)

Electric shocks delivered to the brain restore youthful memory to older adults, experiment shows

Weak electric shocks applied to the brain can be used to reverse decades of age-related memory decline in older people, if only for a limited time.

Scientists exploring memory loss found that the poor performance seen in the elderly was linked to faulty circuits in the most sophisticated parts of the brain.

They discovered that by stimulating these regions with an electrical current they could return mental abilities to pensioners they had not enjoyed since their twenties.

While the researchers only measured the effects of their technique for 50 minutes after the current was applied, they said it was evidence that a decline in mental capacity need not be inevitable. "Negative age-related changes are not unchangeable — we can bring back the more superior working memory function you had when you were much younger," said Dr Robert Reinhart of Boston University, who led the study.

Dr Reinhart said that while old age brings wisdom, it is also associated with the loss of working memory, "the sketch pad of the mind", which we rely on to retain information and solve problems.

"It's essentially where consciousness lives," he said.

With his colleague John Nguyen, Dr Reinhart traced the decline in this ability to circuits in the neocortex and frontal lobes becoming "disconnected" in the brain.

Using caps with electrodes to deliver mild currents in a non-invasive way, they managed to reconnect these circuits in a group of people aged between 60 and 76.

In a paper published in the journal *Nature Neuroscience*, the pair described how they stimulated the brains of young and older people, and tested their abilities in a simple memory task.

They found around half an hour of brain stimulation improved the accuracy of the 42 older people so their results resembled those of the group aged 20 to 29.

With a rapidly ageing global population and few treatment options available for people with memory loss and dementia, experts welcomed the team's findings as a key development in the field.

Dr Sven Braeutigam from the University of Oxford, who was not involved in the research, said it was "important early stage work that may well stimulate fruitful research into effective treatments of age-related decline of human cognitive function".

However, there were also warnings that much more work would need to be undertaken before this technique could be rolled out in clinics. The scientists did not test their subjects' abilities beyond the initial testing session, so the long-term effects remain elusive.



"There is no indication that any beneficial effects of stimulation persist beyond the experimental session," said Professor Dorothy Bishop, also from the University of Oxford.

While the work is still in its early days, Dr Reinhart said he was intrigued to see where it would lead, and noted that companies are already working to bring this kind of technology to the market.

(Source: *The Independent*)

How bad will your allergies be this spring?

Allergy season is here even if you don't see lots of pollen or feel the warm spring air.

In Atlanta and Philadelphia, the amount of tree pollen in the area has reached very high levels, according to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI).

And it's not just the eastern side of the country that's having pollen issues. Las Vegas has a high concentration of tree and weed pollen despite being in the desert.

So what's affects allergy season? In part your winter weather. The weather throughout the year can impact the severity of allergens.

"Milder winters are continuing to affect spring allergies. Trees are able to pollinate earlier and for longer periods, extending the allergy season by several weeks," Kenneth Mendez, president and CEO of the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, told *Healthline*.

Climbing temperatures mean that plants can start blooming earlier and all at once after a harsh winter.

"This year's winter and early spring weather have been warmer than average," said Stacey Galowitz, DO, a board-certified allergist at ENT & Allergy Associates of Somerset in New Jersey.

Typically the first allergen in the spring is the tree pollen, followed by grass pollen in the late spring and early summer, and then weed pollen in the fall, Galowitz explained.



Tree pollen typically begins in the late winter (end of February/early March) and can last until late spring (end of June). The month of May is particularly troublesome for people as grass pollen begins to peak while tree pollen is concurrently high.

Pollen levels appear to be rising across the globe, and climate change affects the weather in general, which in turn, affects the allergy season, she noted.

A long winter can also mean that trees bloom later, but the start of spring means there can be a sudden influx of pollen all at once, as is predicted for the Midwest and

Northeast according to Accuweather.

■ Preventing pollen

Dr. Do-Yeon Cho, an assistant professor of otolaryngology at University of Alabama at Birmingham said it's important to know what you're allergic to in order to quell symptoms. Consult an allergist or ear, nose, and throat specialist to identify specific allergens, then you can work to treat them.

A few ways to prevent pollen exposure include limiting outdoor exposure during times when pollen counts are high. Quality air filters in your home can also help, such as high-efficiency particulate absorbance (HEPA) filters.

Cleaning your home, including washing your bedding in hot soapy water and drying the linens indoors, are also ways to reduce pollen in your home.

When you do go outside and return indoors, change your clothes to lower the chance of pollen on the fabric spreading indoors.

Starting allergy medication now — even if you're not experiencing symptoms but know you will — is a good step. It can prevent your body from releasing chemicals including histamines that cause allergic symptoms, Cho said in a statement.

■ Treating allergies

"Unfortunately there aren't many new ways to get relief from allergies," Galowitz said.

While there are many options to treat allergies — such as antihistamines, nasal steroid sprays, and antihistamine nasal sprays — what remains the gold standard for allergy sufferers is allergy shots or allergen immunotherapy. The shots work by exposing the immune system to low doses of allergens.

"Certain pollens, such as grass and ragweed pollen, can be treated with oral medications, but allergy shots are more effective for tree pollen," she added.

Nasal steroids, which are available over the counter, are the best medication when used regularly in pollen season, Galowitz said.

"This is best used when started before the pollen season, around the first of March," she noted.

Nasal steroids can be used alone or in combination with oral non-sedating antihistamines. Ketotifen eye drops are also available over the counter to treat eye-related symptoms, but first discuss with an allergist which medication or combination is best for you.

Another way to treat allergies without or in combination with medication is to rinse nasal passages with saline. This directly flushes mucus and allergens out of the nose, and may provide some relief.

(Source: *healthline.com*)

Researchers look at the link between gut bacteria and autism

New research looks at the importance of gut bacteria in autism.

The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke explain that "[a]utism spectrum disorder (ASD) refers to a group of complex neurodevelopment disorders characterized by repetitive and characteristic patterns of behavior and difficulties with social communication and interaction."

They also point out that specialists use the term "spectrum," as autism is different in different individuals.

The condition can incorporate a "wide range of symptoms, skills, and levels of disability in functioning."

Most people with autism receive the diagnosis during childhood and, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), around 1 in 59 children receive this diagnosis.

Studies involving autistic adult participants and their parents suggest that people on the spectrum can sometimes have a poorer quality of life. However, the participants and their parents have reported various factors that contribute to these discrepancies in the quality of life. Autistic adults have said that being in stressful situations and experiencing abuse such as bullying had the greatest impact on their well-being. Meanwhile, their parents have focused on factors such as their children's level of independence on a daily basis, as well as their level of physical health.

The CDC note that for those on the spectrum who experience issues such as depression, seizures, and lack of focus, there are drugs available that could help.

People on the autistic spectrum may also experience sensory sensitivity with different degrees of severity, engage in repetitive behaviors, and communicate differently on an interpersonal level.

According to the CDC, people who wish to minimize the effects of some of these characteristics can try different therapies, including speech, sensory integration, and occupational therapy.

■ Autism and the gut microbiome

Research has also found that autistic children often experience chronic gastrointestinal problems a lot more frequently than children without autism.

This has led scientists from Arizona State University in Tempe to explore whether a fairly new form of therapy — microbiota transfer therapy (MTT) — can help solve gastrointestinal issues in autistic children. Also, they wanted to see whether this intervention could affect other autism markers.

MTT involves collecting, processing, and freezing the fecal material of healthy people, and then administering it — orally or rectally — to the person receiving the treatment. Thus, the healthy bacteria should re-establish a balance in the gut microbiome of the person experiencing gastrointestinal problems.

Researchers Dr. Rosa Krajmalnik-Brown and James Adams first ran a clinical trial to test this method a few years ago, and their results — published in 2017 in the journal *Microbiome* — suggested that MTT "appears to be a promising approach to alter the gut microbiome and improve [gastrointestinal] and behavioral symptoms of ASD."

As for why children with autism have gastrointestinal problems, and why MTT seems to be effective in treating these, Krajmalnik-Brown says, "Kids with autism are lacking important beneficial bacteria, and have fewer options in the bacterial menu of important functions that bacteria provide to the gut than typically developing kids." However, the initial clinical trial only examined the effects of MTT 8 weeks after the treatment. Now, the researchers have conducted a follow-up study to see whether the new therapy would be as effective 2 years after its administration.

The study — the findings of which now appear in the journal *Nature* — involved the same 18 autistic children who participated in the former clinical trial.

The researchers received the parents' and children's written consent before enrolling the latter as participants in the new trial.

■ Researchers satisfied with trial results

The researchers explain that at the start of the study, autistic children had poorer bacterial diversity in the gut, compared with neurotypical children with healthy and balanced microbiota.

More specifically, two beneficial bacterial strands — *Bifidobacteria* and *Prevotella* — were lacking in the microbiota of children on the spectrum.

Following the initial MTT intervention, the autistic children experienced more gut bacterial diversity, including increased levels of *Bifidobacteria* and *Prevotella*. In the new clinical trial, which measured bacterial diversity in the gut after 2 years from the intervention, the children had even more bacterial diversity and a steady presence of healthful bacteria.

As for the health effects, the children saw a 58 percent decline in symptoms tied to gastrointestinal problems. Also, the authors write that the children involved in this study showed "a slow but steady improvement in core ASD symptoms," with a 45 percent improvement in measurements related to language, social interaction, and behavior.

According to Dr. Thomas Borody, the gastroenterologist who pioneered MTT, "This is a world-first discovery that when we treated the gut bacteria in these children during our clinical trial 2 years ago to reset their microbiome with [fecal microbiota transplant], positive results are still continuing to be improving 2 years from the original treatments."

"I," adds Dr. Borody, "would call it the highest improvement in a cohort that anyone has achieved for autism symptoms."

■ Issues for consideration

Despite its success, the research does have limitations and ethical questions. As the study authors themselves admit, the results are based on a very small clinical trial with only 18 participants. So, further research is needed to replicate the findings.

"Drs. Krajmalnik-Brown, Kang, and I are excited about the results, but we want to caution the public that we need larger clinical trials for this to become an FDA-approved treatment," notes Adams. Also, although Arizona State University sponsored the clinical trial, some of the authors declare that they received research grants from the Finch Therapeutics Group, a private company that invests in clinical trials focused on developing microbial therapies. Aside from these research-related issues, there are also ethical issues present — most prominently, the question as to whether the behavioral aspects of ASD are "symptoms" or a natural feature of neurodiversity.

Many members of the autistic community would argue for the latter. As the Autistic Self Advocacy Network state in relation to their position about clinical therapy and medical care in autism: "Healthcare disparities need to be remedied and beneficial therapies made more widely available; however, the use of scientifically unproven treatments and those that focus on normalization rather than teaching useful skills should be discouraged."

In the future, researchers should assess, first and foremost, the needs of the autistic community and design studies that address these needs and concerns.

(Source: *Medical Today*)

Social media created over 532,000 contents on 'flood' in Persian: data

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — Over 532,000 contents about 'flood' were created in Persian language from March 15 to April 8 on Instagram, Telegram and Twitter, an Iranian big data company revealed, Mehr reported on Wednesday. Extreme rainfall which began on March 19 has led to flooding in 28 out of 31 provinces affecting 42,269 129 inhabitants in 253 cities and causing widespread damage to municipal facilities, including health centers and hospitals.



According to data mining, the statistics are according to contents in which, words like 'Golestan flood', 'Shiraz flood', 'Lorestan flood' and 'Khuzestan flood'.

Telegram has the biggest share, 40 percent, while Instagram enjoys 34 percent and 26 percent goes to Twitter.

Noteworthy that Twitter has two million Persian language subscribers, however, it is considered as one the main social media in which, the news and information about the recent floods and survivors go viral.

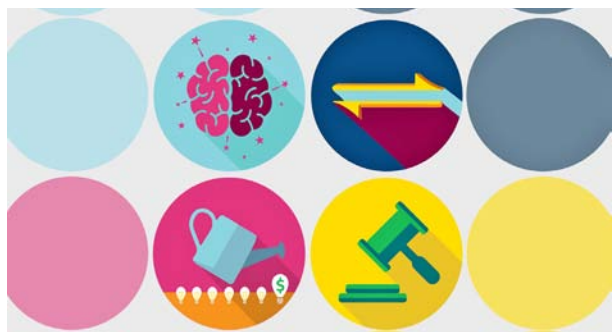
Twitter and Instagram are officially blocked in Iran.

Golestan province was on the top list with 35 percent, Fars province with 27 percent is the second, the third one was Lorestan province with 23 percent and Khuzestan province has 15 percent share of the contents.

Talented individuals can create entrepreneurship ecosystem: official

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — Talented individuals can create entrepreneurship ecosystem to develop the country, an official with the National Elites Foundation said, IRNA reported on Wednesday.

"We should accept that our economy is oil-based and is far away from knowledge-based economy," Mohammad Saleh Tork-estani said.



An entrepreneurship ecosystem would be a great help to overcome dysfunctional systems, he added.

He said that the number of papers and inventions are not necessary factors to call someone a talented person.

Elites are those who want to do a favor for the society and pave the way for the national development, he said.

The foundation aims to support talented persons and manage human resources, he added.

Two out of three hotels accidentally leak guests' personal data

Two out of three hotel websites inadvertently leak guests' booking details and personal data to third-party sites, including advertisers and analytics companies, according to research released by Symantec Corp on Wednesday.

The study, which looked at more than 1,500 hotel websites in 54 countries that ranged from two-star to five-star properties, comes several months after Marriott International disclosed one of the worst data breaches in history.

Symantec said Marriott was not included in the study.

Compromised personal information includes full names, email addresses, credit card details and passport numbers of guests that could be used by cybercriminals who are increasingly interested in the movements of influential business professionals and government employees, Symantec said.

"While it's no secret that advertisers are tracking users' browsing habits, in this case, the information shared could allow these third-party services to log into a reservation, view personal details and even cancel the booking altogether," said Candid Wueest, the primary researcher on the study.

The research showed compromises usually occur when a hotel site sends confirmation emails with a link that has direct booking information. The reference code attached to the link could be shared with more than 30 different service providers, including social networks, search engines and advertising and analytics services.

Wueest said 25 percent of data privacy officers at the affected hotel sites did not reply to Symantec within six weeks when notified of the issue, and those who did took an average of 10 days to respond.

"Some admitted that they are still updating their systems to be fully GDPR-compliant," Wueest said, referring to Europe's new privacy law, or the General Data Protection Regulation, which took effect about a year ago and has strict guidelines on how organizations should deal with data leakage.

(Source: reuters.com)

Iran wins prize at WSIS Forum 2019

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — Iran won the prize in e-science section of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Forum 2019, which is currently underway in Geneva, Switzerland, IRNA reported.

Iran National Research and Education Network (SHOA) was selected from six nominees in the section during a ceremony on Tuesday.

Eighteen WSIS prizes were awarded, recognized successful initiatives by governments, private sector actors, civil society members and partnerships between all stakeholders. The winners were awarded for their tremendous efforts and achievements on implementation of WSIS outcomes.

"Yes, today the #WSIS 2019 announced the winners. Iran National Research and Education Network was selected amongst six nominees! The happiness of my colleagues and the faces of [representatives] of those countries who imposed sanctions on Iran are worth watching," Information and Communication Technology Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi who travelled to Geneva to attend the event, wrote on his Twitter account.

On the WSIS Forum 2018 website, SHOA is described as a Public-private partnership (P.P.P.) project between private sector, government and academia. As an Iranian National Research and Education Network



Eighteen WSIS prizes were awarded, recognized successful initiatives by governments, private sector actors, civil society members and partnerships between all stakeholders.

(NREN), it provides specialized internet service provider dedicated to supporting the needs of the research and education

communities within a country.

It is usually distinguished by support for a high-speed backbone network, often

Iran, Armenia discuss ways to expand ICT ties



Iran's ICT Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi (l) shakes hand with his Armenian counterpart Hakob Arshakyan

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — Iran's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi and his Armenian counterpart Hakob Arshakyan discussed expansion of ICT cooperation between the two countries during a meeting on Wednesday, Mehr reported.

The meeting was held on the sidelines of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Forum 2019, which is currently underway in Geneva, Switzerland.

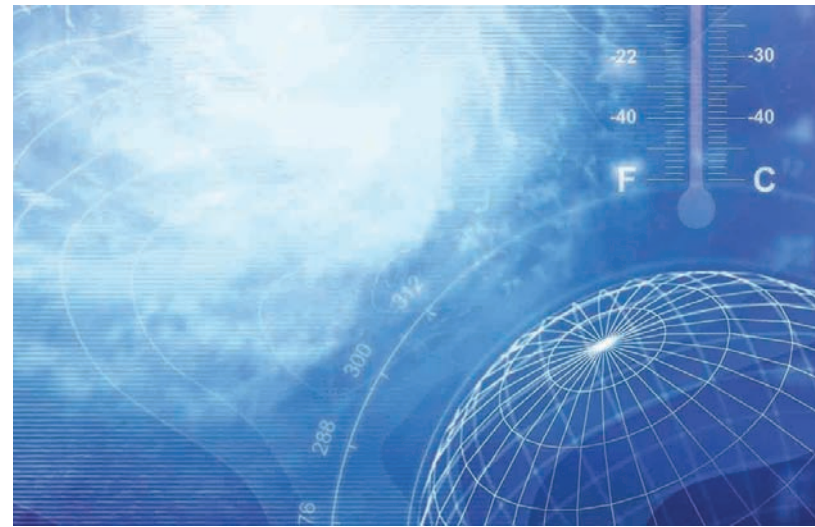
They discussed ICT fields including

telecommunication, international network, expansion of startups and scientific achievements.

In March, Iran's Telecommunication Infrastructure Company and companies from Armenia and Qatar signed an agreement for transit of data from the Persian Gulf to the Europe.

WSIS celebrated its 10th anniversary of the establishment of WSIS Forum from April 8 to 12, under the theme "Information and Communication Technologies for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals".

Startups pave way for meteorological innovation: VP



TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — Startups and knowledge-based companies pave the way for technologies and innovation in the field of meteorology, the vice president for science and technology announced, Mehr reported on Thursday.

Sourena Sattari said that the vice presidency supports software and infrastructure for startups and knowledge-based companies to meet the technological demands of the country.

He pointed to the cutting-edge meteorological projects underway by the knowledge-based companies saying

that they are ready to provide hardware and software services based on modern technologies.

The organizations should trust startups and provide opportunities for them to expand their markets, he said.

He said that the vice presidency supports the procedure of obtaining standards for the startups and knowledge-based companies.

The research centers should guide the scholars to undertake projects through knowledge-based companies, he added.

The vice presidency supports knowledge-based companies to provide industrial products, he concluded.

Iran eyeing global cooperation in disaster management

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — Iran's global cooperation [in disaster management] should be continued and the Iranian satellites would be a great help in the future, the information and communication technology (ICT) minister wrote on his Twitter account.

Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi continued that the diplomacy is fruitful.

Extreme rainfall which began on 19 March has led to flooding in 28 out of 31 provinces affecting 42,269 129 inhabitants in 253 cities and causing widespread damage to municipal facilities, including health centers

and hospitals.

"I thank the European Commission and the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response, UN-SPIDER for their cooperation in satellite monitoring of flood-stricken regions," his tweet reads.

In 17 of the most severely affected provinces major damage to the health infrastructure has been reported, with 577 health houses, 52 health centers, 201 comprehensive health centers, 70 emergency medical services stations, 24 clinics and 43 hospitals affected.

Blockchain could be used by at least 50% of all companies within three years

Ten years after the idea of blockchain was conceived, the technology that underpins cryptocurrencies is starting to be used by large enterprises as a secure way to track goods. But mass utilization is still years away, and it won't be for every company, said a panel of blockchain executives.

"My projection is that between 50% and 60% of companies will use blockchain in the next few years," said Frank Xiong, Oracle's group vice president of blockchain product development at the Forbes CIO Summit in Half Moon Bay, California, Monday.

The enterprise software maker has more than 100 customers using its blockchain platform to track items for purposes such as ensuring the Italian olive oil you're buying was really made in Italy and that a manufacturer isn't buying minerals that support armed conflicts. But it's not a

magic bullet. "We're past the stage that blockchain can cure everything, so people are becoming more realistic about what's good for their business model," he said.

Blockchain is a kind of shared database that allows users to share identical copies of information on many computers. In the past few years, it's gone from largely supporting virtual currencies like bitcoin to a tool used by companies to more closely and accurately track products or private information that pass through many hands.

Despite the buzz, it is still in the early stages of uptake. Large technology companies like IBM, shipping giant Maersk and Oracle, have formed consortia around their blockchains, and many efforts are still in the pilot stage. Others, such as \$3 billion logistics startup Flexport, say they're waiting for global standards before they jump in.



In deciding whether to use blockchain, companies should do a pain point assessment, two executives said. Like any venture, they should figure out if it's worth the cost.

"At the end of the day blockchain makes multipart collaboration more efficient, whether it's having a consortium to track data on counterfeit getting into supply chains, or how much inventory you need to create a better forecast," said Ted Kim, vice president in blockchain at Samsung SDS, a unit of the electronics manufacturer

that provides IT services, including a pilot projects to track cargo from Korea to Europe using blockchain. He expects in three years, 20% of companies will be using blockchain. "There is tangible ROI in the blockchain."

Yet even in a world where blockchain is much more widespread, some aspects may resemble today's commerce system more than blockchain's evangelists forecast.

"People are predicting that the blockchain will allow people to be decentralized, that everyone will have distributed trusted networks," said Daniel Jones, CEO of Bext360, a software startup that keeps track of commodities by identifying and making an electronic token. "I don't think that's possible—I think what we're going to see is companies vertically integrating, the Amazons of the world are going to continue to vertically integrate to the farm level."

(Source: forbes.com)

Researchers observe formation of a magnetar 6.5 billion light years away

A University of Arkansas researcher is part of a team of astronomers who have identified an outburst of X-ray emission from a galaxy approximately 6.5 billion light years away, which is consistent with the merger of two neutron stars to form a magnetar — a large neutron star with an extremely powerful magnetic field.

Based on this observation, the researchers were able to calculate that mergers like this happen roughly 20 times per year in each region of a billion light years cubed.

The research team, which includes Bret Lehmer, assistant professor of physics at the University of Arkansas, analyzed data from the Chandra X-ray Observatory, NASA's flagship X-ray telescope.

The Chandra Deep Field-South survey includes more than 100 X-ray observations of a single area of the sky over a period of more than 16 years to collect information about galaxies throughout the universe.

Lehmer, who has worked with the observatory for 15 years, collaborated with colleagues in China, Chile and the Netherlands, and at Pennsylvania State University and the University of Nevada. The study was published in Nature.

■ A neutron star

A neutron star is a small, very dense star, averaging around 12 miles in diameter. Neutron stars are formed by the collapse of a star massive enough to produce a supernova, but



not massive enough to become a black hole. When two neutron stars merge to become a magnetar, the resulting magnetic field is 10 trillion times stronger than a kitchen magnet.

"Neutron stars are mysterious because

the matter in them is so extremely dense and unlike anything reproducible in a laboratory," Lehmer explained. "We do not yet have a good understanding of the physical state of the matter in neutron stars. Mergers involving neutron stars produce lots of unique

A previous discovery of two neutron stars merging, which used gravitational waves and gamma rays to make the observation, gave astronomers new insight into these objects.

data that gives us clues about the nature of neutron stars themselves and what happens when they collide."

A previous discovery of two neutron stars merging, which used gravitational waves and gamma rays to make the observation, gave astronomers new insight into these objects.

■ X-ray data

The research team used this new information to look for patterns in Chandra Observatory's X-ray data that were consistent with what they learned about merging neutron stars.

The researchers found an outburst of X-rays in the data from the Chandra Deep Field-South survey. After ruling out other possible sources of the X-rays, they determined the signals came from the process of two neutron stars forming a magnetar.

A "key piece of evidence is how the signal changed over time," said Lehmer. "It had a bright phase that plateaued and then dropped off in a very specific way. That is exactly what you'd expect from a magnetar that is rapidly losing its magnetic field through radiation."

Similar calculations about the rate of neutron star mergers have been made based on the mergers detected by gravitational waves and gamma rays, strengthening the case for using X-ray data to find such exotic merger events in the universe.

(Source: phys.org)

In a breakthrough research scientists cool water to -263° C without freezing it

Conventional wisdom and the ice-cold instincts of Mortal Kombat's Sub-Zero tell us that water freezes at 0° C (32° F), but what if you add some creative science to the mix?

Researchers in Switzerland have figured out a way to reduce the temperature of water to a very cool -263° C (-441.4° F) without freezing it, opening up some interesting possibilities around how we study molecular structures at extreme temperatures.

Water turns to ice as it is cooled to zero degrees and molecules on the surface begin to crystallize and turn to ice, which spreads to nearby molecules and continues on until the whole body of water is frozen solid.

In this form, the water molecules are organized in a 3D lattice structure which is very different to the unorganized state of regular water molecules, a characteristic that allows it to flow freely.

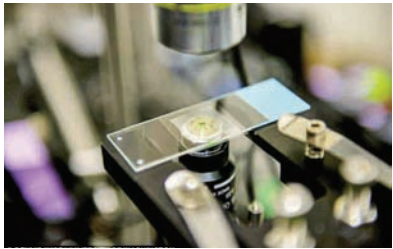
So what if water could be cooled to below freezing temperatures without forming the icy crystals that give it this solidity? Physicists and chemists at ETH Zurich and the University of Zurich have figured out a new way of doing this, and it centers on a new kind of biological matter they've called lipidic mesophase.

■ Natural fat molecules

Within it are molecules that behave in much as the same way as natural fat molecules, or lipids, and will take it upon themselves to gather and self-assemble into membranes.

Those membranes then form a network of microscopic channels less than a nanometer across, and unfortunately for the would-be ice crystals, there's simply no room for them to form. This means that as water is added to the structure, it remains in its disorderly, flowing state even when cooled to extreme temperatures.

To see how far they could take things, the researchers took some liquid helium and cooled their lipidic mesophase structure to a chilly -263° C, which they note is just 10° C above absolute zero, with no sign of those dastardly ice crystals. This has ramifications beyond simply



being a cool science experiment, as it could help us gain new understanding of how matter behaves at such extreme temperatures.

"In the normal freezing process, when ice crystals form they usually damage and destroy membranes and crucial large biomolecules, which prevents us from determining their structure and function when they interact with lipid membranes," explains Professor Raffaele Mezenga from the Laboratory of Food & Soft Materials at ETH Zurich.

■ A new supercooling technique

This is the very dilemma that motivated a similar line of research at the Massachusetts General Hospital last year, where scientists came up with a new supercooling technique that sealed the surface of water with a hydrocarbon-based oil. This prevented the water meeting air, which is where the first ice crystals form, and allowed them to store a sample of liquid water at -20° C (-4° F).

This kind of work opens up important possibilities for other researchers seeking to understand the structures and functions of natural molecules in different ways. It could also find uses in scenarios where it would be useful to prevent water from freezing, with airport runways one example to spring to mind.

"But our work wasn't aimed at exotic applications," Mezenga says. "Our main focus was to give researchers a new tool to facilitate the study of molecular structures at low temperature without ice-interfering crystals, and ultimately to understand how two main components of life, i.e. water and lipids, interact under extreme conditions of temperature and geometrical confinement."

(Source: newatlas.com)

World's fastest hydrogen sensor could pave the way for clean hydrogen energy

Hydrogen is a clean and renewable energy carrier that can power vehicles, with water as the only emission. Unfortunately, hydrogen gas is highly flammable when mixed with air, so very efficient and effective sensors are needed.

Now, researchers from Chalmers University of Technology, Sweden, present the first hydrogen sensors ever to meet the future performance targets for use in hydrogen powered vehicles.

The researchers' ground-breaking results were recently published in the prestigious scientific journal Nature Materials. The discovery is an optical nanosensor encapsulated in a plastic material. The sensor works based on an optical phenomenon - a plasmon - which occurs when metal nanoparticles are illuminated and capture visible light.

The sensor simply changes color when the amount of hydrogen in the environment changes.

The plastic around the tiny sensor is not just for protection, but functions as a key component. It increases the sensor's response time by accelerating the uptake of the hydrogen gas molecules into the metal particles where they can be detected.

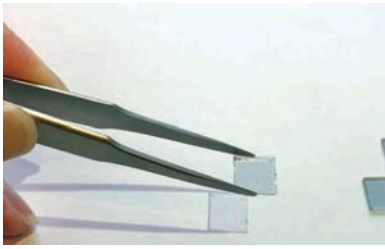
■ An effective barrier to environment

At the same time, the plastic acts as an effective barrier to the environment, preventing any other molecules from entering and deactivating the sensor.

The sensor can therefore work both highly efficiently and undisturbed, enabling it to meet the rigorous demands of the automotive industry - to be capable of detecting 0.1 percent hydrogen in the air in less than a second.

"We have not only developed the world's fastest hydrogen sensor, but also a sensor that is stable over time and does not deactivate. Unlike today's hydrogen sensors, our solution does not need to be recalibrated as often, as it is protected by the plastic," says Ferry Nugroho, a researcher at the Department of Physics at Chalmers.

It was during his time as a Ph.D. student that Ferry Nugroho and his supervisor Christoph Langhammer realised that they were on to something big. After reading a scientific article stating that no one had yet



succeeded in achieving the strict response time requirements imposed on hydrogen sensors for future hydrogen cars, they tested their own sensor. They realised that they were only one second from the target - without even trying to optimize it.

The plastic, originally intended primarily as a barrier, did the job better than they could have imagined, by also making the sensor faster. The discovery led to an intense period of experimental and theoretical work.

"In that situation, there was no stopping us. We wanted to find the ultimate combination of nanoparticles and plastic, understand how they worked together and what made it so fast. Our hard work yielded results. Within just a few months, we achieved the required response time as well as the basic theoretical understanding of what facilitates it," says Ferry Nugroho.

■ A challenging in many ways

Detecting hydrogen is challenging in many ways. The gas is invisible and odorless, but volatile and extremely flammable. It requires only four percent hydrogen in the air to produce oxyhydrogen gas, sometimes known as knallgas, which ignites at the smallest spark.

In order for hydrogen cars and the associated infrastructure of the future to be sufficiently safe, it must therefore be possible to detect extremely small amounts of hydrogen in the air. The sensors need to be quick enough that leaks can be rapidly detected before a fire occurs.

"It feels great to be presenting a sensor that can hopefully be a part of a major breakthrough for hydrogen-powered vehicles. The interest we see in the fuel cell industry is inspiring," says Christoph Langhammer, Professor at Chalmers Department of Physics.

(Source: eurekalert.org)

Researchers say unusual phenomenon in clouds triggers lightning flash

In a first-of-its-kind observation, researchers have documented a unique event that occurs in clouds before a lightning flash happens. Their observation, called 'fast negative breakdown,' documents a new possible way for lightning to form and is the opposite of the current scientific view of how air carries electricity in thunderstorms.

The lightning seen here starts out deep inside the cloud where scientists continue to study its first moments. In their study, UNH researchers observed a possible new way that lightning forms called "fast negative breakdown."

In a first-of-its-kind observation, researchers from the University of New Hampshire Space Science Center have documented a unique event that occurs in clouds before a lightning flash happens. Their observation, called "fast negative breakdown," documents a new possible way for lightning to form and is the opposite of the current scientific view of how air carries electricity in thunderstorms.

■ Negative breakdown

"This is the first time fast negative breakdown has ever been observed, so it's very exciting," said Ningyu Liu, professor of physics. "Despite over 250 years of research, how lightning begins is still a mystery. The process was totally unexpected and gives us more insight into how lightning starts and spreads."

Their finding, published in the journal Nature Commu-



nications, is another step toward answering the question of how lightning begins. Recently, the problem of lightning initiation seemed to be solved with the discovery of "fast positive breakdown" of air, which matched the theory long held by lightning researchers.

Fast positive breakdown involves the downward development of a pathway in the cloud, moving from the positive charge at the top of the cloud to the negative charge in the middle of the cloud. The pathway forms at one-fifth the speed of light and can trigger lightning.

However, the newly reported observation of fast negative breakdown shows that an upward pathway -- going in the opposite direction and just as fast -- can be created in a thundercloud, indicating there's another way to start electricity in the air. Ultimately, this provides scientists with a new view of what's possible inside a storm cloud.

■ Lightning creation

"These findings indicate that lightning creation within a cloud might be more bidirectional than we originally thought," said Julia Tilles, a doctoral candidate in the UNH Space Science Center.

In collaboration with a lightning research team from New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, the researchers documented fast negative breakdown in a Florida lightning storm at Kennedy Space Center using radio waves originating deep inside the storm clouds.

An array of ground-based antennas picked up the radio waves, which then allowed researchers to create a highly detailed image of the radio sources and identify this unusual phenomenon.

Researchers continue to develop images from the data and hope to learn more about how often fast negative breakdown events occur and what fraction of them can initiate an actual lightning flash.

(Source: techtimes.com)

Here's what happens when you put giant sea spiders into boot camp

The realization that giant sea spiders have Swiss cheese-like holes in their exoskeletons has shed light on a decades-old mystery about how underwater creatures living in the polar oceans and deep abysses got so spookily huge.

Researchers found that pores cover the legs of giant sea spiders, and, as these sea spiders grow, their exoskeletons become more and more holey.

The "exoskeletons of the really big ones look almost like Swiss cheese," Caitlin Shishido, a doctoral student of zoology at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, said in a statement.

The scientists discovered this holey phenomenon after testing a hypothesis about how gigantism develops in cold-water marine critters. The idea, known as the oxygen-temperature hypothesis, suggests that animals living in extremely cold waters can grow to extraordinary sizes because they have slow metabolisms. Moreover, cold water can hold more oxygen than warm water can, so there is plenty of oxygen available in cold-water areas.

To test this hypothesis, the researchers went to McMurdo Station in Antarctica to study sea spiders, the cousins of land spiders. The team already knew that sea spiders are "skin breathers," meaning they absorb oxygen through their legs.

In addition, Shishido and her colleagues wondered whether warming temperatures in the polar regions would harm these giant animals, which are adapted to live in cold waters. To learn more, the researchers took species from two genres of sea spider — Colossendeis and Ammothea — and put them in sea spider boot camp, making them exercise like fanatic bodybuilders.

The exercises were fairly straightforward; the researchers flipped the spiders upside down and counted the number of times the creatures were able to right themselves in varying temperatures, ranging from the spiders' usual 28.7 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 1.8 degrees Celsius) to 48.2 F (9 C).

The scientists were mystified until they used microscopes to get a better look at the sea spiders' legs. It was then that they realized that the larger the sea spiders grew, the more porous their exoskeletons became, which allowed the spiders to absorb greater amounts of oxygen.

(Source: livescience.com)

It took half a ton of hard drives to store the black hole image data, team says

Scientists say we can put some of Einstein's most famous predictions from a century ago to the test, but it was not as easy as pointing a big lens at the M87 galaxy and pressing a button. It took years of work and the collaboration of more than 200 scientists to make it happen. It also required about half a ton of hard drives.

Data collection for the historic black hole image began in 2017 with a coordinated effort called the Event Horizon Telescope (EHT). That isn't a single instrument but rather a collection of seven radio telescopes from around the world. The EHT used a principle called interferometry to combine the capacity of all those telescopes, creating a "virtual" telescope the size of the Earth.

The EHT had to collect a huge volume of data to deliver us this one image. Dan Marrone, Associate Professor of Astronomy at the University of Arizona says the EHT team had to install specialized super-fast data recorders on the various radio telescopes to handle the influx of measurements.

The now-famous image of a black hole comes from data collected over a period of seven days. At the end of that observation, the EHT didn't have an image — it had a mountain of data. Scientists had to develop algorithms to take 5 petabytes of data and make sense of it.

Jason Snell at Six Colors has helpfully worked out the effective data rate of shipping these hard drives. The Mauna Kea Observatory in Hawaii might have generated about 700TB of data (one-seventh of the total), and it's 5,000 miles from MIT in Boston. Figuring in trips to and from the airport and the flight itself, it took around 50,400 seconds to move the data. While the best internet connections are currently measured in a few gigabits per second, shipping those drives from Hawaii to MIT works out to 14 gigabytes per second (112 gigabits per second).

(Source: extremetech.com)

Genius new device can kill 99.9% of an airborne virus in the blink of an eye

A new type of air filter has the potential to work faster, cheaper and better than any other, killing virtually all airborne bacteria and viruses in a fraction of a second.

It's germaphobes dream, and a bullish weapon against the spread of infectious diseases, some of which, like measles, can remain suspended in the air for hours on end.

The new device is not only effective at killing viruses, it can actually prevent disease. And if the technology can be miniaturized, the authors say it may one day replace the century-old face mask, allowing us to breathe clean air on the fly.

Nonthermal plasma has been around for over a hundred years, in which time it's been thoroughly researched. It's a testament to the technology's potential that we are still finding uses for it today.

The concept sounds like an oxymoron, but nonthermal plasma is essentially like a flame without the heat, created using an electromagnetic reactor.

Sending pure oxygen gas through one of these special structures, the new device initiates an effect similar to static electricity. Plasma is merely the ionized, or charged, air particles that form around each spark.

The device looks like a simple pipe, but inside, it is filled with glass beads responsible for capturing these tiny little discharges. As electricity flows through the system, electrons are sent flying and atoms are pulled from their molecules, producing a silent glow.

The result is a host of free radicals, which are highly reactive particles desperate to reach a stable equilibrium by forming new compounds. The oxygen radical is particularly excited, and when it reacts with a normal molecule of oxygen at room temperature, it rapidly forms ozone, a known antibacterial agent.

Within minutes, previous studies have shown that plasma exposure can rupture a bacterial cell's wall, impairing and destroying its normal activity.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

International humanitarian aid still arriving for the flood-hit in Iran

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Humanitarian aid from international organizations to the flood victims are still ongoing in Iran, deputy health minister for international affairs Mohsen Asadi Lari has said, IRNA news agency reported on Thursday.



Heavy rainfall, beginning on March 19 has led to flooding in 28 out of 31 provinces affecting 42,269,129 inhabitants in 253 cities and causing widespread damage to municipal facilities, including health centers and hospitals. Many health facilities in affected areas are either fully or partially damaged, and the risk of water- and vector-borne diseases, including malaria, cholera and other communicable diseases is increasing, also due to the interruption of the water supply.

Following devastating flood hitting Iranian provinces some 1,660,100 individuals are in need of health care services in areas where the floods have left 78 people dead and 1,137 injured. As many as 295,787 people have been displaced.

On Wednesday World Health Organization (WHO) sent essential medical supplies, including trauma, health, cholera and non-communicable disease kits and other commodities requested by Iran to respond to the growing health needs of thousands of people who have been displaced as a result of the flooding in many provinces in the country.

Asadi Lari explained that due to the extensive damages caused by the flooding in provinces of Khuzestan and Lorestan more assistance from WHO will be dispatched to Iran.

Dispatching such humanitarian aids are not affected by sanctions, but financial aids are blocked by U.S. sanctions against Iran, he lamented, adding that “although even sending aids are faced with difficulties in some cases.”

Oman has also airlifted relief supplies to Iran which has been hit by massive floods in recent weeks, ISNA news agency reported on Thursday. Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) also announced on Thursday that International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have contributed 100,000 euros to the flood-hit Iranians.

Humanitarian assistance from United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) was also dispatched to the province of Golestan.

Plans for sustainable floating cities discussed at UN

Plans for sustainable floating cities that would power themselves and produce their own food were discussed in a recent meeting at the UN.

Designed with the threat of sea-level rise in mind, these nautical communities would be moored near to coastal cities that are set to be submerged in the future to accommodate for residents fleeing disaster.

They would be built of several connected hexagonal platforms with each serving as a village housing 300 people. Current plans account for a whole city to house 10,000 people.

Residents would grow their own food both above and below the surface, with underwater cages growing kelp and other seafood.

(Source: The Independent)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

U.S. hands over Panama Canal

(December 16, 1999)
World leaders attended a ceremony marking the transfer of control of the Panama Canal from the United States to Panama. BBC correspondent Peter Grester reported.

It was a **poignant** reminder of the tremendous **cost** of building the Panama Canal. The official **delegation** including Jimmy Carter, the Panamanian president Mireya Moscoso and King Juan Carlos of Spain visited two **cemeteries** to offer **floral wreaths** to the tens of thousands who died carving the canal across the Central American **isthmus**. More than four hundred **perished** for every one of the canal’s fifty miles. Most died between 1880, when the French first tried and failed to push the waterway through, and 1914, when the Americans finally completed the **colossal** engineering project.

But if Panamanians are delighted to reclaim their territory, many in the U.S. are not. Many republicans **equate** the loss of their **bases** in the zone with a major **breach** in national security. Now Mr Carter is the most senior American in the delegation. President Clinton, Vice-President Al Gore and the U.S. Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, have all declined invitations to come - a point that has **riled** Panama which **senses** that Washington is still only **grudgingly** giving up its southern territory.

■ **Words**
poignant: something which is poignant affects you deeply and makes you very sad
cost: here, not the money but the loss of lives
delegation: a group chosen to represent other people
cemeteries: a place where dead people are buried
floral wreaths: rings of flowers left on graves in memory of dead people
isthmus: a narrow area of land connecting two larger areas (North and South America)
perished: died
colossal: very large
equate: if you equate one thing with another you believe that the **two are the same:** Republicans believe that if they lose the bases this will mean national security will be threatened
bases: a military base is a place from which part of an army, navy or air force works
breach: here, breach means the breaking of national security
riled: if something riles you it makes you angry
senses: feels or thinks
grudgingly: reluctantly

(Source: BBC)

‘Oil Ministry’s blockage of water to Hour al-Azim a big lie’

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Preventing flood water from entering Hour al-Azim wetland by the Oil Ministry is a “big lie”, Oil Minister Bijan Zanganeh has said, IRNA news agency reported on Friday. Hour al-Azim wetland, located in southwestern province of Khuzestan is a trans-boundary body of water shared between Iran and Iraq. The wetland has been a matter of dispute between environmentalist and Oil Ministry as oil and gas drilling has resulted in the dryness of the wetland as well as other environmental damages in the region.

West Karoun oilfields is situated on Hour al-Azim lakebed. The oilfield which Iran shares with Iraq at the western part of Iran’s southwestern region of Karoun include five major fields namely North Azadegan, South Azadegan, North Yaran, South Yaran and Yadavaran.

The managing director of Iran’s Petroleum Engineering and Development Company (PEDEC) said in mid-March that production of oil from West Karoun oilfields has reached 350,000 barrels per day (bpd) in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20). West Karoun holds great importance for

the country’s oil industry since according to the latest studies, its in-situ deposit is estimated to be 67 billion barrels containing both light and heavy crude oils, and therefore it could have a big impact on Iran’s oil output increases in the future.

And now, following recent extreme rain-falls in western and southwestern Iran 70 percent of the wetland is covered with water and some oil wells have gone underwater.

Over the past few days some have accused National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) of preventing flood water into the wetland to protect oil facilities resulting in inundation of some towns and villages.

However, NIOC categorically denied the accusations and has announced that no efforts have been extended to save oil facilities in the region at a cost to the residents’ lives.

Zanganeh explained that the rumors are mainly aimed at fueling a psychological warfare, stating that “we would never incur loss on the residents for producing more barrels of oil.”

“We have never intervened in measures taken for directing flood water and have always wanted the wetland to be filled with



Over the past few days some have accused National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) of preventing flood water into the wetland to protect oil facilities resulting in inundation of some towns and villages.

water,” he highlighted.

Karim Zobeidi, an official with NIOC, has also told IRNA news agency on Thursday that West Karoun oilfields are de-

signed in a way that water cannot cause any damage to it since the very beginning in order to avoid causing any pollution to the wetland.



150 animals in danger of extinction in Iran

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — There are 1,200 species of animals existing in Iran, of which 150 are on the verge of extinction, an official with Iranian Biological Resource Center affiliated to the Academic Center for Education, Culture and Research (ACECR) has said.

Abdolreza Daneshvar Amoli explained that Caspian horse, Bactrian camel, Sistani cow, Markhoz goat, Moghani sheep, Golpayegani cow are some of the indigenous breeds in danger of extinction in the country.

Based on figures revealed by Iran’s Department of Environment some 15 to 25 percent of animals in Iran are threatened with extinction and 1 to 5 percent of animals are critically endangered, IRNA news agency quoted

Daneshvar Amoli as saying on Thursday.

To safeguard the genetic material of endangered animals for their conservation it is essential to collect, preserve and conserve somatic cells, sperm, eggs and DNA of animal species facing extinction by providing infrastructure, expertise, partnership and coordination for endangered animal bio-banking, he added.

Some 1,000 sperm and cell samples of animals are being preserved in Iranian Biological Resource Center, and National Animal Breeding Centre and Promotion of Animal Products, he highlighted.

Proper budget allocation to organizations striving to safeguard animals would help saving such species from extinction, he concluded.

UNHCR Iran air freight of aid lands in Tehran to contribute towards government-led flood relief efforts

Unprecedented heavy rains and flooding in the Islamic Republic of Iran have swept over much of the country, affecting 24 of its 31 provinces. According to latest government estimates, since 19th March 2019, 70 people have died and over 1,000 have been injured. Displacing an estimated 500,000 people, the floods have left over 2 million in need of immediate humanitarian assistance, including refugees living in Iran.

As part of government-led relief response and coordination efforts, national actors have been able to provide assistance to people in need, including foreign nationals, however reportedly more than 100,000 people are in emergency temporary shelters and thousands of houses have been partially damaged or totally destroyed altogether.

Six provinces in the worst-hit area of western Iran and bordering Iraq remain in a state of emergency. Thousands of refugees reside in these provinces, largely in urban dwellings where they live side-by-side with host communities. Concerned over the needs of refugees and host communities, UNHCR

Representative in Iran, Ivo Freijssen comments, “Generously hosting close to 1 million refugees over four decades, potentially thousands of Iran’s large refugee population could be affected in these six provinces.”

Prompted by the seriousness of the situation, UNHCR took an early decision, in coordination with the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs of the Ministry of Interior (BAFIA), to use existing in-country resources including blankets, sleeping mats, jerry cans and kitchen sets to assist government-led relief efforts. Mr Friejssen explains, “Drawing on additional HQ reserves, UNHCR has now dispatched 1,000 tents and other relief items from its global stockpile, which landed in Iran by air freight on 10 April 2019 and will be distributed in coordination with the government to the most affected communities, including refugees, as soon as possible.”

Speaking during a joint mission to the affected province of Golestan in north-east Iran, UNHCR Representative in Iran, Ivo Freijssen, lauds the government for



its swift action and ongoing efforts to respond to the needs of refugees and host communities across the country. “UNHCR commends the Government of Iran’s ongoing emergency response which has been directed at both Iranians and refugees alike, and appreciates its willingness to engage with UNHCR and the wider UN family in Iran.”

With further heavy rainfall anticipated and over 10 million individuals affected so far, UNHCR continues to work alongside its main counterpart, BAFIA, to support government assistance efforts, particularly in

refugee populated locations. “In coordination with BAFIA, we are doing all we can to assess the conditions and reach those most in need”, Mr. Freijssen adds.

Providing for close to 1 million Afghan refugees and almost 30,000 Iraqi refugees, the Islamic Republic of Iran is currently one of the largest refugee hosting countries in the world. Of these refugees, 97 per cent reside in urban areas, side-by-side with Iranian host communities. The remaining three per cent live in 20 government-run refugee settlements. In addition to Afghan refugees, government estimates indicate that there are 1.5 to 2 million undocumented Afghans in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

UNHCR has maintained an uninterrupted presence in the country for 35 years, and works in close coordination with its main government counterpart the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants’ Affairs BAFIA to provide protection and assistance to Afghan and Iraqi refugees throughout the Islamic Republic of Iran.

(Source: UNHCR)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

Iran to hold first national online project Olympiad

The first round of online project Olympiad will be held in Iran in the next Iranian calendar year (starting on March 21), Fatemeh Mohajerani, an official with the Ministry of Education has said.

The project Olympiad will focus on special subjects and is very much like Khwarizmi International Award the only difference is that the Olympiad will be carried out online, IRNA news agency quoted Mohajerani as saying on Sunday.

The participants can submit their projects online via a website and a jury will evaluate them, she added.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-acy, -acies”

- **Meaning:** a word ending used to form nouns that show condition or state
- **For example:** He passes the ball with unerring **accuracy**.

PHRASAL VERB

Think something through

- **Meaning:** to think carefully about the possible results of something
- **For example:** The policy has not been thought through properly.

IDIOM

Get over something

- **Explanation:** to begin to feel better after a very upsetting experience
- **For example:** She never got over the death of her son.

اولین المپیاد مجازی برگزار می شود

فاطمه مهاجرانی رئیس مرکز ملی پرورش استعدادهای درخشان و دانش‌پژوهان جوان گفت: سال آینده اولین المپیاد مجازی با عنوان «المپیاد پروژه ای» برگزار می شود.

فاطمه مهاجرانی روز یکشنبه در گفت و گو با خبرنگار ایرنا اظهار داشت: این المپیاد یک موضوع خاص را به عنوان یک مساله تعریف کرده و به آن می پردازد و در واقع شبیه جشنواره خوارزمی است با این تفاوت که نیازی به حضور افراد نیست بلکه به صورت مجازی برگزار می شود.

وی افزود: شرکت کنندگان و نخبگان از طریق یک پورتال ، طرح ها و موضوعات خود را ارسال می کنند تا مورد داوری قرار گیرد.

Sudanese defy curfew by post-coup junta, call for civilian rule

➡ The council said it expects a pre-election transition period it announced on Thursday to last two years at most or much less if chaos can be avoided.

It also said Bashir would not be extradited to face allegations of genocide at the international war crimes court and instead would go on trial in Sudan.

Auf was sworn in as the chief of the new military council on Thursday. He declared a three-month state of emergency and imposed a one-month curfew from 10 p.m. to 4 a.m.

He said the country's airspace would be also closed for 24 hours and border crossings sealed until further notice.

On Thursday, European Union diplomatic chief Federica Mogherini called on the army to quickly hand over power to a civilian government.

"Only a credible and inclusive political process can meet the aspirations of the Sudanese people and lead to the political and economic reforms the country needs," she said in a statement.

"That can only be achieved through a swift handover to a civilian transitional government," Mogherini added.

The U.S. also took sides with the protesters and urged Sudan's army to bring civilians into government, saying the planned two-year transition timeline was simply too long.

Washington calls "on transitional author-



ities to exercise restraint and to allow space for civilian participation within the government," U.S. State Department spokesman Robert Palladino told reporters.

"The Sudanese people should determine who leads them and their future and the Sudanese people have been clear and are demanding a civilian-led transition," he said.

"The United States position is the

Sudanese people should be allowed to do so sooner than two years from now," he added.

Iran said it does not take any sides in the recent developments in Sudan, and calls on all Sudanese parties to show self-restraint and sit down for dialogue.

"The principled policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is not to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries," Foreign

Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said late Thursday.

In January, Bashir lamented that he had fallen for advice from unknown parties to normalize ties with Israel in order to ensure stability in his country, but had seen the situation spiral out of hand.

Last month, London-based Middle East Eye reported that the head of Mossad had met with his Sudanese counterpart in Germany as part of a secret plan by Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates to oust Bashir.

■ **Bashir will not be handed over to other countries**

The Sudanese military will not hand over ousted president Omar al-Bashir to the International Criminal Court (ICC), head of the political committee of the country's Military Council General Omar Zein al-Abidin said at a press conference on Friday.

"Omar al-Bashir is in our custody," he said. "Our Council is ruling and brings to responsibility, but will not hand him over abroad, to the ICC."

According to the general, "neither al-Bashir nor any other citizen of the country will be handed over to foreign structures."

He also said that all guilty of deaths of people, who were killed during months of protests "will be brought to trial and will not evade the responsibility."

(Source: agencies)

'Syria refused to recognize Israel in exchange for Golan'

➡ The so-called deal, a backchannel plan to "reach a peace settlement" between Israel and the Palestinians, was proposed by the U.S. administration in late 2017.

Although the plan has not yet been released, leaks signal it may consist of the same tried-and-failed ideas seeking to consolidate Israeli control over the occupied territory, according to Palestinian observers.

Trump had previously recognized Jerusalem al-Quds as the "capital" of Israel in December 2017.

Following Trump's recognition of Israeli rule over the Golan, Lebanese resistance movement's Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah warned that the occupied West Bank may also be recognized as Israeli territory as the "Arab world remains silent".

Many observers have highlighted the role of Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser Jared Kushner in pushing for the new Israeli initiative in Washington.

■ **'Syria reserves right to reclaim Golan by any means'**

A Syrian official says Damascus reserves the right to re-establish control over the Golan Heights, which the Israeli regime has been occupying for more than half a century, stating that a military option to regain the area could not be ruled out.

"The Golan Heights is an integral part of the Syrian territory. We have the right to return this land at any time and by any means, which we consider necessary. In my opinion, the only language, which Israel understands is the language of force and resistance," the director of the Golan Heights Department in the Syrian government, Midhat Saleh, told Russia's Sputnik news agency on Thursday.

Saleh then hoped that the international community would come up with an effective mechanism to put an end to the Israeli occupation of the Golan Heights.

"We are now at war with Israel, and we have the right since Israel does not recognize international resolutions and UN Security Council resolutions, and the United States supports Israel in this case.

"We have the right to return the Golan Heights in the most befitting way for us, either through war or popular resistance. This is our right guaranteed by international resolutions," the official said.

Saleh further noted that all decisions and resolutions on the occupied Golan Heights had not been implemented for more than 50 years, and had simply remained on paper.

He went on to say that over half a million people had been displaced from their original homes in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights and were now living in other parts of Syria, while only 26,000 Syrians were still living in the territory.

On March 25, U.S. President Donald Trump signed a proclamation, formally recognizing Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights. The announcement came as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited the White House.

The Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, in a statement, called the U.S. decision a "blatant attack on the sovereignty and territorial integrity" of Syria.

"The liberation of the Golan by all available means and its return to the Syrian motherland is an inalienable right," according to the statement carried by Syria's official news agency SANA, which added, "The decision ... makes the United States the main enemy of the Arabs."

The Arab League also condemned the move, saying "Trump's recognition does not change the area's status."

Iran, Iraq, Russia and Turkey also condemned the U.S. move.

In a tweet, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif expressed "shock" at Trump's move and Foreign



Ministry Spokesman Bahram Qassemi said "this illegal and unacceptable recognition does not change the fact that it (the Golan Heights) belongs to Syria."

The Iraqi Foreign Ministry also said on Twitter that the U.S. plan "contravenes international law."

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has also said that Trump's recognition of the Golan Heights annexation "violates the UN Charter."

Meanwhile, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said it was impossible for Turkey to accept the U.S. decision on the Golan Heights.

Israel seized the Golan Heights from Syria after the 1967 Six-Day War and later occupied it in a move that has never been recognized by the international community. The regime has built dozens of settlements in the area ever since and has used the region to carry out a number of military operations against the Syrian government.

(Source: agencies)

Trump, in talks with South Korea's Moon, says sanctions on North Korea to stay in place

U.S. President Donald Trump expressed a willingness to hold a third summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un but said in talks with South Korean President Moon Jae-in that Washington would leave sanctions in place on Pyongyang. Trump and Moon, in the Oval Office, discussed the possibility of Moon having an inter-Korean summit with Kim soon as a way to boost dialogue between the United States and North Korea on denuclearization.

North Korea, which has suspended nuclear tests and missile launches, has been pressing for sanctions relief but has not taken meaningful steps toward dismantling its nuclear weapons program.

Trump and Kim have met twice, in Hanoi in February and Singapore last June, building good will but failing to agree on a deal to lift sanctions in exchange for North Korea abandoning its nuclear and missile programs.

"It could happen. A third summit could happen. And it's step by step. It's not a fast process. I've never said it would be. It's step by step," Trump said.

Asked by reporters whether he was prepared to ease some sanctions on North Korea, Trump said he and Moon were discussing "certain humanitarian things" and the possibility of South Korea helping the North with

food. He did not rule out participating in a three-way summit with both Kim and Moon.

Of sanctions, he said, "We could always increase them, but I didn't want to do that at this time."

Moon said he does not view the summit that collapsed in Hanoi as a failure, but part of a longer "process." He said he agreed with Trump on the "ultimate goal" of total denuclearization by North Korea.

"The important task that we face right now is to maintain the momentum of dialogue and also express the positive outlook regarding the third U.S.-North Korea summit to the international community, that this will be held in the near future," Moon said.

In a statement following the meeting, the White House said Trump reiterated to Moon that he has a good relationship with Kim and "noted the door remains open to dialogue."

■ **Push for another summit**

A South Korean statement issued after the meeting, which included a working lunch, said Moon told Trump he will push to hold another summit soon with Kim.

"The two presidents agreed that the top-down approach will continue to be indispensable in the peace process on the

Korean peninsula. In this regard, President Trump stressed that the door was always open for dialogue with Chairman Kim," the statement said.

A South Korean official said nothing has been decided about the timing and location of a next inter-Korean summit.

Moon told Trump he will contact the North in earnest to talk about holding an inter-Korean summit soon, the official said. Trump asked Moon to brief him as early as possible on North Korea's latest thinking.

Ahead of his trip, aides to Moon stressed the need to revive U.S.-North Korea talks. Moon has put his political reputation on the line in encouraging the negotiations.

He has stressed the need to offer North Korea concessions, but Washington appears to have hardened its position against a phased approach sought by Pyongyang in which gradual steps would be rewarded with relief from punishing sanctions.

Trump said he was open to a step-by-step approach but would need to see details.

"There are various smaller deals that maybe could happen. Things could happen. You could work out, step by step, pieces. But at this moment, we're talking about the big deal. The big deal is we have to get rid of the

nuclear weapons," he said.

On Thursday, North Korean state media said Kim had told a meeting of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea on Wednesday that he would push forward with efforts to make the economy more self-sufficient "so as to deal a telling blow to the hostile forces who go with bloodshot eyes miscalculating that sanctions can bring (North Korea) to its knees."

Last month, a senior North Korean official warned that Kim might rethink a moratorium on missile launches and nuclear tests in place since 2017 unless Washington makes concessions such as easing sanctions.

On Wednesday, North Korea's state media said Kim had chaired a politburo meeting on Tuesday to discuss ways to make progress under the "prevailing tense situation."

Kim and Moon met three times last year and Kim promised to visit South Korea in return for the South Korean leader's visit to Pyongyang in September. Analysts said a fourth Kim-Moon meeting could encourage another meeting between Kim and Trump.

Moon's top nuclear envoy Lee Do-hoon said on Friday that sanctions were necessary to deter North Korea from "making bad decisions" but could not solve all unresolved problems.

(Source: Reuters)

Republicans already ran a campaign blasting Democrats as socialists. It didn't work.

➡ Of course, the effectiveness of the attack in the presidential race could depend on which Democrat wins the nomination and which policies that person has endorsed, Republicans said. Sanders, the Vermont senator, doesn't shy away from the "democratic socialist" label; Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) wants no part of it. Former Vice President Joe Biden cuts a more centrist profile than either of them.

Plus, there's a big difference between a midterm election and a presidential election with Trump using his bullhorn day in and day out.

"It's a different messenger, a different moment, a different race," said Charlie Gerow, a Pennsylvania-based

GOP consultant. "In the 2016 cycle, (Ocasio-Cortez) was a bartender in New York challenging Joe Crowley for a seat. Now she's a sitting member of Congress proposing the 'Green New Deal.' That is a seismic shift in the political dynamic."

But if Republicans think they have a surefire winner with the socialism message in 2020, the Pennsylvania experience offers a cautionary tale, at least. Even Republicans who think they'll have better success in 2020 concede the tactic wasn't fruitful in the state last year.

In the gubernatorial race, a billboard funded by Republican Scott Wagner warned of "A MORE SOCIALIST PA," featuring images of Wolf, as well as John Fetterman, then the Democratic candidate for lieutenant governor and a

Sanders supporter in 2016.

"I wanted to get a copy of that. It was just so comical," said Fetterman. "Anyone that examines either of our records would know that that's just unfounded."

J.J. Abbott, a spokesman for Wolf, tweeted recently that the Pennsylvania GOP's messaging during the midterms, including "fake socialism hysteria," proved to be irrelevant to swing voters. Wolf, with Fetterman as his running mate, won by 17 percentage points.

But there's no sign that the outcome in Pennsylvania is giving Republicans pause about going all-in on the socialism message, in the Keystone State or elsewhere.

(Source: politico.com)

North Korea appoints man under U.S. sanctions as new head of state

Parliament re-elects Kim Jong Un to key panel

North Korea has named a new head of state, replacing a senior leader charged with representing Pyongyang in international engagements.

Choe Ryong Hae was named President of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly of North Korea during the first session of the 14th Supreme People's Assembly held Thursday, Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said.

Choe, 69, has deep ties with the ruling Kim family and was recently sanctioned by the United States.

The person holding the position is technically considered North Korea's head of state and usually represents the country at diplomatic events.

The real power, however, is believed to remain concentrated in leader Kim Jong-un's hands.

Choe replaced Kim Yong Nam, who held the position for almost 20 years.

Kim, 91, appeared in a number of international engagements last year, including summits—held separately—between leader Kim Jong-un and U.S. President Donald Trump; Chinese President Xi Jinping and South Korean President Moon Jae-in.

Kim Jong-un granted new title

During the Thursday session, leader Kim Jong-un was also granted the title of "supreme representative of all the Korean people."

Kim was also re-elected as chairman of the country's State Affairs Commission (SAC).

The session was held just hours before President Trump met with his South Korean counterpart Moon in Washington to discuss denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

The South's president has told Trump that he plans to push for another summit with Kim to keep the dialogue going, according to his office.

Moon, who has long favored engagement with the North, formerly said that it was Seoul's "utmost priority" to prevent nuclear negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang from derailing.

North Korea is under a series of harsh sanctions, mainly imposed by the United States but also by the United Nations Security Council over its nuclear and missile programs.

During the meeting with Moon, Trump said he does not want to lift sanctions on Pyongyang. Trump also said that he was considering a third session with Kim.

Last year, Trump met the North's leader in their first ever summit in Singapore, during which the two sides agreed to work toward denuclearization.

Subsequent diplomacy between the two sides, however, made little progress, mainly due to U.S. refusal to lift its harsh sanctions.

Pyongyang has taken several steps toward the goal by suspending missile and nuclear testing, demolishing at least one nuclear test site, and agreeing to allow international inspectors into a missile engine test facility.

Washington, however, insisted that sanctions on the North must remain in place until it completely and irreversibly dismantles its nuclear program.

Kim held another summit with Trump in February from which the U.S. president walked away, claiming that Kim had insisted on the removal of all sanctions. Pyongyang rejected that account, stressing that it had only wanted a partial lifting of the penalties.

In mid-march, North Korea warned that it was considering suspending talks with Washington and resuming its nuclear and missile tests, which it has voluntarily suspended.

Pyongyang has said its nuclear and missile program is part of its deterrence policy against U.S. threats.

(Source: agencies)

U.S. denies entry to BDS cofounder Omar Barghouti

A prominent Palestinian human rights activist and cofounder of the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement was denied entry to the United States on Wednesday, despite holding valid travel documents.

Omar Barghouti was travelling to the US on the invitation of Arab American Institute (AAI) in Washington to speak at New York University's DC campus.

Upon arrival at Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv, Barghouti was told by airline staff that the US Consulate in the city was directed by US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to deny him travelling to the US due to an "immigration matter".

Barghouti holds valid travel documents and a US visa valid until 2021.

"They just said it's a ban by the US immigration service, nothing beyond that," he told Al Jazeera.

Barghouti was also scheduled to speak at public events at the NYU campus in New York, Harvard University and with policymakers and journalists, AAI said in a statement on Thursday. At the end of his trip, he planned on attending the wedding of his daughter who lives in the US.

Barghouti's difficulties travelling in the past were due to the Israeli government restricting his ability to exit and enter Israel by not renewing his travel document, but this was the first time he has faced a ban by the US government.

"This US entry ban against me, which is ideologically and politically motivated, is part of Israel's escalating repression against Palestinian, Israeli and international human rights defenders in the BDS movement for freedom, justice and equality," Barghouti said.

"Israel's far-right regime is not merely continuing its decades-old system of military occupation, apartheid and ethnic cleansing; it is increasingly outsourcing its outrageous, McCarthyite repression to the US and to xenophobic, far-right cohorts across the world," he added. "The most precious thing that this ban deprives me of, and that I cannot compensate, is being at my daughter's wedding. I am hurt, but I am not deterred."

AAI's President James Zogby said in a statement that "Omar's denial of entry into the US is the latest example of the Trump Administration's disregard for those rights."

"Having spent considerable time here as a student and while on speaking tours, Omar visiting America was never an issue before," he added. "It is clear this arbitrary political decision is motivated by this administration's effort to silence Palestinian voices."

(Source: Al Jazeera)

PAOK on the brink of first league win in 34 years

Greek Super League leaders PAOK are a victory away from securing their first domestic league title in 34 years and they could do it undefeated.

The Thessaloniki-based club take on Larissa on Sunday and a win would given them an unassailable lead over second-placed Olympiakos. With three games left to play, PAOK, who have won 24 and drawn three matches so far, are 10 points ahead of Olympiakos, who have a game in hand.

Thousands of fans from the northern Greek port city are expected to pour into the streets to celebrate the first league title won by a club outside Athens in 31 years, as the fierce rivalry between Thessaloniki and the Greek capital continues.

Success-starved PAOK last won the title in 1985 while Larissa was the last club outside Athens to win the league back in 1988.

PAOK fans are banned from travelling to Larissa for the match on Sunday that could win them the title, to avoid any crowd trouble that has tarnished Greek football for years and brought it to the brink of international suspension.

The club knows how feisty the crowd can get, with the two matches last season at home against Olympiakos and AEK Athens en route to what should have been a title, not starting or not finishing following PAOK fans' violence.

In the end PAOK were declared losers in both matches, finished second behind AEK Athens and lost out on the title.

Club boss Ivan Savvidis, a Russian-born billionaire who stormed the pitch against AEK last season with a gun in his belt, will not be allowed to set foot in the Larissa stadium either, having been banned for three years.

(Source: Reuters)

Man United can finish in top three with 15 more points - Solskjaer

Manchester United can secure a top-three finish in the Premier League if they get 15 points from their remaining six games, manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said on Friday.

United, lying sixth with 61 points after a poor run of results, are locked in a battle for third with Chelsea (66 points), Tottenham Hotspur (64) and Arsenal (63).

Third place would guarantee United qualification for the Champions League - which by Solskjaer's calculation would mean beating at least one out of second-placed Manchester City and Chelsea, who they host in consecutive games at Old Trafford this month.

"We need as many points as possible and I think if we get 15 we'll be (in the) top three because in those games hopefully we'll beat Chelsea," Solskjaer told reporters ahead of West Ham's visit on Saturday. "We want top three. Top four is also an aim ...but we should aim for 15 points. But now it's about West Ham and focussing on (that)."

After losing only once in Solskjaer's first 17 games in charge, United have lost four of their last five in all competitions.

The Norwegian pinned that decline on a lack of ruthlessness in front of goal, and United failed to register a single shot on target in their 1-0 Champions League quarter-final first leg defeat at home to Barcelona on Wednesday.

"We've been fantastic but lately we haven't been ruthless or clinical enough in front of goal," Solskjaer said.

"...We should have won the league games against Wolves and Arsenal with the amount of chances we had. We've been practicing out here and, as a striker, I know how important that little bit of belief and trust in yourself is."

(Source: Eurosport)

Southampton part company with chairman Krueger



Southampton chairman Ralph Krueger has left the club by mutual consent after five years in the role, the Premier League side said on Friday.

The former German ice hockey international's contract was set to end in June and following recent talks with Southampton shareholders Jisheng Gao and Katharina Liebherr, it was agreed by all parties that the deal would not be renewed.

"Ralph represented our club with honour and integrity, and followed the Southampton way with great passion. We thank him for the foundations he has helped to build and wish him well for the future," Chinese businessman Gao said in a statement.

Liebherr said Canadian-born Krueger, 59, had laid the foundations for Southampton to be a sustainable team that put pressure on the top sides in the Premier League.

"He was a true leader who fully embodied the Southampton way, a culture which will live on strongly beyond his time as chairman," Liebherr added.

Krueger's departure comes nearly four months after vice-chairman Les Reed left the club to become the English Football Association's new technical director succeeding Dan Ashworth.

"Everything has a beginning and everything has an end. It's the journey in-between that I'll treasure. Thank you Southampton Football Club for the journey," Krueger said.

Former NHL coach Krueger's tenure at the south coast club has not entirely been smooth, as he oversaw the appointment of five different full-time managers with current boss Ralph Hasenhuttl being the latest in December.

Southampton also narrowly missed out on silverware in 2017 when they were beaten 3-2 by Manchester United in the League Cup final. They then just managed to avoid relegation last season.

(Source: Mirror)

Prince Ali fights for women's rights in football



The reaction from the football authorities was less than supportive.

"The abuse was coming, we understand, from the top of the football federation itself.

■ Gag order

"The Afghan football federation put a gag order on them and threatened them. It's a very difficult situation because if this case had happened in Europe, or elsewhere, there would be an uproar."

There have been a spate of sexual abuse

cases in global sport recently, in Britain, in the USA and in Brazil, with another one breaking in Colombia this week, but Ali says Afghanistan has characteristics which make it "the worst you can get".

"In cases in the US and other countries, you find that officials are covering up for coaches, or staff who are conducting abuse. In this case, it's the actual officials themselves."

Ali also said FIFA still need to give greater financial backing to the women's game, and

said women in football face major challenges when it comes to accessing power.

"They have this rule that you can only have one person, for example in the FIFA council, representing a country," said Ali, explaining that because the traditional powers already have a man on the FIFA council, "the main countries that have the top experience in women's football are not represented."

Ali also says that FIFA should not bundle the men's and women's World Cups together for sponsorship, but sell them separately.

"In the women's World Cup in Canada the revenue that came out of that World Cup, the amount that went back to women was much less than they generated. That also went, the majority, to the men's game."

Blatter eventually won the 2015 presidential vote after Ali withdrew from contention before the second ballot could go ahead. However, Blatter's rule was undermined by the scepticism over the decision to award the 2022 World Cup to Qatar, which is now at odds politically with its Gulf neighbours.

Gianni Infantino, who succeeded the disgraced Swiss at the head of world football's governing body, has stated his eagerness to expand the competition to 48 teams and have Qatar share the games with neighbouring states.

"He seemed to have thoughts like his predecessor, maybe he'd get a Nobel prize if he can spread it between Saudi Arabia and other countries.

(Source: AFP)

Chelsea fans denied entry to Prague match over alleged racist chant



Three Chelsea fans were stopped from entering Slavia Prague's stadium for Thursday's Europa League game after an alleged racist chant about Liverpool's Egypt international Mohamed Salah circulated on social media.

Chelsea, who visit Premier League leaders Liverpool on Sunday, put a statement on their website condemning any form of discriminatory behavior after a video showed supporters singing in an apparent derogatory reference to the Egyptian player.

Merseyside Police said they were investigating publication of offensive Tweets made in relation to a Liverpool player.

Ex-Chelsea forward Salah, Player of the Year in England last season and winner of the African Footballer of the Year award for the second time in a row in January, is of Muslim faith.

Chelsea said: "Chelsea FC finds all forms of discriminatory behavior abhorrent and where there is clear evidence of Chelsea season ticket holders or members involved in such behavior, we will take the strongest possible action against them.

"Such individuals are an embarrassment to the vast majority of Chelsea supporters who won't tolerate them in their club."

Chelsea's Italian manager Maurizio Sarri was asked at the post-match press

conference following his side's 1-0 quarter-final, first leg win over Slavia Prague if the Premier League club was right to stop the fans attending the match.

"I don't want to speak about something that I don't know. I did not see the details. Of course it is right that the club made a very strong decision," he told reporters.

Liverpool said in a statement on their website: "The video circulating online, showing vile discriminatory chants being aimed at one of our players, is dangerous and disturbing.

"This behavior needs to be called out for what it is - unadulterated bigotry."

Liverpool added that the club were working with Chelsea and Merseyside Police to identify the people in the video.

The police added: "The language used in the Tweets is abhorrent and we are taking the reports extremely seriously.

"...we understand a number of individuals who are currently in Prague for the Slavia Prague v Chelsea (Europa) League game have been identified and have had their match tickets rescinded for this evening's fixture."

The anti-discrimination organization Kick It Out condemned the latest racist abuse aimed at a footballer.

(Source: Guardian)

Kane may have to consider surgery, says surgeon



Tottenham forward Harry Kane may have to consider surgery on his injured ankle, a leading surgeon has said.

Kane suffered a "significant lateral ligament" injury to his left ankle during Spurs' 1-0 Champions League win over Manchester City on Tuesday and is unlikely to play again this season.

The England captain is susceptible to ankle damage -- this is his fifth such injury since 2016 and the second to his left joint this year.

Surgeon Mark Davies, a leading specialist at the London Foot and Ankle Centre, who has operated on Premier League footballers, said going under the knife could help restore the strength of Kane's ligament to what it was before his first injury.

"At some point I think they would think about doing something surgically to stabilise the ligament, which is quite feasible and should restore the problem happening in the long term," Davies told Britain's Press Association.

"He's not that old, he could do with a stable ankle if he wants to carry on playing long term without it happening again," he added. "It is a routine operation because the ligament needs to be tightened up and

that is fairly easy.

"If he were to have surgery, the surgeon would almost certainly use an internal brace, which is a device which you put over the ligament repair and it is incredibly strong.

"It means you are not just relying on scar tissue regaining strength so it would improve his chances of coming back."

The surgery would put Kane out of action for about three months, which may not be much longer than he could be expected to be out anyway.

The England striker has previously shown impressive powers of recovery and is targeting a return to fitness for a potential Champions League final and UEFA Nations League semi-final in June.

Davies, who has operated on Spurs, Arsenal and Chelsea players in the past, said Kane's quick recovery rates have not made him more susceptible, neither has a full-on schedule which has barely seen him get any rest over the past few summers.

"There is no merit in him having an extended rest, they are not sending him back too early, it's just that he has got an unstable ankle," Davies added.

(Source: AFP)

Mighty Warriors are gunning for more NBA playoff glory



appearance, winning three NBA championships in the last four seasons (2015, 2017, 2018).

They have earned four consecutive NBA finals appearances since their return to the playoffs in 2013.

"I like where we are, I think everybody has their roles in place," said Durant. "We established those in the last couple of weeks in the season.

"The last month of the season we really put our game into playoff preparation. We were thinking about it every game.

The top seeded Golden State Warriors face the first challenge in their quest for a NBA three-peat, which begins on Saturday against the Los Angeles Clippers.

The back-to-back league champions hope to use home court to their advantage when they open their first round playoff series against Clippers at Oracle Arena. Game two is Monday.

"This is what we have been waiting for and we know what is at stake," forward Klay Thompson said.

There is a sense among the Warriors they need to get the job done before Kevin Durant and Thompson's pending free agency this summer.

Golden State have a lot going for them -- including winning the season series over the Clippers 3-1 and a 27-point blowout in their most recent contest.

The Warriors hardly broke a sweat in that game and it has been similar in the opening round where they have won 16 and lost just two games in the first round in the coach Steve Kerr era. "It is a good matchup geographically, but it is a hell of an opponent," said Kerr.

Golden State finished the regular season with the top seed in the Western Conference after finishing with 57 wins and 25 losses.

The Warriors are making their seventh-straight playoff

"We were trying to test the limits mentally to see how far we could take it in the regular season so we could get prepared for the playoffs."

The Warriors are a much different team than the one that lost to the Clippers in the playoffs in 2014, the last time they failed to reach the finals.

Elsewhere, the Toronto Raptors are itching to exorcise some of their playoff demons when their path to a new playoff fate begins with the Orlando Magic.

When you think of the Raptors' recent playoff history what stands out the most is teams that failed to live up to expectations. They have two first round exits, two ousters in the league quarter-finals and one in the semis in the past five seasons.

The disappointing finishes resulted in coach Dwane Casey getting fired and led to the trade of DeMar DeRozan for Kawhi Leonard. Leonard has proven to be an upgrade and new coach Nick Nurse is looking better with a versatile and deeply talented team.

"They are playing very well. They are well coached," Casey said on Thursday of the Magic. "They don't turn the ball over. They don't give up rebounds. It is a good squad we are playing."

(Source: France 24)

Patosi's late winner gives Esteghlal edge over Sepahan

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Ayanda Patosi scored in the dying moments of the match as Esteghlal edged past Sepahan in Isfahan in Iran Professional League (IPL) on Friday.

Esteghlal moved to third place after the valuable win over Amir Ghalenoei's side at the Naghsh-e Jahan Stadium.

Earlier on the day, struggling Sepidrood defeated IPL second-place Tractor Sazi 3-1 in Rasht.

Mehrdad Bayrami opened the scoring for the hosts after Tractor Sazi goalkeeper Mohsen Forouzan made a blunder in the second minutes of the match.

Masoud Shojaei equalized the match with a long-range effort in the 23rd minute.

Meysam Ferdowsi and Bayrami were on target in the 33rd and 66th minutes respectively to seal a precious victory for Sepidrood.

Padideh also defeated Naft Masjed Soleyman 3-0 in Mashhad. Masoud Rigi scored the first goal in the 19th minute and Amin Ghaseminejad scored twice in the 28th and 60th minutes.

IPL leader Persepolis will meet Saipa on Saturday in Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

Persepolis sit at the top of the table with 51 points, followed by Tractor Sazi with 49 points.

Esteghlal and Sepahan are third and fourth with 47 points, followed by Padideh with 46 points.



Shanghai lesson gives Sydney FC blueprint for derby triumph

There was no hiding the despair in the eyes of Sydney FC players on Wednesday night having led three times against Chinese giants Shanghai SIPG only to fall short. But if there was a silver lining to their 3-3 draw, it was in finding the template they believe will deliver them a derby day triumph.

For parts of the match, Sydney FC outplayed a cashed-up team consisting of Brazilian stars Elkeson, Hulk and Oscar, the latter earning an income worth more than the entire salary cap of the A-League put together.

They were punished for individual errors but were structurally disciplined. They were fluid and mobile in attack, found fortune when going towards goal more directly than usual and maintained a tempo well beyond their usual A-League rhythm.

According to their players and coach, that is now the benchmark. They may only have two days between their Asian Champions League match and Saturday night's derby but Sydney FC suggest if they can replicate Wednesday's performance, they will continue their good run of form against the Wanderers.

"I think we had a real good game today, we played really well, very organised but also the quality on the pitch was very high," striker Reza Ghoochannejhad said. "It is true that if you can maintain this quality, this tempo and this rhythm then you can win every game in the A-League. The important thing is the consistency to stay focused, do the things that you can do like we did today to bring in every game."

Sydney FC coach Steve Corica echoed the Iranian international's sentiments. He wants his players to be sharper with

individual errors after having a turnover punished by a late Elkeson goal on Wednesday but says his players must overcome fatigue to perform to that level against the Wanderers.

"I think if we play like that against any A-League team we will destroy them," Corica said. "That's what we want, we have improved, we're getting better, we've got players back now and we have good options off the bench."

Ghoochannejhad should have had a goal to his name on Wednesday only to be denied three times by Shanghai goalkeeper Yan Junling. After an otherwise solid display, Ghoochannejhad hinted he remains a strong chance to retain his starting position for Saturday night's derby, his first in the A-League.

(Source: Sydney Morning Herald)

Beiranvand to auction Ronaldo penalty save gloves and boots to help flood victims



Iran international goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand has vowed to auction his goalkeeping gloves from his 2018 FIFA World Cup match against Portugal to help the victims of devastating floods in his home nation.

As many as 70 people have been reported dead in the deadly floods that has ravaged 26 of 31 provinces in Iran.

And as a gesture to help the thousands who have been displaced by the massive floods, Iran's national team hero Beiranvand has reportedly decided to auction his 2018 World Cup gloves and boots with which he denied superstar Cristiano Ronaldo from the penalty spot.

"The Nowruz New Year got off to a bad start for my compatriots and my province. Sadly, lives were lost; many houses were destroyed and the people have nowhere to live. I will auction the gloves and boots I wore at the 2018 World Cup against Portugal. These are very precious to me," Beiranvand said.

Team Melli were pooled with Portugal, Spain and Morocco in Group of the World Cup in Russia last summer and Carlos Queiroz's men had defeated Morocco 1-0 and then conceded a narrow defeat to Spain in their first two group games.

In the third and final group match, they faced Portugal having a chance to reach the knockout stages of the World Cup and create history for Iranian football. Ricardo Quaresma had given Portugal a 1-0 lead just before half time before the European champions were awarded a penalty in the second half.

Ronaldo stepped up to take it, but Beiranvand denied the then-Real Madrid man by making a diving save and keep his team in the game. Karima Ansarifard then scored in the injury time to earn a 1-1 draw, though Iran, with four points, crashed out finishing behind Portugal and Spain — both with five points apiece.

(Source: Fox Sports Asia)

PSG should heed my Champions League advice, Dani Alves



Paris Saint-Germain's experienced Brazil international defender Dani Alves said on Thursday that the club should follow his recommendations to improve in the Champions League.

With three Champions League crowns, three Club World Cup titles and two UEFA Cup triumphs among his 38-trophy haul as a professional, the full-back is the world's most decorated active player, but he feels his voice is not being heard at runaway Ligue 1 leaders PSG.

PSG have been knocked out of the Champions League in the last 16 for three years in a row, going out on away goals against Manchester United this season after winning the first leg 2-0 at Old Trafford.

"I know how to win," the 35-year-old, who joined PSG in 2017 from Juventus and has been negotiating a contract extension for next season, told RMC Sport.

"When I want to say something I would like to be followed. Not because I'm better than any other but because I've been there.

"When someone has been there maybe it's good to listen to them, to rely on their experience. Maybe it will work, maybe it won't. I would like that when I say something, one would listen more."

Alves, who spent six years at Sevilla and eight at Barcelona before moving to Italy in 2016, felt PSG should have been less complacent and more aware that history was against them.

"When you are up against a historical opponent in football, boxing, tennis, history will always be against you," he said.

PSG are on the brink of an eighth Ligue 1 title, which they can clinch on Sunday by avoiding defeat at second-placed Lille.

(Source: ESPN)

Iran B 2nd at FIVB Beach Volleyball World Tour

Iran B came second at the FIVB Beach Volleyball World Tour Satun 1-Star in Satun, Thailand on Thursday.

The Iranian team consists of Rahman Raoufi and Abolhamed Mirzaali lost to Denys Denysenko and Vladyslav Iemelianchuk 2-0 in the final clash.

The Ukrainian duo displayed an amazing endurance and a splendid offensive combination to snatch a totally lop-sided first set 21-10.

Denysenko and Iemelianchuk started the second set in the same fashion as they carried out successful attacks and solid blocking. Despite a few timeouts, the Iranians failed to use the momentum and let the formidable rivals jump ahead. They tried to claw back into the game, but efforts and determination did not pay dividends.

The Ukrainians performed brilliantly and did not allow their opponents any chance to come back, clinching the second set 21-14, match and gold medal.

"For sure we did not expect an easy win like this in the final," said Denysenko after the match. "Our rivals suffered from the searing heat here in Thailand. The host country has already entered 'summer' and it's likely to be extremely hot everywhere. So, it's likely that they ran out of energy and looked very tired. We also had a very tough game in the semi-finals against Kazakhstan, but fortunately, we did our best to get through to the final. I am very happy to win the title here."

Next up for the Ukrainian duo is the FIVB World Tour Langkawi Open in Malaysia, which has already kicked off



qualification round on Thursday.

"Our expectation is to try to win the matches we play and hope that we can show our best again there," he added.

Meanwhile, the final women's showdown turned out to be an all-Asians clash. Chinese Taipei's Kou Nai-Han and Liu Pi-Hsin, ranked 58th in the world by FIVB and who have already captured their first FIVB World Tour gold in the Ulsan 1-Star in Korea on July 22, 2018, had to battle against the heat and resilient opponents.

Lou and Liu recovered from the first set down 18-21 to complete their remarkable unbeaten run in Satun with a hard-fought three-set win (18-21 21-18 15-12) against Vanuatu's Miller Pata and Sherysyn Toko.

"To get the gold medal here is such an honors for us," said Liu. "I am very happy to finish on top of the podium.

Vanuatu are a very good team with strong attacks. They moved and covered the court very well, so it was not easy to play them. We had to bring out our best to beat them."

The Vanuatu duo, on the other hand, won their first-ever FIVB World Tour medal after appearing in three World Tour women's final fours. They were placed fourth at the Vizag Open in India last March.

Ukraine's Diana Lunina and Maryna Samoday had to settle for bronze following their 2-0 (23-21, 21-15) triumph over Colombia's Galindo sisters, Claudia and Andrea.

"This tournament has been very hard for us because we didn't get used to the hot weather here. The Ukraine summer is not as hot as here in Satun," said Diana. "We feel mentally and physically exhausted. But it is a great experience for us for future tournaments. We have played together for one year and a half and our next tournament will be at the FIVB Beach Volleyball World Tour Langkawi Open, so I hope we will have a good result out there."

After conclusion of the FIVB World Tour Satun 1-Star on Thursday, most of the Asian teams will leave Satun the following day to take part in the 20th Asian Beach Volleyball Tour Samila Open in Songkhla from April 14 to 16. Since the annual event will be held during the Songkran Festival which marks the beginning of the traditional Thai New Year, all players and officials have been invited by the local organizers to join the "Water Festival" in and around the province on April 13.

(Source: asianvolleyball.net)

Discus thrower Hadadi wins gold in Chula Vista

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iranian discus thrower Ehsan Haddadi claimed a gold medal in Chula Vista event.

Triton Invitational meet was held in California and Hadadi won the meet with 67.19m.



Sam Mattis won the silver with 65.03m, and Reggie Jagers came in third place, throwing 61.72.

Hadadi claimed a quota place for his country in the 2019 World Championships in Athletics in Doha, Qatar.

Haddadi won a silver medal at the 2012 Olympics Games with a 68.18 m throw.

His achievement was a milestone in Iran's Olympic history in that it ended the country's 64-year-old medal drought in events.

Iran learn fate at AFC U-20 Futsal Championship

2019 hosts and title holders of the AFC U-20 Futsal Championship Islamic Republic of Iran will face Afghanistan and Hong Kong in Group A, following the official draw ceremony that took place at the AFC House on Thursday.

The Group A tie will be a rematch between the two Central Asian sides, having met previously in the Central Zone Qualifiers last December with Iran emerging as 4-2 victors. They are also joined by Hong Kong, who will be making their first-ever appearance in the tournament.

Thailand, hosts of the inaugural edition and third place finishers two years ago, will be joined by 2017 quarter-finalists Lebanon and Kyrgyz Republic in Group B.

For Japan, Vietnam and Tajikistan, who were drawn into Group C, it will be a meeting of familiar foes, as the three teams played against one another in the inaugural edition of the tournament, with the Samurai Blue eventually claiming a top eight finish.

Iraq, the 2017 runners-up, will aim to outdo their previous best as they go up against Indonesia, as well as Chinese Taipei, who booked their spot in the 2019 Finals as the East Zone Group B winners.

The second edition of the AFC U-20 Futsal Championship will be held in the city of Tabriz from June 14 to 22.

The top two teams from each group will advance to the quarter-finals.

(Source: the-afc)

Shoja Khalilzadeh winner of ACL Goal of the Week

IRNA — Persepolis defender Shoja Khalilzadeh's goal has been voted as Goal of the Week in the 2019 AFC Champions League Matchday Three.

The-AFC.com announced that Khalilzadeh is the winner of this week's Goal of the Week after amassing over 140,000 votes.

In the match against Al Ahli of Saudi Arabia on Tuesday, Khalilzadeh was in the right spot and went for the spectacular, volleying home from inside the box past a helpless Mohammed Al Owais in the first half.

The-AFC.com has announced the nominations for this week's Goal of the Week presented by Allianz for Matchday Three of the 2019 AFC Champions League.

Malaysian Safawi Rasid, Pakhtakor's Khojiakbar Alijonov and Al Sadd midfielder Xavi Hernandez were competing for this award.

Pejman Nouri to quit football at season's end

TASNIM — Former Iran national football team midfielder Pejman Nouri is going to hang up his boots at the end of the season.

The 38-year-old player, who currently plays for Iranian First Division Malavan Bandar Anzali, will quit his football at the end of the season.

Nouri started his career in Malavan in 2001 and has played in popular Iranian football teams Persepolis and Esteghlal.

He has also played in Iranian football clubs Pegah Gilan and Khooneh Be Khooneh and Emirates Club of the UAE.

Nouri also made 49 appearances for Iran national football team from 2003 to 2013 and scored four goals.

Iran female chess player runner-up in Sri Lanka champs

IRNA — Iranian teenage girl Parnian Qomi ranked second in the 2019 Asian Youth Chess Championship held in Sri Lanka.

In the final match, Qomi tied with her rival and received a silver medal.

Meanwhile, Iranian male teenage Sina Movahed was overpowered by India and snatched a bronze medal.

In 16-year-old category, Amir Reza Agha Bala ranked third and bagged a bronze medal.

In is worth noting that Iranian squad received seven medals including 1 gold, 3 silver and 3 bronze in Rapid & Blitz Chess Championships.

The 2019 Asian Youth Chess Championship was held on April 2-10.

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Everything becomes abject in facing destiny,
and when death comes, connivance shakes
with fear before it.

Imam Ali (AS)

WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES

Sculpture

■ An exhibition of sculptures by Nasrin Yusefi is underway at Saye Gallery.

The exhibit titled "Self" will continue until April 17 at the gallery located at No. 21, 13th Alley, Sanai St. off Karim Khan Ave.



Painting

■ Paintings by Fariba Gorjian are currently on display in an exhibition at Seyhun Gallery.

The exhibition will be running until April 24 at the gallery that can be found at No. 11, 4th St., Vozara Ave.



■ A collection of paintings by Arsia Moqadam is on display in an exhibition at Homa Gallery.

The exhibit named "Almost Everyone Is Pleased" will run until April 23 at the gallery located at No. 8, Forth Alley, Sanai St., Karim Khan Ave.



■ A group of artists including Behruz Boluri, Hamid Zaribaf, Leila Ahmadvand, Mitra Ahmadi, Afsun Montazeri and Mana Sepahvand are displaying their latest paintings in an exhibition at Idea Gallery.



The exhibit titled "Peace and Abstract" will run until April 17 at the gallery located at 26, 18th St. off Sanai St., Karim Khan Ave.



■ An exhibition of paintings by Farid Jahangir is underway at Iranshahr Gallery.

The exhibit entitled "Mountains" runs until April 23 at the gallery, which can be found at 69 Sepand St., off Karim Khan Ave.



■ Saeid Emdadian, Parviz Ruzbeh, Hossein Khoshraftar, Mohammadreza Firuzei, Maryam Safari, Samaneh Mehdipour and nine more artists are displaying their paintings in an exhibition at Negah Gallery.

The exhibit titled "Nature's Brush" will run until April 24 at the gallery located at 64 Ghaffari St., Jam St., Motahhari Ave.

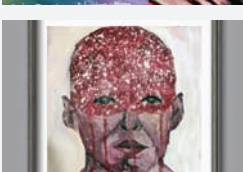


■ Farzad Amini is showcasing his latest paintings in an exhibition at Ace Gallery.

Entitled "The Book of My Brother's Passion", the exhibit runs until April 17 at the gallery located at 1831 Shariati Ave. near the Qeitarieh neighborhood.



■ Vista Gallery is hosting an exhibition of paintings by Azin Rostami. The exhibit named "The Secret Layers" will be running until April 23 at the gallery located at No. 11, 12th Alley, Mir Emad St.



■ An exhibition of paintings by Soheila Ahangari is underway at Negar Gallery.

The exhibit entitled "Face without Audience" will continue until April 17 at the gallery located at 33 Delaram Alley, Roshanai St. in the Qeitarieh neighborhood.

Photo

■ Photos by Mohsen Yazdipour are on display in an exhibition at Ag Gallery.



The exhibition will be running until May 17 at the gallery located at 3 Pesian St., off Moqaddas Ardebili St., in the Zafaranieh neighborhood.

Fajr film festival to spotlight comedy cinema

A R T **TEHRAN** — A lineup of seven comedy movies from world cinema will go on screen in the Focus on Contemporary Comedies section of the 37th Fajr International Film Festival, the organizers announced on Thursday.

"I'm Back" by Luca Miniero from Italy, about the fascist dictator of Italy, Benito Mussolini, who comes back to life and is mistaken for an impersonator, is among the films.

Other movies are "Don't Cry for Me England" by Néstor Montalbano from Argentina, which is about the British invasion of Buenos Aires in 1806, and "Bécassine" by Bruno Podalydès from France, which is about a strong bond between a nanny and an adopted child.

The lineup also includes "The Man Who Bought the Moon", a co-production between Italy, Albania and Argentina by Italian director Paolo Zucca about an unidentified man living in Sardinia, who is the real owner of the moon.

The festival will also screen "Smuggling Hendrix" by Marios Piperides from Cyprus, "Lajko: Gypsy in Space" by Balázs Lengyel from Hungary and "How about Adolf?" by Sönke Wortmann from Germany.

The 37th Fajr International Film Festival will take place in Tehran from April 18 to 26.



This combination photo shows posters for four films selected for the Focus on Contemporary Comedies section at the 37th Fajr International Film Festival. (FIFF)

Hatamikia's war drama "The Scout" to open Fajr International Film Festival

A R T **TEHRAN** — Ebrahim Hatamikia's 1990 war drama "The Scout" is due to open the 37th Fajr International Film Festival at Tehran's Felestin Cinema on Wednesday.

Filmmaker Hatamikia as well as a number of cast and crew members are expected to attend the film screening session, the organizers have announced.

The film tells the story of a scout who must go through a path at the warfront that is being fired upon and bombed by the Iraqi forces during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

Hatamikia's name has always added weight to the Fajr festival. He began his career with movies such as "Identity", "The Scout", "The Emigrant" and "The Union of the Benevolent", which directly involved stories about the war.

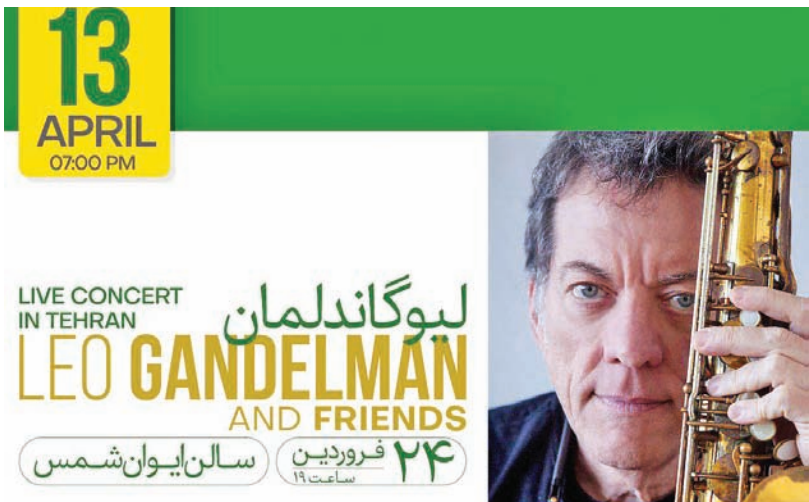
All these movies brought him numerous awards at various editions of the festival.

A copy of the movie has also been selected to be screened in the Preserved Classics section of the festival, which will be held in Tehran from April 18 to 26.



A poster for Ebrahim Hatamikia's "The Scout".

Brazilian saxophonist Leo Gandelman to give concert in Tehran



A poster for Brazilian saxophonist Leo Gandelman's concert in Tehran.

A R T **TEHRAN** — Brazilian saxophonist Leo Gandelman will be giving a concert in Tehran today.

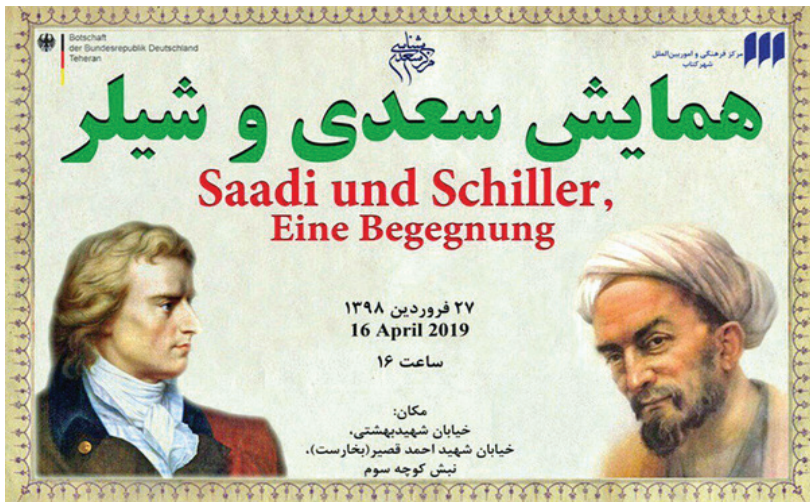
Gandelman's musician friends Adalberto Bezerra Miranda, Cassus Almeida da Costa and Eduardo Amancio Farias will accompany him in the Tehran concert, which will take place at the Eyvan Shams Hall.

The musicians are due to perform a repertoire of jazz and Samba, a Brazilian music genre and dance style.

Gandelman is praised by the mainstream public, young and pop, and by the fans of MPB, a Brazilian type of music known as Brazilian Popular Music.

The concert has been organized by the Avay-e Baran Institute and the Brazilin Embassy in Tehran.

Iran, Germany to host meetings on Sadi, Schiller



A poster for the conference of German poet Friedrich Schiller and Persian poet Sadi.

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — Affinities between Persian poet Sadi (C. 1213-1291) and leading German dramatist and poet Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) will be discussed in a conference to be held at the Book City Institute in Tehran on April 16.

Sheikh Muslim od-Din Sadi Shirazi (C. 1213-1291) is one of the greatest figures of classical Persian literature famous

worldwide for his Gulistan (The Rose Garden) and Bustan.

Friedrich Schiller is a German dramatist, poet, and literary theorist, best remembered for such dramas as "The Robbers" (Die Räuber) (1781), "The Wallenstein Trilogy" (1800-1801), "Maria Stuart" (1801) and "Wilhelm Tell" (1804).

The conference will next be held in Shiraz and will later go to the German cities of Berlin and Weimar.

Documentary films line up for Fajr Docs in Focus

A R T **TEHRAN** — Nine documentary films from international filmmakers have been selected to go on screen at the Docs in Focus section of the 37th Fajr International Film Festival, the organizers announced on Friday.

"Eduardo Galeano Vagamundo" by Felipe Nepomuceno from Brazil, "Piazza Vittorio" by Abel Ferrara from Italy, "The Truth: Lost at Sea" by Rifat Audeh from Jordan and "The Case" by Vera Krichevskaya from Russia will go on screen in this section.

Also included are "Heroes", a co-production between



"Midnight Traveler" by Afghan director Hassan Fazili.

Turkey and Australia by Turkish director Köken Ergun, "Palace for the People" co-directed by Georgi Bogdanov and Boris Missirkov from Bulgaria, and "Midnight Traveler", a co-production among the U.S., the U.K. and Canada by Afghan director Hassan Fazili.

The festival will also screen "Water Lilies of Monet - the Magic of Water and Light" by Giovanni Troilo from Italy and "Triumph" Co-directed by Kreshnik Jonuzi, Luftar Von Rama and Charlie Askew from the U.S.

The 37th Fajr International Film Festival will be held in Tehran from April 18 to 26.

Oscar-winner Rush wins defamation suit against News Corp's Australian arm

SYDNEY (Reuters) — Oscar-winner Geoffrey Rush won damages of at least A\$850,000 (\$610,000) on Thursday after a court ruled that the Australian arm of News Corp defamed him by saying he behaved inappropriately toward a co-star in a production of King Lear.

The Federal Court, which found News Corp's Daily Telegraph tabloid in Sydney failed to prove its stories were true, will later determine further damages for economic harm, such as Rush's loss of movie roles and the effect on his career.

"This was in all the circumstances a recklessly irresponsible piece of sensationalist journalism of the worst kind, the very worst kind," Judge Michael Wigney said in a decision read to a crowded courtroom.

Rush, 67, said the articles were hastily compiled because the Telegraph wanted an Australian angle on accusations of sexual assault leveled at U.S. film producer Harvey Weinstein.

Wigney agreed and said the paper failed to properly inquire into the facts before it published.

Daily Telegraph editor Ben English said News was disappointed with the decision and would review the judgment.

Outside the court, Rush said he was pleased to acknowledge the verdict, but added it had been distressing for all involved.

Since the accusations against Weinstein in 2017, scores of powerful men have been accused of sexual harassment or assault in a movement dubbed #MeToo.

Under the headline "KING LEER," and in later articles, the Daily Telegraph said Rush, playing the title role of a 2015 Sydney Theatre Company production of the Shakespeare play, had been accused by a co-star of unspecified inappropriate conduct.

Rush, who won the Best Actor Oscar in 1997 for "Shine" and has since appeared in the "Pirates of the Caribbean" films, said the stories implied he was a major pervert, or guilty of major depravity, and his lawyer sought "very substantial" damages.

Wigney found that readers could have drawn those conclusions, despite the vagueness of the articles, because of the #MeToo climate in which they were published.

The articles did not name the accuser nor detail the conduct, and the actor, Eryn

Jean Norvill, did not speak to the newspaper for its story nor want her complaint made public.

Norvill, who played Lear's daughter Cordelia, agreed to testify as part of the paper's defense, and testified that during the production Rush touched her on the breast and humiliated her with sexual innuendo.

On Thursday Justice Wigney questioned her reliability and credibility.

"In my view, Ms Norvill revealed herself to be a witness who was, at times, prone to exaggeration and embellishment," he said. He cited examples of differences between her testimony and that of Rush, who denied behaving inappropriately, and other actors involved in the play, who corroborated Rush's view.