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Europeans must not imagine Iran will wait for them

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CBI rejects rumors of requesting loan from IMF

TEHRAN — Central Bank of Iran (CBI) has denied the recent rumors about the bank applying for a loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

In a statement published on CBI's official website, the bank also announced that CBI Governor Abdolnaser Hemmati wasn't able to attend the IMF Spring Summit because of his tight work schedule.

"The governor cancelled his visit to Washington which was due last Monday," the statement reads.

Gholamreza Tajgardoun, the head of Majlis planning and budget committee, attended the spring meetings of the World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund which was held in Washington, D.C.

Earlier, some sources inside and outside Iran reported that CBI has applied for a \$18 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund in order to develop domestic production countering U.S. sanctions.

Senior officials meet, focus on floods

TEHRAN — Heads of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the government held a meeting for the coordination of economic affairs in Tehran on Sunday.

According to the Islamic Republic News Agency, in addition to Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani, President Hassan Rouhani, and

Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi, the meeting was also attended by the vice president, central bank governor, oil minister, economy minister, Planning and Budget Organization chief and some other officials. High on agenda of the meeting was the recent floods that affected large parts of Iran. **→2**

Hamas: Abbas' new government will ease way for U.S. 'deal of century'

The Hamas resistance movement has criticized the formation of the new Palestinian government dominated by the Fatah party, saying such a government will ease the way for the imposition of the United States' yet-to-be-unveiled proposal on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

On Saturday, Palestinian President

Mahmoud Abbas swore in the new government headed by a loyalist from his Fatah party, Mohammad Shtayyeh.

The 21-member cabinet only includes ministers from factions affiliated with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), primarily Fatah, but excludes Hamas and the Islamic Jihad movement. **→13**

Kenyan memorizer, Iranian reciter top at Quran competition in Tehran

TEHRAN — Muhammad Haji from Kenya and Amir-Hossein Rahmati from Iran have won the first prizes in the memorizing and reciting sections respectively at the 6th International Quran Competition for School Students in Tehran.

Ali Feizi from Iran and Mahmud Abul Khair an-Nasif from Syria also received second and third prizes in the memorizing section, the organizers



announced on Sunday.

In the reciting section, Seyyed Yasin Hosseini from Afghanistan and Muhammad Rafghas Hawari from Indonesia took second and third places respectively.

In the memorizing section for schoolgirls, Zeinab Aminpur from Iran won first prize and Faiza Nargis from Turkey and Reem al-Shebel from Jordan took second and third places.

A conscious fight against colonial rule: Dipesh Chakrabarty

By Rooholamin Saeidi

TEHRAN — Dipesh Chakrabarty holds a BSc (physics honors) degree from Presidency College, University of Calcutta, a postgraduate Diploma in management (considered equivalent to MBA) from the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, and a PhD (history) from the Australian National University. He is currently the Lawrence A. Kimpton Distinguished Service Professor in History, South Asian Languages and Civilizations, and the College. He is the faculty director, University of Chicago Center in Delhi, a faculty fellow of the Chicago Center for Contemporary Theory, an associate of the Department of English, and by courtesy, a faculty member in the Law School.

Following is the text of her interview with Asre-Andisheh Magazine:

■ Many postcolonial writers stress the continued relevance of colonial structures and relations of power in so called post-colonial era. What is your idea? Do you think that recognizing the

political independence of third world countries was a calculated plan by Western powers to continue and maintain their control and dominance in new ways?

A: There is no question that relations of domination between peoples and nations continue to exist even when formally colonial relationships are gone. Besides, certain legacies of imperial rule continue, though in changed forms. The state of India, for instance, is fundamentally based on the structure of government the British created. The Naga peoples were incorporated into the republic against their will, though by now they are integrated into it. The complexities of Kashmir question owe themselves primarily to structures that were put in place by the British as well as to inept handling by various governments in India of Kashmiri peoples' aspirations. All modernizing states, in any case, end up practicing imperial/colonizing relationships with some group or another.

I don't think that decolonization was a conspiracy on anybody's part. If you look at the history of the Bandung Conference of 1955, you will see that even rightwing thinkers and politicians had come to feel in the nineteen fifties that imperial relationships did not offer any collective future for the world that European empires, capitalism, and technology had done much to bring together. The idea if formal empires had lost all legitimacy. That said, however, it needs to be acknowledged that the UN system was created to ensure a world-order of post-colonial and post-imperial nations where powerful countries, all Western in the beginning, would continue to dominate under the leadership of the United States. The United States, it may said, took over the mantle of imperial Britain in a post-imperial world. The age of world-dominant power began. The former Soviet Union, the US, and now China and India — they all aspired to this world-dominant status. **→7**

I did not run for Congress to be silent: Ilhan Omar

A Democratic congresswoman says she will not be silenced after facing a barrage of criticism over comments she made about the 9/11 attacks - including from Donald Trump.

The U.S. president tweeted "WE WILL NEVER FORGET" alongside a video showing footage of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks spliced with a speech by Representative Ilhan Omar.

"Some people did something," she is seen saying, in between footage of planes hitting the Twin Towers and people fleeing the buildings.

Republicans have accused her of downplaying the attacks, but Democrats have largely rallied to her defense, saying she had been quoted out of context and some accusing Trump of inciting

violence against her and Muslims. Here is how the row developed.

Ms. Omar won a Minnesota seat in the House of Representatives last November, becoming one of the first two Muslim women ever elected to the U.S. Congress.

Her family originally came to the U.S. as refugees from Somalia and she is the first congresswoman to wear the hijab.

Despite being a newcomer to Washington, this is not the first time Ms. Omar has made headlines.

She has been accused of anti-Semitism over comments she made about Israel and pro-Israel lobbyists. After being rebuked last month, in-

cluding by Democrats, she apologized and said she was "listening and learning".

The congresswoman has also raised the alarm about anti-Muslim rhetoric surrounding her, in response to a Republican poster that showed her alongside the Twin Towers.

Just last week, police arrested a 55-year-old man in New York state for allegedly calling her office with a graphic death threat in which he reportedly labelled her a "terrorist".

■ **What did she say?**

The "some people did something" quote was from a speech Ms. Omar gave to a civil rights group, the Council on American-Islamic Relations (Cair), on 23 March. **→13**



PERSPECTIVE

Hanif Ghaffari
Political analyst

A nightmare for the French president

Although the popularity of Emmanuel Macron has risen over the past month, rising to over 30%! But this popularity is not enough for his party's victory in the European parliamentary elections. On the other hand, many analysts believe that if the current trend continues, Macro will fail in the presidential election of 2022.

The young French president won the presidential election in 2017. In that election, he was able to gobble up his opponent Marin Le Pen with the full support of French parties and groups. However, Macron does not have a good time today!

As "TIME" reported, France's Yellow Vest protesters took to the streets for a 22nd straight Saturday, leading to clashes with police in the southwestern city of Toulouse, while the capital remained calm. Police used tear gas and water cannon in Toulouse to keep demonstrators out of the center of the city, French television showed.

Parts of Paris and some regional cities were declared off limits to protesters following an eruption of violence last month, when anarchists sacked and burned stores and restaurants on the Champs-Elysees. Around 31,000 Yellow Vests turned out across France, including about 5,000 in Paris, according to Interior Ministry figures cited by AFP, up from about 22,300 last Saturday.

The Yellow Vests have protested every Saturday since Nov. 17, with demands ranging from lower taxes and improved spending power to better public services, although numbers have declined since the movement began.

The protests raised at a time when some analysts were speaking of Macron's role in leading Europe! Not long ago, there were talks of Macron becoming Europe's new Angela Merkel, and that he's slowly assuming her role as Europe's leading figure.

As Merkel's center-right Christian Democratic Union (CDU) fared badly in the September general elections, her status as Europe's leading figure has taken a hit. On the other hand, Emmanuel Macron emerged victorious from the French presidential elections, defeating France's far-right candidate Marine Le Pen and entered the Elysee Palace. **→7**

TENDER INVITATION NO.98/1001

IRAN ALUMINIUM COMPANY (IRALCO) , Would like to invite eligible suppliers for the supply of 200 MT. Magnesium pure on tender basis. Interested companies are allowed to send their competitive offer till **5.May.2019** based on our required instruction to following address: **NO.49, Mollasadra Ave. , Vanak Square , Postal code: 1991614581 Tehran , Iran . Attention : Ms. Emadi Tel : +98 21 88049046-7 Fax : +98 21 88049045** For obtaining tender's documents and more information, please check: www.iralco.ir

Public Relations Department of Iran Aluminum Company



Who fueled violence in Tripoli?

TEHRAN (FNA) — According to Western media outlets, Saudi Arabia gave millions of dollars to Khalifa Haftar to help pay for his Tripoli campaign.

They say few days before Libya's renegade General Khalifa Haftar launched an offensive on the capital, Tripoli, Saudi Arabia offered tens of millions of dollars to help pay for the operation. The offer came during a visit by Haftar to the Saudi capital, Riyadh, in the run-up to his April 4 military campaign.

The latest conflict in the North African country pits Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) against forces allied to the United Nations-backed Government of National Accord (GNA). The GNA controls Tripoli, situated in Northwestern Libya, while the LNA is allied to a parallel administration based in the East of the oil-rich country, which splintered into a patchwork of competing power bases following the overthrow of former leader Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

As a consequence, UNICEF says children are now suffering, and death like their long-suffering counterparts in Yemen — half a million and counting. A new report by UNICEF says "More than half a million children are at direct risk in the Libyan capital of Tripoli" and just like in Yemen, the UN agency has appealed to all parties "to refrain from committing grave violations against children".

The World Health Organization (WHO) also reported that many people have been killed and wounded over the past few days of fighting in this besieged country. Doctors without Borders warn that "refugees, migrants, and children are suffering from alarming rates of acute malnutrition."

Though all acknowledge the terrible conditions, the EU representatives claim "there is little we can do" because "Libya is a sovereign country" with which Europe cooperates. It's sickening hypocrisy. They have never bothered to demonstrate more than minimal interest in ending the needless violence.

Even so, the new report by UNICEF should put everybody at the UN on notice. They should tell "Fortress Europe" what it has done to Libya by thwarting the will and wishes of the world community and by violating international law and the UN Charter. Soon its leaders will wake up to the nightmare of a new humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean region. They better start erecting new razor-wire fences and walls along their shores to stop the influx of refugees — this time from Libya. **→7**

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Iran has notified EU on creation of similar mechanism to INSTEX: Zarif

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran has announced to the European Union the establishment of a corresponding institution to the Instrument for Supporting Trade Exchanges (INSTEX), Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Sunday in a meeting with Vito Rosario Petrocelli, president of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Italian Senate.

INSTEX is a special purpose vehicle aimed at facilitating legitimate trade between European economic operators and Iran after the U.S. withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal and reimposition of sanctions.

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



France's new ambassador submits credentials to Zarif

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The new French Ambassador to Tehran, Philippe Thiebaud, in a meeting on Sunday submitted a copy of his credentials to Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, Mehr reported.

Thiebaud was French ambassador to the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

He was also France's ambassador to Pakistan from 2011 to 2014 and to South Korea from 2005 to 2009.

His predecessor, François Semenaud, left Tehran in July 2018.

The French Foreign Ministry announced last month that Thiebaud will be the country's new ambassador to Tehran.

Shortly after the appointment, Iran named Bahram Qassemi, the Foreign Ministry spokesman, as its new ambassador to Paris.



Zarif names Khaji his senior assistant

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has appointed Ali Asqar Khaji as his senior assistant in special political affairs, the Foreign Ministry announced on Saturday.

As a senior diplomat, Khaji had earlier served as deputy foreign minister for Europe and Americas, director-general of the Persian Gulf Department, and Tehran's ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Belgium, and China.

Khaji also attended nuclear talks with American negotiators in Oman during Barack Obama's administration.



Interior Ministry readying for parliamentary polls

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Interior Ministry director for election affairs Esmail Mousavi says his ministry has begun preparatory work for the 2020 parliamentary elections.

Mousavi said work on implementing different stages of the elections will begin in the upcoming weeks based on the ministry's timetable, ISNA reported on Sunday.

"Implementing the timetable will begin with the order of the interior minister," he said.

The parliamentary elections will be held on Feb. 21, 2020 with the approval of the Guardian Council, Interior Ministry spokesman Salman Saman announced two months ago.



Imran Khan to visit Iran soon

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan is scheduled to visit Iran, heralding a new chapter for further cooperation between the two friendly countries.

Pakistan's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mohammad Faisal said Imran Khan will pay an official visit to Iran in the near future but the details of the visit would be announced later, IRNA reported on Sunday.

The visit has been due since Imran Khan took over as prime minister last August.

It comes at a time when bitter border incidents drew strong protests from Iran which holds Pakistani government accountable for failure to secure the common borders.



Turkish envoy: Tehran-Ankara ties to expand in coming years

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Turkish Ambassador to Tehran Derya Ors on Saturday reassured that relations between Tehran and Ankara will further develop in the next four years, stressing that the two neighbors are determined to solve problems obstructing the expansion of bilateral ties.

"Over the next four years, we will see improvements in the condition [of bilateral relations] and the settlement of the existing problems," Ors said, Fars reported.

The Turkish diplomat said the border issues are solvable through cooperation and consultation between the two sides.

"Iran and Turkey are two friends and brothers that have long-standing cultural and economic relations, which can pave the way for developing bilateral economic relations," Ors remarked.

France must explain on its envoy's remarks about Iran's enrichment program

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi on Sunday said that France must explain about the remarks by its ambassador to Washington about Iran's uranium enrichment program.

"If tweets by @GerardAraud represent French position, we're facing a major violation of the object and purpose of the JCPOA and UNSCR 2231. Needs immediate clarification by Paris, or we act accordingly," tweeted Araqchi who acted as a leading nuclear negotiator with the 5+1 group that led to conclusion of the nuclear deal officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

In a tweet on Saturday, French Ambassador Gerard Araud said, "It's false to say that at the expiration of the JCPOA, Iran will be allowed to enriching uranium. Under the NPT and its additional protocol, it will have to prove, under strict monitoring, that its nuclear activities are civilian."

"As we said in 2002 that enriching uranium without a credible civilian program was illegal under the NPT, we'll be able to react likewise in 2025 if necessary. Sanctions were imposed. Sanctions could be reimposed. There is no



Araqchi says if tweets by Ambassador Gerard Araud represent French position, "we're facing a major violation of the JCPOA and UNSCR 2231."

MPs pass overview of bill to counter U.S. move against IRGC

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee on Sunday passed an overview of a bill to counter Washington's move in calling the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) a terrorist organization.

Ali Najafi Khoshrudi, the spokesman of the committee, said the double-urgency bill would in retaliation against the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) and its subsidiary terrorist organizations.

Any financial, technical, educational, and

otherwise aid to the CENTCOM and its related bodies in West Asia would incur legal measures under Article 508 of the Islamic Penal Code, the lawmaker said.

He said the bill would also require swift reaction to terrorist acts of U.S. forces which endanger the interests of the Islamic Republic. U.S. President Donald Trump labeled the IRGC as a foreign terrorist organization last Monday.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said the decision was an "election gift" to

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who was facing reelection a day later.

Bahrain and Saudi Arabia welcomed the move by Trump.

Immediately after the announcement, the Iranian Supreme National Security Council named 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.

'Many S. Korean SMEs in bankruptcy over U.S. Iran sanctions'

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Hossein Tanhaee, head of the Iran-South Korea Joint Chamber of Commerce, has said many of South Korea's small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have gone bankrupt due to the U.S. sanctions against Iran.

Tanhaee said trade volume between the two countries has decreased 70 percent since the U.S. imposed new sanctions on Tehran,

Tansim reported on Sunday.

"South Korean companies are completely independent and the government cannot put pressure on them with regard to their relations with other companies and countries," he said.

"Therefore, the big companies whose activities are in the fields of automotive industry, petrochemistry and household appliances were forced to reduce their trade ties because

of their high trade volume with the United States," he added.

Tanhaee pointed out that South Korean companies are unwilling to reduce their business relations with Iran.

Trade volume of some big South Korean companies with the U.S. is 25 times as much as their trade with Iran, he explained.

Last year, Trump unilaterally pulled the

During a cabinet meeting, Rouhani said, "Prime minister of the Zionist regime of Israel has said clearly that the U.S. action has been taken upon their [the Israelis'] request. All the U.S. crimes and illegal actions have been in line with helping one person in the occupied lands to gain victory in election."

Last Tuesday all parliament members appeared on the Majlis floor wearing outfits of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps in a move to show contempt for the United States' move to name the armed forces terrorist.

U.S. out of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), generally known as the Iran nuclear agreement, and unleashed the "toughest ever" sanctions against Tehran despite international objections.

Since then, the U.S. has been trying to force other countries, especially the Europeans, into following its lead in putting maximum pressure against Tehran.

IRGC, Basij to continue helping flood victims: spokesman

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Forces from the Islamic Revolution Guards and Basij will continue to provide relief aid to victims of the recent floods until the situation goes back to normal, IRGC spokesman Brigadier General Ramazan Sharif said on Sunday.

Sharif said the forces focus on providing the flood-stricken people with basic services such as nutrition, health-care, housing and transportation, IRNA reported.

He said visits by top IRGC commanders to the flood-hit areas played a decisive role in managing the crisis and alleviating the plight of the flood victims.

During the last month, forces with the IRGC and Basji as well as jihadi groups came to the people's help by doing field

work, cooperating with provincial crisis management centers, establishing security and assisting people in housing, nutrition and cleaning up homes, the spokesman added.

Catastrophic floods hit 1,900 cities and villages in western, southwestern, northern and northeastern Iran last month, leaving 76 dead and hundreds of thousands displaced.

Ever since, the IRGC, among other organizations, has been a key part of fighting floods. However, in an ill-advised move U.S. President Donald Trump on April 8 labeled the Guards as a "foreign terrorist organization". The move unified all Iranian political factions, with many hailing the IRGC as an "anti-terror" organization which has greatly contributed to regional stability.

Four ministers brief Majlis on flood damages

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Four ministers attended the parliament on Sunday to brief parliamentarians about the damages left by heavy floods that have stricken almost all provinces across Iran.

In the open session of the parliament, Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli, Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian, Agriculture Minister Mahmoud Hojjati and Transport and Urban Development Minister Mohammad Eslami explained about the repercussions of floods.

Rahmani Fazli said floods have left nearly \$2.5 billion in damages. He said floods have hit 25 provinces. He also called on all state bodies to be prepared for probable heavy rainfalls in future days.

For his part, Ardakanian said 35 villages have no electricity and noted that floods

have inflicted \$152.2 million in damages to energy infrastructures. He also said that the level of water resources have increased by 62 percent.

Hojjati also said that floods have caused \$942 million damage to agriculture sector.

And Eslami said that floods inflicted \$255 million damage to roads, railways and houses.

He added that 725 bridges have been completely destroyed.

Since March 19, large parts of Iran have been inundated with flash floods. So far, about 76 people have lost their lives and hundreds of thousands have been displaced.

After nearly two decades of droughts in Iran, such heavy rainfalls and consequent flash floods have been unprecedented. Some experts have attributed the destructive floods to climate change.

Zarif: Europeans must not imagine Iran will wait for them

It is 'unacceptable' for Europe to delay implementing INSTEX, foreign minister says

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Sunday that Europe's delay in implementing the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX) with Iran is "unacceptable".

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

"The Europeans have been too late and they must not imagine that the Islamic Republic of Iran will wait for them," Zarif told reporters.

For implementing INSTEX it was necessary that Iran also establish a similar mechanism and this was done last week and "now there is no excuse for Europeans not to start their work," Zarif asserted.

European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas and British Foreign Secretary Jeremy



Hunt have said INSTEX will support legitimate European trade with Iran.

In May 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump unilaterally pulled Washington out of the JCPOA and ordered reimposition

of sanctions against Iran. The first round of sanctions went into force on August 6 and the second round, which targets Iran's oil exports and banks, were snapped back on November 4.

■ Preventing aid to flood-stricken people is 'crime against humanity'

Zarif also said that Iran has evidence which proves that the U.S. has prevented aid to the flood-stricken people in Iran, calling the act "crime against humanity".

"International aid means international solidarity. This international solidarity has been impeded because of the U.S. destructive and inhuman actions," he said.

Since March 19, large parts of Iran have been inundated with flash floods. So far, about 76 people have lost their lives and hundreds of thousands have been displaced. Almost all provinces have been affected by the flood.

The Trump administration has been blocking the accounts of the Iranian Red Crescent Society, actually impeding transfer of money to the Iranian flood victims.

Senior officials meet, focus on floods

1 → During the session, Rouhani, Raisi, and Larijani emphasized the need to join efforts to relieve the pains of people who have been affected by the floods.

They also stressed the need for all Iranians to receive natural disaster insurance and discussed the ways of providing the financial bases of it.

Floods hitting Iran since March 19 have

been highly devastating especially in the provinces of Golestan, Mazandaran, Lorestan and Khuzestan.

According to officials, more than 227,000 people surviving the floods were provided with emergency accommodation.

Army, Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), and Basij have collectively attempted to provide services to the flood victims.

Heavy rainfall, beginning on March 19, has led to flooding in 28 out of 31 provinces. It has affected 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 healthcare services in areas where the floods have left 76 people dead and 1,137 injured. As many as 295,787 people have been displaced.

Pompeo on Latin America tour to build up support for Maduro ouster

Maduro orders civil militia expansion

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who is on a tour of four Latin American countries, has called for maintaining regional pressure on Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and his government.

On the third leg of his four-nation tour, Pompeo arrived in the Peruvian capital of Lima on Saturday and met with the country's President Martin Vizcarra to gather support for President Donald Trump's hardline stance against Maduro.

Washington has been pressuring Maduro to step down and urging more countries to join the coalition supporting Venezuela's opposition figure Juan Guaido who declared himself "interim president" in January.

The Trump administration has imposed a raft of sanctions against Maduro's government and even threatened to use military force in an attempt to remove him from power.

U.S.-imposed sanctions have hurt the Venezuelan economy as well as ordinary people, who are already suffering from hyperinflation and food and medicine shortages, triggering mass migration to neighboring countries, such as Peru and Colombia.

After a private meeting with Vizcarra on Saturday, the U.S. secretary of state attended a joint news conference with Peruvian Foreign Minister Nestor Popolizio and discussed the status of Venezuelan migrants in neighboring countries.

"From Venezuela, it is our deep hope that we can achieve our objectives quickly, timely so that these individuals will return to their home country," Pompeo claimed.



However, he got irate when a reporter asked if that contradicted Trump's harsh immigration policy at home.

"Our objective is to allow people to stay in their home countries, this is President Trump's desire, we want to create conditions in these countries where they can stay in their own country," he said.

Many Venezuelans, fleeing economic and political crisis at home, have joined migrant caravans of Central American countries over the past months and reached the U.S. southern border with Mexico, where they have been facing an array of mistreatment and abuse.

Pompeo's visit to Peru as part of a tour of four Latin American countries came after

meeting officials in Chile and Paraguay.

In the Chilean capital of Santiago, he defended sanctions against Caracas and said Washington would not "quit the fight" in the South American nation.

In Paraguay's capital Asuncion, Pompeo accused Maduro of being a "tyrant," and praised Paraguay's support for Guaido in Venezuela.

Maduro blames U.S. sanctions for the country's economic problems and dismisses Guaido as an American puppet.

■ Maduro orders civil militia expansion

On Saturday, the Venezuelan president ordered an expansion of civilian

militia by nearly one million members amid worsening crisis after nationwide electricity blackouts.

"With your rifles on your shoulders, be ready to defend the fatherland and dig the furrow to plant the seeds to produce food for the community, for the people," Maduro told thousands of militia members gathered in the capital, Caracas, wearing khaki camouflaged uniforms.

The civilian militia, dubbed National Bolivarian Militia, functions as a reserve force composed of civilian volunteers, which was founded by former president Hugo Chavez in 2008 to assist the Latin American country's armed forces.

Venezuela's military top brass has remained loyal to the 56-year-old president despite Guaido's offer of amnesty to military members who defect.

Power cuts have occurred sporadically since the massive blackout of March 7 left the country in the dark for five days, with electricity being rationed outside of Caracas.

Maduro's government has blamed U.S.-backed sabotage for the massive blackouts that have deprived millions of power.

Maduro has called for support from allies, including Russia and China as well as the UN to investigate the "U.S. cyber attack" he claims was responsible for the blackout.

Businesses and schools have been shut down on the president's orders since the blackout began.

(Source: agencies)

Israeli delegation cancels trip to Bahrain on security grounds

An Israeli delegation composed of businessmen and government officials has cancelled its participation in a conference set to take place in Bahrain.

The group, which was planning to attend the gathering organized by the Global Entrepreneurship Network on April 15, said in a statement it was withdrawing from the summit on security grounds.

"While we advised the Israeli delegation they would be welcome, they decided this morning not to come due to security concerns and a wish not to cause disruption for the other 180 nations participating," the organization's president Jonathan Ortmans told Reuters news agency on Sunday.

The cancellation came after the kingdom's parliament issued a statement rejecting the visit, and some protests against it in the streets of the capital Manama.

While Israel does not maintain any diplomatic relations with any of the six-member Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC) nations, analysts say some of the countries are not opposed to normalising ties with Tel Aviv.

In October, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu paid a surprise visit to Muscat following an invitation by Oman's Sultan Qaboos.

Shortly after that visit, Israeli Minister of Culture and Sports Miri Regev attended a judo tournament in Abu Dhabi, where the Israeli anthem was also played.

In October last year, Israeli Communication Minister Ayoub Kara had not only visited Dubai but also gave a speech at a telecommunications conference.

Recently, Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah, Oman's minister responsible for foreign affairs, called on Arabs to take initiative and make Israel overcome "fears for its future" in the region.

"I believe that we Arabs must be able to look into this issue and try to ease those fears that Israel has through initiatives and real deals between us and Israel," bin Abdullah told a discussion panel on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum earlier in April.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

India confident U.S. cannot impose sanctions over S-400

India says it is confident it will avoid U.S. sanctions over its purchase of Russia's S-400 missile system, which has become a lightning rod in American dispute with China and Turkey.

India's Defense Minister Nirmala Sitharaman stressed in an interview with AFP that her country needed arms from Russia to remain strong.

The US has warned of sanctions on countries buying Russian military equipment. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, however, defied the warning in October when he signed a deal worth more than \$5 billion on the delivery of S-400 anti-aircraft missiles with President Vladimir Putin.

Sitharaman said India has presented its reasons for the purchase to the US and expects Washington to accept them and avoid imposing sanctions on New Delhi.

"In the case of S-400 we have explained ourselves well. That has been heard and understood. They have appreciated the point of view put forward," AFP quoted her as saying.

Asked if she was confident that India would avoid sanctions, Sitharaman said: "Yes I hope so."

U.S.?President Donald Trump's adminis-



tration imposed sanctions on China's military in 2018 over Beijing's purchase of the S-400 and other military hardware from Russia.

The US is currently embroiled in a brewing dispute with Turkey and has warned the NATO member of sanctions for buying the S-400 after suspending Ankara's participation in the stealth F-35 jet program.

Washington has already cast scorn on New Delhi's efforts to obtain a waiver from the U.S. Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) which monitors the S-400 system with a particular focus.

American officials have indicated that the U.S. government is still hopeful to persuade India to forego the agreement.

Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs Randall Schriver told a hearing in March that Washington wanted to "work through" the problem given that India's contract with Russia had not been completed yet.

Schriver said the U.S. was "very keen to see (India) make an alternative choice (to the S-400) and we are working with them to provide potential alternatives."

The U.S. government, however, is not in a position to play hardball with India because Washington needs to keep the Asian giant on its side in order to counter China's growing power.

The United States is specially in a tricky position in the face of efforts by China and India to patch up relations which went into sharp decline in 2017 when they had a military standoff over a Himalayan plateau.

In her interview, Sitharaman stressed the two sides' determination to sort out their differences.

"Sometimes there are differences and you have a face-off", but "our attempt has been that these differences... cannot be allowed to become disputes."

(Source: Press TV)

Iraq unearths mass grave of Kurds killed by Saddam

Iraq must never forget Saddam Hussein's crimes or allow his party to return, President Barham Salih said on Sunday after attending the unearthing of a mass grave of Kurds killed by the former leader's forces three decades ago.

The grave, found in the desert about 170 km (106 miles) west of the city of Samawa, contained the remains of dozens of Kurds made to "disappear" by Saddam's forces, Salih's office said.

They were among up to 180,000 people who may have been killed during Saddam's "Anfal" campaign that targeted Iraqi Kurds in the late 1980s when chemical gas was used, villages were razed and thousands of Kurds were forced into camps.

"He killed them because they did not accept the continuation of this regime, because they wanted to live a free and dignified life," Salih, a Kurd, told a news conference at the grave site.

"He brought them to Samawa to bury them but our people in Samawa embraced them," Salih added. Iraq's southern provinces are predominantly inhabited by Shi'ite Arabs, who also suffered oppression and mass killings under Saddam, a Sunni Arab.

"The new Iraq must never forget these crimes that were committed against Iraqi people from all groups," he said.

(Source: Reuters)

Haftar's forces 'set to push into capital Tripoli'



Forces loyal to renegade General Khalifa Haftar are set to move in on Libya's capital, Tripoli, on Sunday, the head of the country's self-proclaimed eastern parliament said.

Haftar announced an attack against Tripoli on April 4 to capture the capital and the entire west of Libya from the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA), headed by Prime Minister Fayez al-Serraj.

"We need to get rid of militias and terrorist groups," Aguila Saleh, head of the House of Representatives allied to Haftar, said on Saturday, using a reference eastern officials often make to describe forces allied to the Tripoli government.

Meanwhile, Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi met Haftar in Cairo on Sunday to discuss the latest developments, Sisi's spokesperson said. No other details about the meeting were immediately available.

Sisi has been an ardent supporter of Haftar's forces, which control swaths of eastern Libya.

On Saturday, an air raid by Haftar's forces hit the yard of a school on the southern outskirts of Tripoli, where Haftar's forces have been confronted by forces allied to al-Serraj's internationally recognized government.

In a possible new front, the eastern Libya National Army (LNA) was readying a unit to move to the Es Sider and Ras Lanuf oil ports, Libya's biggest, on the eastern coast, anticipating an attack from an armed group allied to al-Serraj, eastern military officials said.

"The force will strengthen the protection of the ports," one official said, asking not to be named.

For its part the Tripoli government will agree to a ceasefire only if the LNA troops return back east, government spokesperson Mohanad Younes told reporters.

■ Ongoing air raids

Forces loyal to al-Serraj's government have so far kept the eastern offensive at bay. Fierce fighting has broken out around a disused airport about 11km from the center.

An eastern military source said a warplane belonging to the LNA had fired at a military camp in an eastern Tripoli suburb.

In a separate raid the yard of a primary school was hit, a Reuters news agency reporter at the scene said. A LNA official said the plane had targeted a camp of al-Serraj's forces.

Saleh also said the United Nations mission to Libya and al-Serraj's government had been controlled by armed groups and had failed to expel them from the capital, and promised Libya would hold long-delayed elections after the Tripoli operation ends.

The LNA's push into Tripoli is the latest outbreak of a cycle of conflict since the 2011 overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi. It has continued despite international calls for a halt in an offensive that risks causing many civilian casualties.

Last week the European Union called on the LNA to stop its attacks, having agreed on a statement after France and Italy sparred over how to handle the conflict.

Haftar's offensive had surprised the UN, which had been planning to hold a national conference on April 14 to prepare Libya for elections.

The latest battle had by Friday killed 75 people, mainly fighters but including 17 civilians, and wounded another 323, according to UN tallies. About 13,000 people have been forced out of their homes.

As well as the humanitarian cost, the conflict threatens to disrupt oil supplies, boost migration to Europe, scupper a UN peace plan, and allow armed groups to exploit the chaos.

Haftar, 75, a former general in Gaddafi's army who later joined the revolt against him, moved his troops out of their eastern stronghold to take the oil-rich desert south earlier this year, before sweeping up to Tripoli at the start of April.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

WHO demands protection of health workers, facilities amid Gaza protests

The World Health Organization (WHO) has called for the protection of Palestinian paramedics and medical facilities in the Gaza Strip in the wake of mass protests along the fence separating the besieged coastal enclave and the Israeli-occupied territories.

WHO said on Saturday that it had recorded an unprecedented 446 attacks on health workers in the Gaza Strip ever since anti-occupation protests started in the sliver early last year, the official Palestinian Wafa news agency reported.

These attacks had resulted in the deaths of 3 health workers and injured 731 others, it said. A total of 104 ambulances and six other forms of health transport, in addition to five health facilities and one hospital, had been damaged as well, it added.

WHO further noted that health workers faced substantial obstacles to carry out their work as they might get struck or their access to injured protesters was hampered. Additionally, being witness to such events could significantly affect the mental health of health workers and their work, it said.

Palestinians have held weekly rallies along the Gaza border to protest the siege on the enclave and demand the right for refugees to return to their homes they fled during

the 1948 creation of Israel.

More than 270 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces ever since anti-occupation protest rallies began in the Gaza Strip on March 30, 2018. Over 16,000 Palestinians have also sustained injuries.

The Gaza clashes reached their peak on May 14, 2018, on the eve of the 70th anniversary of Nakba Day (Day of Catastrophe), which coincided with a U.S. decision to relocate its embassy from Tel Aviv to occupied East Jerusalem al-Quds.

On June 13, 2018, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution, sponsored by Turkey and Algeria, which condemned Israel for Palestinian civilian deaths in the Gaza Strip.

The resolution, which had been put forward on behalf of Arab and Muslim countries, garnered a strong majority of 120 votes in the 193-member assembly, with 8 votes against and 45 abstentions.

The resolution called on UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres to make proposals within 60 days "on ways and means for ensuring the safety, protection, and well-being of the Palestinian civilian population under Israeli occupation," including "recommendations regarding an international



protection mechanism."

It also called for "immediate steps towards ending the closure and the restrictions imposed by Israel on movement and access into and out of the Gaza Strip."

(Source: Press TV)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	196084.6
IFX	2451.91

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,516 rials
GBP	54,903 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$71.55/b
WTI	\$63.89/b
OPEC Basket	\$70.41/b
Gold	\$1,291.70/oz
Silver	\$15.04/oz
Platinum	\$894.70/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



Copper cathode, anode output beats forecast

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Production of copper cathode and anode in Iran exceeded the planned amount in the past Iranian calendar year 1397 (ended on March 20, 2019), IRNA reported citing the data released by Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO).

IMIDRO data indicate that Iran National Copper Company produced 247,300 tons of copper cathode and 313,700 tons of copper anode in the previous year, showing 15 percent and 21 percent rise, respectively, from the projected figures.



Annual unemployment rate at 12%: statistical center

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — According to the latest report of the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI), unemployment rate stood at 12 percent in the past Iranian calendar year 1397 which ended on March 20, 2019, IRIB reported on Sunday.

As reported, the jobless rate shows 0.4 percent rise from the figure of the Iranian year 1396.

The SCI report also put the unemployment rate at 12.1 percent in winter, which corresponds to the fourth quarter of the past Iranian calendar year (December 22, 2018 – March 20, 2019), rising from 11.7 percent in autumn.

Hong Kong named world's most expensive city to buy a home

Hong Kong is the most expensive city in the world for those looking to buy a home, new research showed.

Published Thursday, real estate firm CBRE's fifth annual Global Living report analyzed property markets across 35 cities.

Asia dominated the list of the world's most expensive property markets. Hong Kong held its position as the most expensive city for the fifth consecutive year, while Singapore came in second and Shanghai was ranked third.



According to the report, the average price of a home in Hong Kong in 2019 is more than \$1.2 million. High demand and short supply have driven property prices to "unaffordable" levels in recent years, with the territory planning to build an \$80 billion artificial island to help fix the crisis.

The Chinese cities of Shenzhen and Beijing were also named among the ten costliest cities for home buyers, ranked in fifth and ninth place respectively.

Vancouver – where the average home costs \$815,322 – was the most expensive North American city and the fourth most expensive place in the world to buy a home, according to the data. Los Angeles and New York also made the top ten.

London, named the eighth most expensive city for buying a home, was Europe's priciest city, according to CBRE. Potential buyers in the UK capital are looking at an average house price of \$646,973 in 2019.

The cheapest cities for buying residential property were Istanbul, Ho Chi Min City, and Bangkok.

Meanwhile, Barcelona, Dublin, and Shanghai were seeing the most rapid growth in house prices, CBRE said.

When it came to the rental market, the most expensive city was New York, where the average monthly price of rent hit \$2,844. Abu Dhabi and Hong Kong were the next most expensive areas for renters, both with average monthly rental costs of more than \$2,700.

Year-on-year rental growth was the highest in Portuguese capital Lisbon, where prices were growing by more than 20 Percent.

(Source: CNBC)

Over \$857m worth of commodities traded at IME in 2nd week of April

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — During weekdays ending up to April 11, while 698,399 million tons (MT) of commodities worth over \$857 million were traded at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), the trading volume and value experienced growth of 577 percent and 479 percent, respectively.

According to the report from IME International Affairs and Public Relations

Department, last week, on the domestic and export metal and mineral trading floor of IME, 241,432 MT of various products worth close to \$386 million were traded.

On this trading floor, 233,060 MT of steel, 5,400 MT of copper, 2,600 MT of aluminum, 120 MT of molybdenum concentrates, 12 MT of precious metal concentrates as well as 240 MT of zinc ingot were traded by customers.

The report declares that on domestic



and export oil and petrochemical trading floors of IME, 455,473 MT of different commodities with the total value of \$479 million were traded.

On this trading floor, 206,200 MT of VB feed stock, 137,720 MT of bitumen,

78,897 MT of polymer products, 32,068 MT of chemical products and 1,680 MT of sulfur were traded.

Furthermore, 1,494 MT of various commodities were traded on the side market of IME.

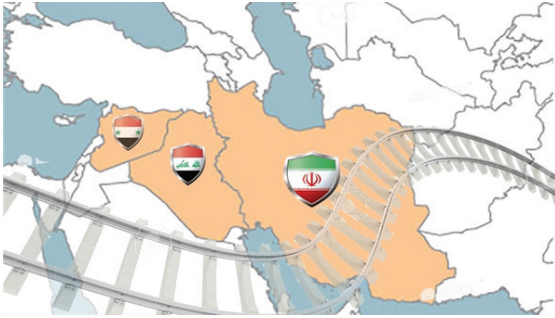
Transnational railroad to link Iran, Iraq, Syria

Iraqi Republic Railways Company Chief Salib al-Hussaini said that Tehran, Baghdad and Damascus will soon hold a summit to further discuss the development of a transnational railway line linking the three countries.

Salib al-Hussaini said a summit will be held between Iran, Iraq and Syria to further discuss the project of the transnational rail between the three countries, according to the Arabic-language al-Sumeria news website.

He made the remarks on the sidelines of the joint Syrian-Iraqi committee held in Damascus, a week after Iranian First Vice President Es'hag Jahangiri spoke of an initiative to link the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean.

"We will connect the Persian Gulf from Iraq to Syria and the Mediterranean via railway and road," said Jahangiri, making reference to the construction of a railway linking the



Iranian Shalamcheh border region to the Iraqi city of Basra. Speaking last December, Director General of the Railway

and Technical Structures Department at the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAI) Mohammad Mousavi said Iran was planning to build a movable railway bridge over Arvand River as part of the Shalamcheh-Basra project.

Mousavi said the project would effectively link the Iranian cities of Khorramshahr and Abadan along with the Imam Khomeini Port to the Iraqi city.

The railway project was agreed last month when Iran and Iraq signed five memorandums of understanding for the expansion of bilateral cooperation in various economic and healthcare sectors.

Observers have described the new agreements as a sign of Baghdad's serious intention of not being "party to the system of sanctions against Iran" as Prime Minister Abdul-Mahdi said earlier in February.

(Source: Fars News Agency)

Iran, Iraq exchange 39 economic delegations in a year

Iran's commercial attaché in Iraq said that in the Iranian year 1397 (ended on March 20, 2019), 39 economic delegations were exchanged between the two countries, showing the growing economic ties between Tehran and Baghdad.

During the Iranian year 1397, 19 trade and marketing missions and 20 official economic delegations, including 720 people have been

exchanged between the two countries, Nasser Behzad said.

Behzad said that Iraq as the main target for Iranian export enjoys growing capacities, on which the mentioned delegations focused with the aim of expanding ties and cooperation as well as strengthening the non-oil export and proper growth of economic relations between the two countries

in goods and services.

He also said that the exchange of the delegations resulted in signing of contracts between private sectors of the two countries, marketing for Iranian goods, opening sales offices, getting acquainted with each other's capacities, expansion of tourism, a 50% growth in Iran's export to Iraq, and field examination of how industries can facilitate

cooperation.

Referring to President Hassan Rouhani's visit to Iraq last month, Behzad said that the agreements made on this visit, in energy, industry, trade, consulate affair, infrastructure and banking, could open a new chapter in Iran-Iraq relations and pave the way for private sectors.

(Source: IRNA)

China to maintain prudent monetary policy, PBOC's Chen says

China will maintain a prudent monetary policy stance this year and keep the yuan in line with fundamentals as it uses fiscal tools to spur growth, according to central bank Deputy Governor Chen Yulu.

The Chinese economy has been "generally stable," Chen said a statement to the International Monetary and Financial Committee, which was posted on the IMF's website. Authorities will further open up the financial sector and level the playing field between local and foreign-funded institutions to strengthen the industry, he said.

"Prudent monetary policy will be neutral in general," the deputy governor said. "China will pursue a proactive fiscal policy with greater intensity and enhance its performance, focusing on cutting taxes and fees on a larger scale."

Policy makers in Beijing have been trying to stimulate growth without causing a debt blowout as trade tensions complicate the outlook for an economy that's already slowed moderately because of a domestic financial cleanup. The Wall Street Journal reported on Friday that the U.S.-China trade deal may include penalties if the latter manipulates its currency to boost exports.

China will continue to "improve the exchange rate mechanism and keep the RMB exchange rate in line with fundamentals at an adaptive equilibrium level," Chen said.

The potential for foreign portfolio investment inflows is growing, the central bank official said, pointing to the inclusion



of yuan-denominated assets into global indexes as a reason. Such inflows hit a record \$120 billion last year, he said.

"The stock market, which has seen a slack in the past few years, is showing signs of bottoming out and recovering," he said.

Chen said that Chinese and foreign-funded financial institutions will be treated "equally in a way that is more transparent and consistent" with best international practices to strengthen the vitality of the financial sector.

The government passed a new foreign investment law in March that it hopes will keep global companies enthusiastic about China. The law, to take effect in 2020, is designed to address a longstanding source of resentment by overseas companies that vast swathes of the economy remain closed off to foreign capital.

The government is also making progress on state-owned enterprises, Chen said. More than 1,900 so-called zombie enterprises, former central SOEs, and distressed companies had exited the market by the end of last year, he said.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Why June is set to be a decisive meeting for ECB

During the IMF meetings in Washington this week, Finnish Central Bank Governor Olli Rehn told CNBC that how the economy evolves by June will be key in determining how "we proceed as regards to our monetary policy stance."

The European Central Bank releases updated macroeconomic projections every quarter.

In March, the ECB slashed its growth forecast for 2019 to 1.1 percent from 1.7 percent, alongside announcing another targeted long term refinancing operation (TLTRO-III) as well as pushing back the timing of its first rate hike to the "end of 2019."

During prepared remarks on Wednesday's ECB meeting, President Mario Draghi said that the ECB stands ready to use "all available instruments" if the economic situation in the euro zone were to deteriorate further.

The ECB ended asset purchases of European government bonds in December, having expanded its balance sheet to over 2.6 trillion euros, but is continuing to reinvest payments from maturing securities under the program "for an extended period of time past the date when we start raising the key ECB interest rates."

When asked about the likely policy response if economic data were to worsen, Rehn told CNBC, "It is too early to say, speculate such that we have clearly said that we are ready to use or adjust all of our instruments as appropriate," adding that "the next time we are going to have a monetary policy meeting in June we will



also have a quarter of macroeconomic projections at our use and depending on the message of that economic assessment then we can judge how we proceed to our monetary policy stance."

He said, "For now it's clear that we have a very accommodative monetary policy stance," reiterating that "we are ready to adjust all of our instruments as appropriate taking into account economic developments."

There has been growing speculation that the ECB may consider tiering of deposits to alleviate the adverse impact negative rates have had on European banks.

Rehn told CNBC that "we are assessing the impact of negative rates as we always do as part of our regular assessment."

The IMF slashed euro zone forecasts by 0.3 percent in its World Economic Outlook earlier this week, with the largest downgrades for Italy and Germany (0.5 percent lower).

"We have recognized that there is a certain slowdown stemming from the global economy such as the Chinese slowdown, trade tensions as well as some internal European problems like Brexit," Rehn said.

(Source: CNBC)

Europe's risk of paralysis in slowdown puts Germany on the spot

Germany and France aren't exactly looking like a power couple when it comes to firing up Europe's slowing economy.

The divide between the two biggest euro-area economies was on display at the spring meetings of global policy makers in Washington, where the International Monetary Fund warned that growth in the region is losing momentum beyond a normal cooling of the economy. But the two nations that Europeans look to for leadership are at odds.

For German Finance Minister Olaf Scholz, a key challenge was fending off pressure, including by France and the IMF, for Chancellor Angela Merkel's government to ease off its annual push for a balanced budget and do more to revive growth instead. One possible remedy, according to Scholz: Come to Germany and find yourself a job.

"We have growth in Germany -- there is nothing like a traditional recessive situation," he told Bloomberg Television on Friday. "If there would be 500,000 or 1 million very skilled people coming to Germany and knock at the



right doors, they would find a job. This is the situation how we should understand it."

Much of the disagreement between Paris and Berlin is about the level of urgency.

French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire wants the euro area to prepare for a joint response to a possible downturn, meaning countries such as Germany should use their "fiscal space" to spend more. In the past the Trump administration has also pressured Germany to reduce its surplus and do more to spark growth.

Germany is already pursuing a "very expansive financial strategy," including spending on social programs and infrastructure, Scholz

said. Its debt reduction from 80 percent to 60 percent of gross domestic product creates a fiscal buffer that could be used in a major economic crisis, he said.

"I would not say there is a common position among the European states, but a common understanding of the current situation," Le Maire told reporters in Washington.

Germany's economy stagnated in the fourth quarter after a third-quarter contraction. Coupled with five consecutive quarters of slowing year-on-year growth in the euro area, that's shifting the economic goalposts for governments and the European Central Bank.

The ECB is readying more support for lending to the real economy just a few months after halting its crisis-era bond-buying program. Investors don't see it as being able to lift interest rates well into 2020.

Draghi's message

At the center of Europe's woes is a manufacturing shock in Germany, which officials blame on temporary factors from low water levels to a statistical overhang from previous

quarters.

A technical adjustment by German carmakers, which struggled last summer to adapt to new emissions-testing standards, has landed on the radar of policy makers across advanced economies trying to understand the global loss in momentum.

"The most likely scenario is still that the economy is going through a soft patch and momentum will pick up again after a pause," Bundesbank President Jens Weidmann said in Washington. Even so, German growth is likely to come in below IMF forecasts this year, he said. The fund this week cut its growth forecast for Germany to 0.8 percent this year, from a estimate of 1.3 percent it made three months earlier.

ECB President Mario Draghi pointed to unusual factors such as those in Germany as exacerbating the bleakness for the euro area's export-oriented economy. He and his colleagues have stepped up calls on European governments to help stimulate the economy.

(Source: CNBC)

Iranian new year’s 1st round of condensate offering due this week

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** — The National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) is due to launch this year’s first round of gas condensate offering at the international ring of Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX) on Tuesday.

According to an NIOC statement, one million barrels of condensate will be sold in 35,000-barrels cargos at this round and the base price for each barrel is set at \$67.85, Shana reported on Sunday.

Like the previous rounds, customers can make a six-percent pre-payment and the payments can be done up to 100 percent in rial.

The purchased cargos will be delivered to the consumers within four months.

The first round of offering gas condensate of South Pars gas field was held at IRENEX on February 13 which failed to attract any customers.

According to the National Iranian Oil Company’s representative Amir Hossein Tebyanian, despite the failure of the first two rounds, NIOC plans to offer gas condensate cargos at the energy exchange in a regular basis like oil.

Since the U.S.’s withdrew from Iran’s



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

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 and gas condensate sales, one of which is offering them at the country’s stock market.

NIOC offered crude oil at IRENEX first on

October 28, 2018 just few days before new U.S. sanctions on Iran’s petroleum sector took effect (November 4). In the first round, NIOC could sell some 280,000 barrels of crude oil at \$74.85 per barrel. With the daily supply amount of one million barrels, the market wrapped up by selling eight 35,000-barrel cargos of oil on the day.

Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh has said that NIOC will offer crude oil at IRENEX every week.

Establishment of IRENEX, which is considered as a turning point in Iran’s strategic oil industry and capital market and also a platform for producers and consumers to be in touch and pay lower trade costs in a transparent business environment, can be translated into creation of a new energy stock market that results in economic development.

The energy market is basically exports-oriented and has the capacity to increase Iranian oil customers both domestically and internationally. Price setting relies on the base price determined by NIOC according to global prices. Receiving a trading code, foreign companies can purchase oil cargos from IRENEX.

Russia, OPEC may ditch oil deal to fight for market share: Russian minister



Russia and OPEC may decide to boost production to fight for market share with the United States but this would push oil prices as low as \$40 per barrel, TASS news agency cited Russia’s Finance Minister Anton Siluanov as saying on Saturday.

“There is a dilemma. What should we do with OPEC: should we lose the market, which is being occupied by the Americans, or quit the deal?” Anton Siluanov, speaking in Washington, said, TASS reported.

“(If the deal is abandoned) the oil prices will go down, then the new investments will shrink, American output will be lower, because the production cost for shale oil is higher than for traditional oil.”

Siluanov said oil prices could drop to \$40 per barrel or even less for up to one year.

The minister said there had been no decision on the deal yet and he did not know whether OPEC countries would be

happy with this scenario.

OPEC, Russia and other producers, an alliance known as OPEC+, are reducing output by 1.2 million bpd from Jan. 1 for six months. They meet on June 25-26 to decide whether to extend the pact.

The combined supply cuts have helped to drive a 32 percent rally in crude prices this year to nearly \$72 a barrel, prompting U.S. President Donald Trump to call on OPEC to ease its market-supporting efforts. OPEC has said the curbs must remain, but there are signs that stance is now softening.

Earlier this week, sources familiar with the matter told Reuters that OPEC could raise oil output from July if Venezuelan and Iranian supply drops further and prices keep rallying, because extending production cuts with Russia and other allies could overtighten the market.

(Source: Reuters)

Brazil’s economy minister says he can ‘fix’ Petrobras situation



Brazilian Economy Minister Paulo Guedes said he’ll clear up any confusion from President Jair Bolsonaro’s decision to halt a planned fuel-price hike by Petroleo Brasileiro SA.

When asked about Bolsonaro’s meddling in state-controlled Petrobras’ pricing policy this week, Guedes said he’d get more information when he returns home from Washington, where he’s been attending the spring meetings of the International Monetary Fund.

Petrobras shares plunged more than 8 percent on Friday after Bolsonaro called the energy producer’s Chief Executive Officer Roberto Castello Branco and ordered him to cancel a planned increase in diesel prices.

“The president has many virtues, does a lot of right things, and he has already said he doesn’t understand much of economics,” Guedes told reporters on Saturday. “If he

did something that’s not very reasonable, I’m sure we can fix it. A conversation fixes everything.”

Bolsonaro’s hastily-made decision sent shockwaves across Brazilian markets as it revived fears of the interventionist policies by previous Brazilian governments that analysts blame for fueling inflation and hurting the economy in recent years. A massive trucker strike hit the country a year ago when diesel prices were finally allowed to go up. Since then, the government temporarily subsidized diesel, and Petrobras has started adjusting its prices more sparingly.

Late on Friday, Bolsonaro’s spokesman said the president understands that Petrobras is a publicly-held company subject to market rules, and that it shouldn’t be subject to political interference.

(Source: Bloomberg)

First Chinese deepwater rig in South China Sea aims to supply LNG to Greater Bay Area

A controversial offshore drilling platform has started deepwater operations in the South China Sea, which officials said would supply liquefied natural gas to the “Greater Bay Area” in the future.

It is the first Chinese-built deepwater rig, and its first deep-sea well was completed in eastern waters of the South China Sea in recent days, according to a statement by its operator, state-run China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC).

The well is 4,660 metres deep, with a true vertical depth – or the distance in a straight line from the surface to the bottom of the borehole – of 2,529 metres.

Han Xiaoping, chief analyst at energy industry website china5e.com, called it a “breakthrough”.

“This is a breakthrough for China, because

it was very challenging for CNOOC to drill a well with such a depth [for the first time],” Han said.

“This is a common drilling operation used by the world’s top offshore drilling companies in the United States, Britain and other Western countries,” he said. “The completion of a deep-sea well like this indicates China is narrowing the gap with these Western countries.”

Once the rig starts production, LNG from the well will be transported to CNOOC’s gas terminal at Gaolan port in Zhuhai, Guangdong province and it will supply energy to a population of 70 million in the Greater Bay Area, according to the company’s statement. It did not say when production would begin.

The Greater Bay Area refers to the Chinese government’s scheme to link Hong Kong and Macau with the southern cities

of Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Foshan, Zhongshan, Dongguan, Huizhou, Jiangmen and Zhaoqing into an integrated economic and business hub.

Han said that since the area aimed to rival Silicon Valley and Wall Street combined, a reliable clean energy supply was a must.

“If LNG can be directly transported to the Greater Bay Area by pipeline from CNOOC’s terminal in Zhuhai, it will save a lot on transport costs for the power companies – and residents will also benefit,” Han said.

Vietnam wants a South China Sea dispute resolution pact with teeth, not more politics The Offshore Oil 981 drilling platform is a sixth-generation ultra-deepwater rig that was developed by state-owned shipbuilder China State Shipbuilding Corp for CNOOC.

Work on the platform began in May

2012 in the South China Sea, where Beijing has territorial disputes with Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and other neighboring countries. The Chinese rig was originally located in waters contested with Hanoi, but it was moved after it sparked a violent dispute between the two countries in 2014 that saw deadly anti-Chinese demonstrations across Vietnam.

The South China Sea is believed to contain rich reserves of energy resources such as natural gas and oil. The US Energy Information Agency estimates that it holds about 190 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and 11 billion barrels of oil in proved and probable reserves, most of which lie along the margins of the South China Sea rather than under disputed islets and reefs.

(Source: scmp.com)

Here’s the level oil needs to hold for the crude rally to rage on

Crude can’t crank higher unless it stays above the key \$60 level, says expert technician Louise Yamada.

Tightening global supplies have proved bullish for the commodity this year, with U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude prices currently hovering near five-month highs. But the upward action has also been quite volatile, as economic and geopolitical factors have wielded increasing influence over prices.

And if you ask Yamada, who runs Yamada Technical Research Advisors, oil prices are facing some serious resistance that can’t be topped without similarly strong support.

“Right here, \$60, \$60-61, is an important support on any pullback,” Yamada told CNBC’s “Futures Now” on Thursday. “I’d like to see that hold if we’re going to see a consolidation that suggests higher levels. So, let’s say \$60 is an important support.”

At the same time, crude is bumping up against resistance at the \$64 level, which it failed to hold in Friday’s session.

“So far, oil has achieved our first target of \$63 and, at the moment, it’s gone through the



200-day moving average, which is a plus,” Yamada acknowledged. “But it’s headed up into this 2018 resistance level – that’s almost a yearlong resistance – so I would suspect that we get a little consolidation. It could pull back toward the 200-day [at] \$61.60.”

If the stars align – crude’s 50-day moving average crossing above the 200-day moving average at the same time as the price moves above \$65 a barrel – Yamada gets more bullish.

“We have an outstanding target at \$70”

if those two things happen, she said. “But our real concern here was the resistance around \$63, \$64. So we want to see how it negotiates that level. We did have a nice positive divergence in the daily momentum back in December, suggesting that the low that we saw was a reversal, which we got. [...] So this may be a resting point before, and if, prices go higher.”

And while crude’s daily and weekly momentum indicators are still positive, “it’s the monthly that concerns us,” Yamada warned. “It’s close, but has not moved into a positive position. If it did, then I think, possibly, you could see it move higher. But at the moment I think it’s due for a little bit of a rest.”

WTI crude oil prices ended Friday’s trading session fairly flat, up less than half of 1%. On Thursday, RBC Capital Markets raised its 2019 forecast for international Brent crude, the global benchmark, to \$75 and forecast bouts of \$80 crude throughout the summer.

(Source: CNBC)

Renewable energy could save \$160 trillion in climate change costs by 2050

In the face of rising global emissions, intensified electrification and an increase in renewable energy could prove to make the difference that ensures we reach future climate goals. With development and energy demands soaring worldwide, there is an opportunity for clean, renewable energy to supplant fossil fuels and take over as the main form of electricity generation. New findings published by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) have emphasized the need to scale up efforts to transition away from fossil fuels and towards renewable energy.

‘The Global Energy Transformation: A Roadmap to 2050’ outlines how the world can successfully implement large-scale renewable programs that will not only help reduce carbon emissions but improve global socioeconomic development. The analysis provided by IRENA shows that global energy demands are expected to double by 2050, and that 86 percent of global electrical needs could be met by renewable energy within that same timeframe. A large scale up from current levels, the extra energy load would be carried mostly by wind and solar installations.

Barriers to change

Despite the optimistic outlook, IRENA warns that more needs to be done in order to reach the goal they anticipated. IRENA’s Director-General Francesco La Camera explains that, “The energy transformation is gaining momentum, but it must accelerate even faster. The UN’s 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the review of national climate pledges under the Paris Agreement are milestones for raising the level of ambition. Urgent action on the ground at all levels is vital, in particular unlocking the investments needed to further strengthen the momentum of this energy transformation. Speed and forward-looking leadership will be critical – the world in 2050 depends on the energy decisions we take today.”

Whilst the push for renewable energy certainly has its benefits, there remains a wide range of obstacles in the way of their large-scale development and implementation. For example, the past two years have seen the United States’ solar industry lose momentum over President Donald Trump’s tariffs, whilst lawmakers in Australia are failing to adhere to the nation’s COP21 emissions reduction goals and have continued on with their plans to open the world’s largest open-air coal mine despite widespread public condemnation. These political setbacks are relatively widespread and have been reducing the ability of the renewable energy sector to efficiently evolve and develop, and could have a lasting impact on global emissions.

A time for action

IRENA’s report has noted that transitions have been slow and that current rates of emission reduction are not in line with global climate goals. The report recommends that nations take more aggressive actions to ensure a quick and effective transition away from fossil fuels that will help reach the previously agreed-upon goals and ensure that mitigation of climate change remains a priority. In order to do so, IRENA advocates for stronger national policy focusing on long-term zero-carbon strategies as well as promoting innovation in the fields of renewable energy, technology and smart-grids.

Commenting on the report’s findings, La Camera said that “The race to secure a climate safe future has entered a decisive phase. Renewable energy is the most effective and readily-available solution for reversing the trend of rising CO₂ emissions. A combination of renewable energy with deeper electrification can achieve 75 percent of the energy-related emission reduction needed.” What La Camera is describing has already happened in many places worldwide - many islands have been leading the charge in renewable energy transitions, and are becoming incubators for energy innovation.

Race against the clock

The benefits stemming from embracing clean, renewable energy go a lot farther than just reducing pollution and carbon emissions. IRENA has illustrated the risks of a slow transition, and every year that carbon emissions increase is another year that negatively affects the environment, social welfare, and the wider economy. Likewise, IRENA has also been quick to point out the knock-on effects of a renewable energy transition in its report, outlining how a rapid transition could save the global economy \$160 trillion in costs associated to climate change.

“The shift towards renewables makes economic sense,” emphasizes La Camera, “By mid-century, the global economy would be larger, and jobs created in the energy sector would boost global employment by 0.2 percent. Policies to promote a just, fair and inclusive transition could maximize the benefits for different countries, regions and communities. This would also accelerate the achievement of affordable and universal energy access. The global energy transformation goes beyond a transformation of the energy sector. It is a transformation of our economies and societies.”

With time of the essence as nations grapple to reduce the current and future effects of climate change, IRENA’s report punctuates the emergency of the situation - but also how beneficial an efficient transition away from fossil fuels will be for the economy.

(Source: Forbes)

Sudan political turmoil not affecting South Sudan oil flow: minister

Political turmoil in Sudan has not affected oil flow from neighboring South Sudan, the latter’s oil minister said on Saturday.

“This morning I have been updated by our technical teams in the oilfields in GPOC and DPOC and in Khartoum and Hagleig and the oil is flowing as normal,” South Sudan Oil Minister Ezekiel Lul Gatkuoth told Reuters.

“The technical teams from both sides in South Sudan and Sudan are cooperating very well and nothing is alarming at all.”

South Sudan, the world’s youngest country after its split from Sudan in 2011, has some of the largest reserves of crude in sub-Saharan Africa, only a third of which have been explored so far.

The oil minister said in February the country would return to producing more than 350,000 barrels of crude per day by the middle of 2020, up from current levels of just over 140,000 bpd.

Sudan President Omar al-Bashir was overthrown last week after weeks of mass protests. The new head of Sudan’s military council said on Saturday a civilian government would be formed after consultation with the opposition.

(Source: Reuters)



Trump is helping Saudi Arabia go nuclear, despite Mr. Bone Saw



The White House faces a hostile Congress in its dealings with Saudi Arabia, with a bipartisan majority lined up against President Trump — though not yet big enough to override a presidential veto. It's a sign of how the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi has affected U.S. politics, at least in Washington's relations with Riyadh.

We first saw it when the Senate tried to enforce the Magnitsky Act in the wake of the journalist's killing, demanding that the White House impose sanctions on those responsible within 120 days. The deadline passed and President Trump ignored it.

Then we had last month's vote by Congress to stop America's military support for the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen's civil war, which has caused 60,000 deaths and left millions on the brink of famine.

Again, all the signs are that this, too, will be vetoed by the president.

Now we have a third bone of contention; namely, how the Trump administration is secretly helping Saudi Arabia develop a nuclear power program that may, or may not, result in the desert kingdom's acquiring the A-bomb.

Yes, that's right. Last year, the U.S. president was tearing up what he called the "worst deal ever," an international agreement to stop Iran developing a nuclear program.

■ On the nuclear ladder

Now he is helping Iran's arch foe in the Persian Gulf, Saudi Arabia, get its feet on the nuclear ladder.

What particularly angers those on Capitol Hill is that it shows the president's business-as-usual attitude toward the man they believe ordered the Washington Post journalist's murder.

I'm talking about the Saudi crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, MBS or "Mr. Bone Saw."

We know the Trump administration has been covertly supplying nuclear technology to the Saudis in contravention of U.S. law.

And what senators and congressmen find particularly irksome is that this could have been happening since Khashoggi's murder.

As Sen. Bob Menendez, D-N.J., said, "It's critical to know how exactly how this happened, when it happened and particularly were you doing this after Khashoggi?"

Last year, MBS caused alarm when he said the Saudis would develop a nuclear bomb.

It was no doubt with this in mind, as well as Khashoggi's dismemberment, that Sen. Brad Sherman, D-Calif., said last week: "If you cannot trust a regime with a bone saw, you should not trust them with nuclear weapons."

And it's not just opposition Democrats who are worried about MBS.

■ MBS as a wrecking ball

Who can forget Republican Lindsey Graham's description of the crown prince as a "wrecking ball."

"I think he's crazy. I think he's dangerous," said the South Carolina senator.

Last week, satellite images showed Saudi Arabia's first nuclear reactor, which is nearing completion at the King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology in Riyadh.

It came as no surprise that one is being built. We've known about Riyadh's nuclear ambitions for nine years, but the plans have accelerated under MBS' Vision 2030 program, which aims for solar, wind and nuclear power to provide a third of the kingdom's energy needs by then.

What is worrying is how the Trump administration has been happy to bypass Congress and hand over America's nuclear know-how with no safeguards to ensure that Saudi Arabia cannot enrich uranium or reprocess spent fuel.

Under Section 123 of the U.S. Atomic Energy Act of 1954, also called the "golden standard," any country receiving help from the U.S. agrees to abide by certain rules regarding non-proliferation technologies, the peaceful nature of a nuclear program and International Atomic Energy Agency inspections.

It was this type of oversight that the Saudis did not like when the Obama administration tried to enforce it.

Thomas Countryman, who was then the assistant secretary of state for international security and nonproliferation, said his talks with the Saudis foundered over their resistance to accepting restrictions on enrichment or reprocessing, as well as any inspections schedule to stop any fissile material from being diverted for use on weapons.

■ Saudi MBS bending the rules

But now that they have a president dancing to their tune, MBS and his friends have been able to bend the rules to suit them.

"I believe the Saudis saw an opportunity with Trump and Kushner to conclude this rapidly on their terms, holding out the promise of major purchases," said Countryman, now chairman of the Arms Control Association, referring to Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law.

In particular, seven permits known as Part 810 authorizations have been issued for U.S. companies to sell nuclear power assistance to Saudi Arabia.

Senator Sherman added, "It tells the country that if Jared and Donald Trump can transfer nuclear technology to the Saudis on seven occasions and not reveal the details to members of Congress with the highest national security clearance, even in special classified rooms — what are they hiding?"

Yet again, while there is a bipartisan majority in Congress supporting adherence to the "golden standard," it is still not big enough to muster the two-thirds vote needed to override a Trump veto. As Sherman said, "The cards are stacked against us."

All this comes barely a year after a new Middle East crisis entirely of Trump's own making — when America tore up that nuclear deal, with Iran saying it was "rotten."

This was despite acceptance in the wider international community that the agreement was actually working quite well, with Tehran dismantling a huge part of its nuclear program and letting inspectors in to make sure it wasn't cheating.

(Source: Newsweek)

European leaders buy time to keep bickering

By Peter Müller and Jörg Schindler

The new British passport looks almost exactly like the old one. It's burgundy red and the front cover shows the English lion and the Scottish unicorn standing proudly on their hind legs next to the United Kingdom's coat of arms. It is emblazoned with the words "Honi soit qui mal y pense," in English: "Evil be to him who evil thinks."

Britain's glorious future outside the EU was originally supposed to begin. It was a first step in the country's return to its (new) old glory. Beginning at the end of this year, UK passports will shine again in the traditional colors of blue and gold.

That's the theory, at least. It's also possible that this announcement — like so much else in the never-ending Brexit saga — was somewhat premature.

There has been a new deadline for Brexit since Thursday. After a marathon meeting in Brussels, the UK and the 27 other EU members agreed that Oct. 31, 2019, would be the absolute last day of this dysfunctional marriage.

As is so often the case when important decisions are made in the EU capital, heads of government convened behind closed doors for hours, debating, with their sherpas running through the corridors every now and then, until finally, in the middle of the night, they could announce that a deal had been reached.

In reality, nothing has been solved. With their compromise on Thursday, the united Europeans and the United Kingdom entered a decisive "as if" phase: The EU will pretend as if October is their final offer; Theresa May will pretend as if she can still decide; in London, the government will pretend as if it is conducting promising negotiations with the opposition Labour Party; May's enemies within her own party will pretend as if they could depose their leader at any minute; and everyone is collectively pretending as if they have Brexit under control.

Meanwhile, everyone is fully aware that October — barring some miracle — is just another obstacle for the British to overcome. And that things will continue after that, perhaps until March 2020, perhaps until the end of 2020, perhaps even longer. Who knows? Brexit forever.

If the last days and weeks have made one thing clear, it is that more time only means more arguments. And the longer this goes on, the more serious the consequences will be — not only for Theresa May, her party and her country, but for the entire European project.

■ May imploring the MPs

On Thursday afternoon, Theresa May bravely returned to the British House of Commons, where she has been attacked so often and so mercilessly. Once again, she implored the MPs to reach a compromise, all the while ignoring calls for her resignation.



It was a clear message that even now, she wasn't thinking about quitting. The fact that she had, only a month ago, loudly proclaimed that she "as prime minister" refused to postpone Brexit later than June 30 — no worries. May has promised so much and delivered so little that it hardly matters anymore. Except maybe for those voters who think mainstream politicians are all liars anyway.

It's not clear how May plans to use her newly won time. No one dares hope that the talks that were kick-started in early April with the equally disjointed Labour Party could actually lead to a viable compromise on Brexit. Labour's goal is new elections. So why should the party — with the catastrophe averted for now — support what Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn likes to refer to as a "Tory-Brexit?"

Should the negotiations with Labour fail, May wants to let parliament vote on alternative variants of Brexit again. Should any of the many options achieve majority approval, May has promised to respect the outcome. But despite her complete lack of credibility, even among party allies: Why should something that has already failed twice suddenly work on the third attempt? The agreement in Brussels has removed the only leverage that could have maybe forced a compromise: the pressure of time.

And so, the dreaded EU elections inch ever closer toward the island. If the Brits don't manage to come to some Brexit agreement with Brussels, they will be required to participate in the vote for a new European Parliament, for better or worse. There is much reason to believe such a vote would be a momentous reckoning for the ruling conservatives.

The think tank Open Europe just published a survey, according to which the Tories could only expect to receive around 23 percent of the vote. The big winners of the election would be the new "Brexit Party" of the firebrand populist Nigel Farage and the EU-friendly dissidents of "Change UK," which isn't even registered as a political party yet.

So far, neither group has a functioning apparatus, voter base nor sufficient number of candidates for the election. Even so, they have what it takes to bring the British political system to its knees. With unforeseeable consequences. It's hard to imagine a situation after such a historic debacle in which Theresa May could still cling to her office.

By that point at the very latest, it would be time for a new leader to try their hand at governing. And since the majority of Conservative Party members are staunchly critical of the EU, the dreams of some unpredictable politician like Boris Johnson could suddenly come true and they could find themselves in a position of power.

No one has any doubts that Johnson, a former EU correspondent for the Daily Telegraph, would give his desire to destroy Brussels free rein — with the goal of negotiating the hardest Brexit possible. Or, if push came to shove, to simply leave without an agreement. Only the British parliament in its current constellation could prevent Johnson or some other hardliner from taking this step — another reason why another special parliamentary election could soon take place.

That's why the EU's decision on Thursday was such a big risk. No one can know how the UK will behave in the near or distant future. Once again, Theresa May made big promises: that her country intended to continue fulfilling its obligations as an EU member; that London would refrain from trying to influence personnel decisions just as it would stay out of negotiations over an EU budget for the years 2021 to 2027. But what are May's promises really worth anymore?

Hardline Brexiteer and Boris Johnson supporter Jacob Rees-Mogg even went so far as to say earlier this month that his country should be "as difficult as possible" with the EU. European diplomats should no longer harbor any illusions.

■ Sabotaging the bloc

To be sure, the Brits' ability to sabotage

the bloc will be limited in the coming weeks and months. Top jobs like the presidencies of the Council and the Commission don't have to be unanimously ratified and there are no major legislative projects in the pipeline for the time being. European Parliament will convene one more time in Strasbourg next week and then the European election campaign will begin.

But should the UK send a passel of right-wing populists to Brussels, it would be even more difficult to find majorities in a new European Parliament. And what if British hardliners remain in parliament after October? Will they carry the discord they sowed in the House of Commons with them to Brussels and Strasbourg?

So far, the remaining 27 EU member states have managed surprisingly well to prevent the chaos in London from spreading to Brussels. Maintaining that quarantine will also be the goal in the coming months. On May 9, the EU plans to discuss future issues in the Romanian city of Sibiu. The way things look at the moment, it's unlikely they'll ask Theresa May to participate.

But cracks are already beginning to show in the EU facade.

Before EU leaders reached a compromise on Thursday, France and Germany clashed. On the one side, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, with the backing of Ireland and the Netherlands, had wanted to grant the British a generous extension of their Brexit deadline until at least the end of the year. On the other side, French President Emmanuel Macron was unyielding.

Along with Austria and Spain, he made the case for a postponement of a few months at the most — and the Brits' behavior, he said, should be regularly reviewed and evaluated. "History will not judge us kindly if we allow the British to stand in the way of the EU and European integration," Macron said. The way he sees it, the prospect that other EU countries might follow the UK's lead is more dangerous than a hard Brexit without an agreement.

The new deadline of Oct. 31 was chosen arbitrarily — it is almost exactly between the dates that Macron and Merkel would have chosen. In that sense, it was a classic Brussels compromise.

Merkel and the vast majority of other EU member states still believe that the prospect of having to stay in the EU for a long time will increase the chance of the British parliament agreeing to some Brexit deal after all. And more than a few people, including European Council President Donald Tusk, still secretly hope that the British will cancel Brexit altogether.

If the last 1,000-plus days have demonstrated anything, it's that in the era of Brexit, things always happen differently than expected.

(Source: Spiegel)

Voting and loathing in South Africa

By Tofi Mhaka

On March 6, just two months before South Africa's elections, African National Congress (ANC) politician and current premier of Gauteng province, David Makhura, declared: "I think some specific crimes (are omitted) by some specific nationalities or foreign nationals are involved."

Whenever a powerful South African political leader blames undocumented migrants for perpetrating crime and lawlessness, I get shivers down my spine.

The consequences of expressing such broad, unsubstantiated claims can be deadly, as events in the recent past have demonstrated.

In 2008, more than 60 people were killed in weeks-long xenophobic riots across the country; the violence was preceded by much talk by South African officials about "flood" of "aliens". Since then, the country has witnessed fatal attacks on foreigners on a regular basis.

Most recently, in late March, at least three people died after an angry crowd attacked foreign-owned shops and homes in the city of Durban.

■ As general election nears

As South Africa's May 8 general election nears, politicians from both the ruling ANC and the main opposition Democratic Alliance (DA) party are stepping up their anti-migrant rhetoric.

Plagiarizing from U.S. President Donald Trump's electoral playbook, they have repeatedly described foreigners as criminals who are taking advantage of and exploiting the nation's riches.

The ANC has promised to take a "hard line" on undocumented foreigners and the DA has said it is bent on "fixing immigration". But is migration really South Africa's biggest problem?

I am a migrant from Zimbabwe. I came to South Africa 14 years ago after the economy of my country imploded. I have a permanent residency here. Contrary to what Makhura and others like him claim, I'm not a criminal. I work legally in South Africa.

I, and the two million migrants in South Africa, fear drug lords, property hijackers, carjackers, murderers, rapists and petty thieves, whatever their nationality may be.

I don't fraternize with criminal elements and remain panic-stricken and angered by the pervasive threat of falling prey to violent crime, just as much as my South African friends and colleagues are.

Unfortunately, the massive divide between a law-abiding

migrant, documented or not, and a "foreign criminal", is deliberately obscured and purposefully politicized. I'm always inundated by a sense of deep shame and discomfort each time a migrant, especially a fellow Zimbabwean, reportedly commits a crime. But the truth is, the vast majority of us are not involved in criminal activity.

In a 2017 analysis, South Africa's Institute for Security Studies (ISS) concluded that "most people committing crimes across the country are South Africans and not foreign nationals".

The ISS study also said unsubstantiated public declarations made by senior government officials on undocumented migrants tend to "promote xenophobic attitudes and may provoke violence against foreign nationals".

Currently, 7.5 percent of the prison population in South Africa is made up of foreigners and, according to the 2011 census, 4.2 percent of the South African population was foreign-born.

Given that migrants have a higher chance of being apprehended by the police, since they are purposefully targeted, there does not seem to be evidence that there is a higher degree of criminality among them.

Blaming other problems plaguing the country on foreigners is also based on non-existent evidence.

Contrary to what Makhura and others like him claim, I, and many other migrants, do not exploit South Africa's healthcare system. I pay taxes in South Africa and therefore contribute to the funds that go towards the healthcare budget. Whatever is not covered by the system, I pay out of my own pocket.

My three children were born here, and I am forever grateful to the South African nurses, specialists and doctors who delivered them safely and cared for them at government hospitals in Pretoria.

The fact that state-run hospitals are overwhelmed and underfunded is not because of us, migrants.

In fact, it has been well-documented that plenty of migrants are turned away by South African hospitals, despite the fact that they have the legal right to access free basic healthcare.

■ Structural issues

The health care system is suffering because of major structural issues the South African state faces, including problems of mismanagement and misallocation of funds.

That there are some migrants who do not pay taxes on their labor or commercial activities is also not a problem of migration, but a problem of law enforcement by the South African state.

More importantly, whatever "tax evasion" is happening among migrant workers, it is negligible in terms of scope compared to the massive amounts of money South Africa is losing due to the complex schemes major corporations and business elites undertake to avoid paying their dues.

As one recent study found, "98% of the tax loss is associated with profit-shifting by the biggest 10% of multinational corporations".

Likewise, unemployment woes in South Africa are not caused by migration. Migrants most often than not take low-paying jobs that locals avoid and more often than not restrict their economic activities to the informal sector anyway.

Migrants are also not to blame for low salaries. The precarious situation they often found themselves in force them to accept the worse working condition and lower pay.

However, it is the duty of the state to ensure fair remuneration in all sectors of the economy and punish employers who do not provide it.

■ Levels of violent crime

Indeed, when one looks at the big picture — the pervasive poverty, the poor service delivery, the underdevelopment of infrastructure, lack of housing and high levels of violent crime — it is clear that migration is not South Africa's biggest problem.

But it is a convenient issue to rant about in public when the general population needs to be distracted from the fact that over the past 25 years, the South African political elite has not managed to deliver on the many promises it has made. It is much easier to fuel xenophobic sentiments among the South African population than to try to counter them. In fact, it is politically rewarding to do so.

Blaming foreigners for everything is an old, political gimmick that unfortunately still works and South African politicians are showing no signs of giving up on it in their electoral games.

And while they are quick to condemn violence when it gets really bad, they seem to make no connection between their routine toxic rhetoric and what is happening on the ground, between talking about "undocumented foreigners ... not paying taxes and running businesses without licenses" and the shooting of dozens of migrant shopkeepers every year.

Back in 2008, after the deadly xenophobic riots, the opponents of then President Thabo Mbeki within the ANC blamed his policies for the situation.

Today, 11 years later, it does not seem that they have done much to rectify whatever Mbeki did wrong.

(Source: aljazeera.com)

A conscious fight against colonial rule:

Dipesh Chakrabarty

Being on the margin makes you intellectually vigilant

1 → ■ Many postcolonial writers argue that the return to a pristine, unspoiled precolonial culture is impossible. Do you agree with them? For example can India return to its indigenous language and culture before British colonialism?

A: Yes, I agree with them. Once you have been molded by ideas of modernity – a difficult and complex term, but let's reduce it for the purpose of this conversation to Kant's ideal of deployment of reason in public life – it is well nigh impossible to go back and construct a public or citizenly life based on relations and ideas that completely preceded the coming of modernity. Take the example of caste-based oppression in India. Caste had its critics in pre-British India but a lot of these criticisms were based on the idea of "equality of all humans in the eyes of God." But in modern India, the most effective and powerful criticisms of the so-called caste-system are grounded in the notion of "equality of all citizens in the eyes of the law." I don't think anyone in their right minds would argue that the earlier premise would be sufficient today. But this is not to say that all our ideas and practices get Westernized or Europeanized to the same degree or in the same way. If you look at practices relating to bureaucratic life, Indians have mostly adopted European rules and practices (including wearing European-style clothes). But if you look at the world of music, Indians exercise much more sovereignty there. The same would go for other creative arts: films, performance and visual arts, fiction.

■ As an Eastern scholar who is living in the West, do you think that you have a hybrid identity? Do you embrace this hybridity or do you believe that we should resort to our local cultures and identities?

A: My good friend Homi Bhabha's argument has been that we all have hybrid identities. He defined "hybrid" as the principle of "difference within." In the same way that a language develops and strengthens its identity as "one" language only by borrowing and assimilating elements from other languages, by becoming "internally plural" that is, humans also develop claims to rich, unitary identities by becoming internally plural. My own language is Bengali, the language spoken in the Indian state of West Bengal and in the Republic of Bangladesh. I think of it as one language. Muslim Bengalis fought with Pakistan to create Bangladesh, literally the land where Bangla is spoken. But Bangla developed as a language only by borrowing heavily from Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, English, and other European languages – not just words but also idioms, phrases, and grammatical properties. I say all this to suggest that we all negotiate hybrid identities. It is only political compulsions that sometimes lead us to deny the hybrid nature of identities. Incidentally, one could be hybrid and local at the same time. That is the point of what I said above about languages.

■ Nandy says: 'colonialism is first of all a matter of consciousness and needs to be defeated ultimately in the minds of men'. In your opinion, how can we make the minds of men in global South aware of postcolonial relations? Are you optimistic about the possibilities of subaltern resistance against power relations?

A: Whether or not colonialism happens in the mind first – for, as a historian, I find that colonial rule often has plural or uncertain origins in events that do not necessarily have to do with any conscious colonizing designs – once established, it definitely works by securing itself in the minds of people. A conscious fight against colonial rule therefore begins by questioning its legitimacy. And that is a battle for the minds of people. Nandy is certainly right in that sense.

I feel optimistic – without losing my sense of realism – about the future of subaltern resistance. But this is not an uncomplicated question. The world recognizes the claims of various "subaltern" groups – from the classic working class, indigenous peoples, minority groups to queers, disabled, and others – much more than it did a century ago. In that sense, subaltern resistance has definitely paid off in significant ways. But we cannot forget the lessons of Gayatri Spivak's exercise in her



Dr. Dipesh Chakrabarty a Historian and specialist in postcolonial theory and subaltern studies

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epochal essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Subaltern resistance, even while resisting the main structures and links of power, has to work through the same structures and links that they resist. One should not think of subaltern resistance as turning the world upside down once and for all. Questions of power and hierarchy remain. This was the point that Ranajit Guha, the guru of Subaltern Studies, made in his classic 1983 book, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, a foundational text of the intellectual movement that "subaltern studies," the series, stood for. So, yes, subaltern resistance is always good and necessary but we should not delude ourselves that such resistance would result in the kind of emancipation that the Marxist idea of revolution once stood for. We can forget the hard-earned insights of Foucault and Derrida.

■ Do you think that postcolonialism has achieved decent status in IR theory or do you still regard it as a relatively new entrant in the discipline which remains on the margins of IR? How do you anticipate the future perspective of this theory?

A: I am not a specialist in IR but have been around some of the discussions that have taken place on postcolonialism and IR. I would say that this interest now forms a significant but marginal group in the world of IR. Mainstream IR, it seems to me, is still dominated by the so-called realist view of politics. That is because mainstream IR does not even try to imagine an alternative world; it simply takes all given power-relations for granted and tries to imagine the future of the world on that basis. For that reason, mainstream IR does not have the means and methods of imagining an alternative world. Tipping points, cri-

ses that can change beyond recognition the nature of the international relations – issues like these would remain outside its purview.

This is why, for instance, those IR specialists who would like to take seriously, say, the problem of planetary climate change also remain on the margins of this field. Postcolonial IR, similarly, begins from a very serious critique of the domination by the powerful nations of the world of what is called the "world order" and, however strong such an order may seem in the immediate context, postcolonial thinking simply cannot afford to go on thinking of the present as a permanent state of the world. By its own nature and thanks to its intellectual assumptions, postcolonial IR must imagine a more just and alternative future for the world of nations. For that reason, while the present US-China-dominated order exists, postcolonial IR, I am afraid, will remain on the margins. But that may not be a bad thing: being on the margin makes you intellectually vigilant and gives your critical energies a vibrancy that will always be in contrast to the smugness of the mainstream.

■ You coined the word "provincializing Europe" in postcolonial studies which is the title of one of your book. What do you exactly mean by it?

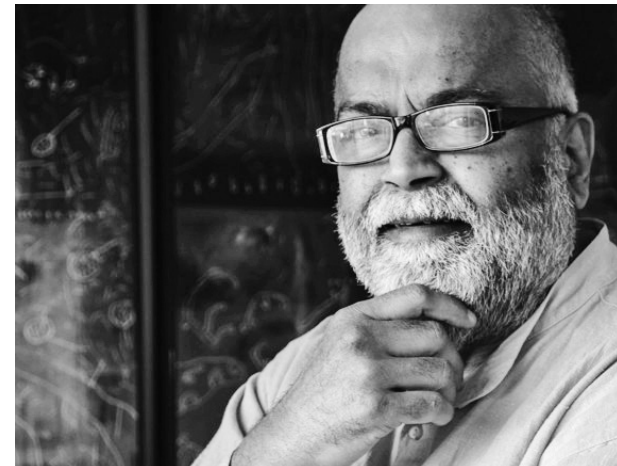
A: You asked me to explain briefly the sense in which I spoke of "provincializing Europe" and what the act of "provincializing" exactly meant. For me, to provincialize Europe was to make a deliberately self-contradictory move. I am not the first one to make such a move. Other post-colonial intellectuals before me have made self-contradictory moves to articulate their positions. Du Bois spoke of possessing "a double consciousness;" Frantz Fanon discussed how European thought had all the ingredients needed for human emancipation but colonized people had to rearrange them; Salman Rushdie, in our time, famously proposed to speak with a "forked tongue."

Homi Bhabha, a most important postcolonial thinker of the present, made similar moves. My move was to say that European thought was indispensable in the modern world – we cannot imagine the world without ideas about citizen's rights or human rights, for instance – but it is also at the same time inadequate. Why indispensable and inadequate? Mind you, I said "and" and not "but" because I was not against European thought as such. But such thought by itself was inadequate for non-European peoples because they, the latter that is, never encountered the thoughts coming from Renaissance and Enlightenment Europe in a state of being a "clean slate."

In other words, they encountered this Europe from within their own histories, pasts and memories, and accordingly "translated" European thought into their own contexts (just as European thinkers had translated and assimilated ideas arriving on their shores from distant origins). These acts of translation make thoughts that are otherwise indispensable, hetero-telic – aspiring towards multiple pasts and futures. The same framework would apply to Europe itself. European themselves encountered their own modernizing abstracts thoughts within their own pasts and these thoughts therefore underwent some process of translation there as well. In fact, after the book came out, many friends in Eastern Europe said to me that I should have called the book "Provincializing Western Europe!"

Another way of making the same point would be say that while abstract socio-political categories of putative European origin – such as the idea of the modern individual or that of human rights, democracy, etc. – have two necessary aspects to them: a discursive (abstract) side and a figural side (i.e. how it is visualized). One could argue then something like this: democracy as a concept may stand for certain commonly accepted by abstract and universal ideas but it will be visualized differently in different contexts, though every act of visualization will be contested by competing visions. Provincializing Europe walks a tight rope between the universal and local; it does not give up on the universal but seeks to ground it in the local everywhere including in Europe.

I am optimistic about the future of resistance and emancipation: Arjun Appadurai



By Rooholamin Saeidi

TEHRAN — Dr. Appadurai is a prominent contemporary social-cultural anthropologist, having formerly served as Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs at The New School in NYC. He has held various professorial chairs and visiting appointments at some of top institutions in the United States and Europe. In addition, he has served on several scholarly and advisory bodies in the United States, Latin America, Europe and India. Dr. Appadurai is world renowned expert on the cultural dynamics of globalization, having authored numerous books and scholarly articles. The nature and significance of his contributions throughout his academic career have earned him the reputation as a leading figure in his field. His latest book is *The Future as Cultural Fact: Essays on the Global Condition* (Verso: 2013). He is a Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Following is the text of her interview with Asre-Andisheh Magazine:

■ How do you explain the relation between globalization and westernization? Do you think that globalization amounts to westernization and all indigenous cultures are doomed to be westernized and Americanized sooner or later or do you believe that globalization is a more complicated process so that no single culture can dominate the globe and we should recognize pluralism and relativism?

A: No, I have long argued that Westernization and modernization are not the same thing. The world is not doomed to either Westernization or Americanization. For at least fifty years, the decolonized nations of Asia, Africa, the Middle-East and Latin America have been evolving their own modernities, which reflect their specific historic conditions and often are efforts to rewrite the present in their own terms. We can still see this today in the arts, cultural politics, social movements and literatures of the world, though the pressure from powerful countries and corporations to commoditize these modernities is also very strong.

■ Do you consider indigenous cultures in the global south capable enough to resist and challenge western forms of power relations? What are the potentials of this resistance?

A: This is a difficult question. The states in many of these societies often try to compete in global markets, both cultural and economic, and so they often try to mimic or replicate dominant models, often from the West. But in many decolonized countries, there are powerful movements involving artists, intellectuals, activists and ordinary citizens to resist and reorganize to address the force of modern Western hegemonies. The resources for such efforts to resist are always limited, for they do not usually have large or reliable sources. They must rely on the resources of imagination and aspiration and they are frequently faced with efforts to repress or marginalize them, both from forces outside their countries and from the ruling elites of their own countries. Thus, they do have a good chance, but the effort is always hard and the outcome is hard to be certain about.

■ We can regard the Islamic Revolution in Iran as a counter hegemonic resistance against global imperialism which has survived for about four decades in spite of all pressures, sanctions and threats and it is inspired by other liberation movements. How do you see this resistance experience? What are the reasons of its survival?

A: The Iranian experience since the Islamic Revolution of 1989 is remarkable. It is a major case of resistance to Western imperialism, and to the forces of Israel, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Syria. This has required a political alignment with Russia and China, but this has not been accompanied by cultural imperialism from the East. Iran remains a source of major democratic struggles, brilliant artistic expressions (such as Iran's alternative cinema) and significant progress in women's rights and literacy. Iran's challenge is not in the realm of culture but in the realm of equality, democracy and the right to dissent.

■ Both Iranians and Indians have anti colonialist experiences in their contemporary history. So are there any chance for cooperating and coordinating resistance policies against the new forms of imperialism, given the fact that the two nations have linguistic, cultural and civilizational similarities and interactions throughout a long history?

A: It is true that India and Iran have similar histories as strong, independent postcolonial countries. Today, the two governments are in an active strategic dialogue, but it is mostly based on oil and negotiating mutual political interests. It needs to be a more active dialogue in the realms of art, education and popular social movements. This sort of dialogue has a great deal of potential since it can build up on centuries of shared Indo-Persian collaboration and exchange.

■ Are you optimistic about the future of resistance and emancipation in the global south? What are the fears and hopes in this regard? Specifically how do you define emancipation?

A: I am optimistic, mainly because people who are in much more difficult circumstances than my own, such as refugees, dissidents and activists who face daily repression and disappointment, are themselves optimistic. So how can I afford to be pessimistic? For me, emancipation is that political condition in which the dreams and hopes of intellectuals and scholars will converge with those of poor, weak and marginal populations across the world, so as to produce a decisive victory against the forces of corporate capitalism and religious intolerance.

Who fueled violence in Tripoli?

1 → The crucial part of the picture is that this is the same regime-change cabal that overthrew Gaddafi in 2011 because they didn't want to allow Russia or China to horn in on their Libyan market. The United States, France, and Britain, which turned this once stable and prosperous nation into a failed state on the pretext of "democratization," cannot be allowed to escape responsibility, either.

Today, Libya is still a failed state - just like Yemen - as well as a haven for terrorist groups and proxies. The foreign policy establishment in the West insists it has a lock on wisdom, but a new report by the UN Support Mission in Libya points out otherwise. It confirms that "Libya's infrastructure continues to deteriorate at an alarming rate while basic services, including in health, water and electricity are eroding".

For that, the new reports by the UN and others suggest that words have not translated into action yet. The world should never be ashamed of doing the right thing by expos-



ing a myth. The NATO-led intervention was immoral and the world should decide on

what is right and stick to it. The UN must show some moral backbone to address the

violence, those who fuel it, and hold them to account.

The UN should turn its reports into meaningful measures and call on the NATO-led interventionists and their Mideast lackeys to take responsibility for their actions and help stop the violence. This is the same war that Barack Obama admitted was the worst mistake of his presidency, and the same "democratic" intervention that President Donald Trump has described as "a catastrophe."

There's a lesson to be learned here: In this deadly power struggle, the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to take sides. The UN should resume serious peace talks and draw up an election roadmap, instead. Supporting two parallel governments vying for territory and oil wealth won't bring a swift end to the violence; it won't make a difference for half a million children. The situation will only get worse unless meaningful action is taken by the UN to immediately stop the violence.

A nightmare for the French president

1 → From that time on, Macron had several meetings with European authorities on migration, fixing the euro currency, Europe's defense, taxing digital companies and other issues. This was while his authority was flagging

at home.

The fact is that Macron is a huge loser in the political and administrative equations of France and Europe! If the young French president fails to win the European Parliamentary

election, which lasts less than two months, he will find a very difficult situation at the Elysees Palace. In this case, his term of office may be over before 2022! The subject of the French president is a nightmare.

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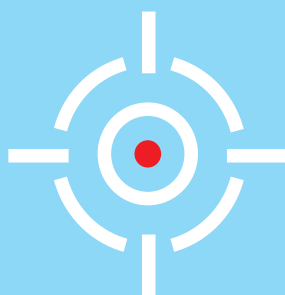
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‘Empathetic technology’: Can devices know what you’re feeling?

For some, the word “technology” might evoke cold imagery of steely robots and complex computer algorithms. But a talk on “empathetic technology” at this year’s Wired Health conference did a lot to change this perception.

Our smart devices may soon know how we are feeling even before we do.

With approximately 39 million people in the United States currently owning a smart speaker, technology that caters to our needs is more and more ubiquitous, taking up ever more of our personal space.

But smart devices can do so much more than merely playing our favorite song or searching the internet when we ask them to. Smart speakers may soon be able to diagnose us or tell how we are feeling.

At Wired Health—an annual conference that brings to the fore the latest developments in health tech—neuroscientist and technologist Poppy Crum, Ph.D., gave a talk aptly titled “Technology that knows what you’re feeling.”

Treading a fine line between ominous and hopeful, the title made a powerful point: soon, consumer technology may know our mental and physical states before we do.

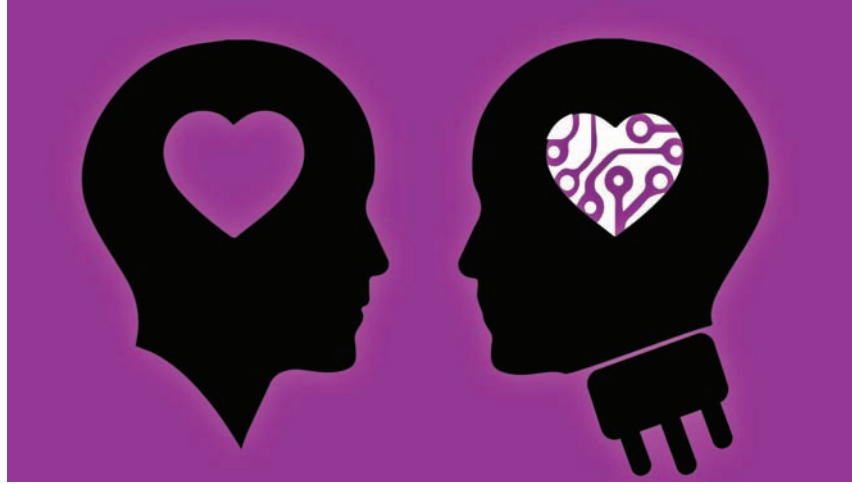
But how, exactly, can technology achieve this? How can we harness its potential to help us elucidate mental and physical conditions, and what role does empathy play in all of this?

These are some of the questions that Crum answered at Wired Health—an event which this year took place at the Francis Crick Institute in London, United Kingdom.

■ What is empathetic technology?

Crum, who is the chief scientist at Dolby Laboratories in San Francisco, CA, and an adjunct professor at Stanford University in the Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics, defines empathetic technology as “technology that is using our internal state to decide how it will respond and make decisions.”

So how can technology read our internal states? Crum’s talk at Wired Health featured some interesting examples of neurophysiological “giveaways” that the right type of technology can now pick up easily—a phenomenon the scientist referred to as “the end of the poker face.”



For instance, as Crum showed in her talk, when we’re feeling overwhelmed by a cognitive load—or, in simpler terms, when we’re struggling to understand something—our pupils dilate.

The pupillometry research from the last few decades has shown that we can track multiple cognitive processes, such as memory, attention, or mental load, by examining the behavior and measuring the diameter of our pupils. In fact, this is an experiment we can all “try at home.” In 1973, renowned psychologist Daniel Kahneman wrote:

“Face a mirror, look at your eyes and invent a mathematical problem, such as 81 times 17. Try to solve the problem and watch your pupil at the same time, a rather difficult exercise in divided attention. After a few attempts, almost everyone is able to observe the pupillary dilation that accompanies mental effort.”

Further experiments have shown how skin conductance, also known as galvanic skin response, can be a tool to predict a person’s emotional response when watching a movie or a football match.

How much sweat a person’s skin secretes, as well as the changes in the electrical resistance of the skin, can predict “stress, excitement, engagement, frustration, and anger.”

Furthermore, humans exhale chemicals,

such as carbon dioxide and isoprene, when they feel lonely or scared. In fact, in a TED talk, Crum had tracked the carbon dioxide that members of the audience exhaled when they watched suspenseful scenes from a thriller movie.

Although scientists have known about these processes for a while, Crum noted in her Wired Health talk, the devices that researchers now use in their labs to detect these changes are 10 times cheaper than they were decades ago. Also, smart glasses can now detect such changes, as can cameras from very far away.

■ Practical applications of empathetic tech

“Empathetic” hearing aids could be personalized and attuned to the amount of effort that a person with hearing problems needs to use in order to make out what someone is saying, said Crum in her Wired Health talk.

This would help destigmatize those living with certain disabilities, as well as providing these people with optimal care.

Empathetic technology also has wide implications for our mental wellbeing. “With more capable cameras, microphones, thermal imaging, and exhalant measuring devices, we can capture prolific data,” writes Crum, data that can, in turn, function to alert carers.

On the subject of mental health, it is not only the eyes that offer a window into someone’s “soul,” but also the voice, Crum expounded in her Wired Health talk.

Researchers have applied artificial intelligence (AI) to data they gathered on parameters such as syntactic patterns, pitch-reflex, and use of pronouns to accurately detect the onset of depression, schizophrenia, or Alzheimer’s disease.

For example, less than a year ago, Tuka Alhanai, a researcher at the Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory (CSAIL) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, MA, led scientists who designed a neural network model that accurately predicted depression by analyzing speech patterns in 142 participants.

“The model sees sequences of words or speaking style, and determines that these patterns are more likely to be seen in people who are depressed or not depressed [...] Then, if it sees the same sequences in new subjects, it can predict if they’re depressed too.”

Study co-author James Glass, a senior research scientist in CSAIL, also commented on the findings at the time. “Every patient will talk differently,” he said, “and if the model sees changes, maybe it will be a flag to the doctors [...] This is a step forward in seeing if we can do something assistive to help clinicians.”

Other researchers have used computer algorithms to study half-a-million Facebook status updates to detect “depression-associated language markers,” such as emotive cues or greater use of first-person pronouns, like “I” or “me.”

Of course, empathetic technology can enhance not only our understanding of psychological conditions but also that of physical ones.

An experiment that Crum and her team conducted used arthritis simulation gloves to create an empathetic experience for a group of participants. The researchers then asked these participants to design the menu of an app, bearing in mind that its users would have arthritis.

(Source: Medical News Today)

Low levels of ‘bad cholesterol’ may actually increase stroke risk

A recent study warns that women with low levels of low-density lipoprotein cholesterol, sometimes called “bad cholesterol,” may face an increased risk of bleeding stroke.

Women with low LDL cholesterol levels may be more at risk of bleeding stroke, new research finds.

According to the latest guidelines from the American College of Cardiology and the American Heart Association, a person’s levels of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol should remain under 100 milligrams per deciliter (mg/dl) to maintain health.

That is because, generally, specialists have considered LDL to be “bad” cholesterol. LDL carries cholesterol to the cells that need to make use of it, but if its levels are too high, it can stick to the arteries, leading to all manner of cardiovascular problems.

However, new research from the Brigham and Women’s Hospital and Harvard Medical School in Boston, MA, has found that women with LDL levels below 100 mg/dl may actually be more at risk of hemorrhagic (bleeding) stroke. This type of stroke, though less common than an ischemic stroke, is harder to treat and thus more dangerous to the person experiencing it.

“Strategies to lower cholesterol and triglyceride levels, like modifying diet or taking statins, are widely used to prevent cardiovascular disease,” explains study author Pamela Rist, from Brigham and Women’s Hospital. “But, our large study shows that in women, very low levels may also carry some risks. Women already have a higher risk of stroke than men, in part because they live longer, so clearly defining ways to reduce their risk is important.”

The new study’s findings now appear online ahead of print in the journal *Neurology*.

■ Low LDL levels more than double risk

In this study, the researchers looked at the data of 27,937 women aged 45 years and over who took part in the Women’s Health Study. The data included measurements of each participant’s LDL cholesterol, high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol, and triglyceride levels at the beginning of the study.

Rist and team looked at both these data and the participants’ medical records over an average 19-year follow-up period.

They found that during this time, 137 women had experienced a bleeding stroke. They noted that nine (or 0.8 percent) of the 1,069 women with LDL levels of 70 mg/dl or lower experienced this type of cardiovascular event, whereas it affected 40 (or 0.4 percent) of the 10,067 women with LDL cholesterol levels of 100–130 mg/dl.

After adjusting for possible confounding factors, the researchers concluded that women with the lowest levels of LDL cholesterol were more than twice (2.2 times) as likely to have a bleeding stroke as those with high LDL cholesterol levels.

They identified a similar association in relation to triglyceride levels: 34 (or 0.6 percent) of the 5,714 women with the lowest triglyceride levels had experienced a bleeding stroke, whereas this event had occurred in 29 (0.4 percent) of the 7,989 women with the highest triglyceride levels.

(Source: flipboard.com)



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Iran to host UNOOSA regional workshops

TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran will host two regional workshops of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) on environmental problems and outer space treaty in the near future, the information and communication technology (ICT) minister announced, IRNA reported on Friday. Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi met UNOOSA Director Simonetta Di Pippo and discussed further cooperation between two parts during his recent trip to Vienna on Friday.



The workshops will deal with drought, flood control and disaster management and forest protection, he announced. Another workshop will be held on outer space treaty with presence of other countries in Iran, he added. “During the meeting, we have also discussed the peaceful programs of the next year and further cooperation for space achievements, which lead to development of Iran’s environment,” he said. During the meeting, he also expressed his thanks over the international cooperation of United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), which provides high quality images from flood stricken regions for Iran.

The United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs is a part of the United Nations Secretariat, located at the United Nations Office in Vienna, Austria. It is tasked with implementing the decisions of the United Nations General Assembly and of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

Iranian Space Agency collaborating with APSSO Project

TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Astronomers at the Iranian Space Agency are collaborating with the Asia-Pacific Space Science Observatories (APSSO) Project, Mehr reported on Sunday. The international project aims to establish eight new observatories in member states, namely Iran, Bangladesh, Thailand, China, Mongolia, Pakistan, Peru and Turkey.



Representatives from APSSO member states pose for a photo in front of five-hundred-meter Aperture Spherical Radio Telescope in China on April 2, 2019.

The observatories not also provide information about satellites, space debris and space objects but also an updated astronomical data bank for member states.

The Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization (APSCO) headquartered in Beijing was inaugurated in 2008 as an inter-governmental organization. APSCO provides a cooperative mechanism for developing countries in the region to be able to main stream peaceful use of space as a drive of development.

By resource sharing in space science, space technology and space application, APSCO promotes multilateral cooperation to facilitate capacity building of its Members, including: Bangladesh, China, Iran, Mongolia, Pakistan, Peru, Thailand and Turkey; Signatory State Indonesia, Observer State Mexico.

Scientists say our brains will connect to computers within decades

Forward-leaning scientists and researchers say advancements in society’s computers and biotechnology will go straight to our heads — literally.

In a new paper published in the *Frontiers in Neuroscience*, researchers embarked on an international collaboration that predicts groundbreaking developments in the world of ‘Human Brain/Cloud Interface’s’ within the next few decades.

Using a combination of nanotechnology, artificial intelligence, and other more traditional computing, researchers say humans will be able to seamlessly connect their brains to a cloud of computers to glean information from the internet in real-time.

According to Robert Freitas Jr., senior author of the research, a fleet of nanobots embedded in our brains would act as liaisons to humans’ minds and supercomputers, to enable ‘matrix style’ downloading of information.

“These devices would navigate the human vasculature, cross the blood-brain barrier, and precisely autopoosition themselves among, or even within brain cells,” explains Freitas.

“They would then wirelessly transmit encoded information to and from a cloud-based supercomputer network for real-time brain-state monitoring and data extraction.”

The interfaces wouldn’t just stop at linking humans and computers, say researchers. A network of brains could also help form what they call a ‘global superbrain’ that would allow for collective thought.

In recent experiments, researchers have already demonstrated the capability to conjoin human brains in collective tasks in what they call BrainNet.

Like the move ‘The Matrix’ users could use brain to computer interface to instantly download information.

(Source: dailymail.co.uk)

Iran, Philippines sign agreement on sci-tech cooperation

TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The Iranian vice presidency for science and technology and the department of science and technology of the Philippines signed an agreement on Sunday to boost cooperation in different scientific and technological fields, IRNA reported.

The secretary of the department of science and technology of the Philippines, Fortunato de la Peña, met with the vice president for science and technology, Sourena Sattari, in Tehran.

The agreement aims to develop and boost cooperation according to the laws of two countries.

Iran enjoys great improvement in different fields of technology and the Philippines is eager to boost cooperation with the country in the fields of agricultural biotechnology, nanotechnology, medical and pharmaceutical achievements, Fortunato de la Peña said.

As a country with knowledge of important fields like nanotechnology, Iran can have a great impact on the Philippines’ technology, he added.

“We have also provide a list for international events in the field of nanotechnology and Iran can participate as one of the main actors in this field,” he said.

The Philippines also has some developments in the field of renewable energy in



The Iranian vice president for science and technology, Sourena Sattari, (r) and the secretary of the department of science and technology of the Philippines, Fortunato de la Peña, signed an agreement in Tehran on Sunday.

Iran enjoys great improvement in different fields of technology and the Philippines is eager to boost cooperation with the country in the fields of agricultural biotechnology, nanotechnology, medical and pharmaceutical achievements

Iranian students to compete at LECO Cup



TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Over 5,000 students will compete at the 15th LECO Cup scientific and innovation festival, which will be held on April 19 at the Sharif University of Technology.

Students aged 6 to 18 from 300 cities will participate in 18 different sections including LECO Robo (robotics), LECO Mas (mental calculation),

LECO Kids, LECO Lab, LECO Pole, LECO Fly, LECO 3D, LECO Domino, LECO Bio, LECO Child, LECO Nano and LECO Sum.

The event is cosponsored by the vice presidency for science and technology and Iranian National Commission for UNESCO in order to support talented students in different fields of robotics.

Iran supports producing 170 innovative traditional medicines



TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The national council for science and technology development of medicinal and aromatic plants and traditional medicine supports over 170 innovative products in over 150 knowledge-based companies, Mehr reported on Sunday.

The council, which is affiliated to the vice presidency for science and technology, initiated the first startup accelerator in the field

recent years, he said.

The agricultural biotechnology of the countries lead to sustainable cooperation between two countries, he added.

Fortunato de la Peña said that his country has a modern research center, which can provide innovative facilities for researches.

During the meeting, Sattari said that the two parts plan to provide a joint committee to provide scientific and technological infrastructures.

The meeting paves the way for further cooperation in the field of new emerging technologies, knowledge-based companies and startups of the two countries.

Iran has a great professional and innovative human resources who can provide sustainable interaction with other countries, he added.

The establishment of science and technology parks, innovation factories, incubator centers, startup accelerators, which are provided in an innovation ecosystem, are on top agenda of the agreement, he said.

The agreement also provide opportunity for joint exhibitions and scientific and technology events, he added.

Iran boasts 41 science and technology parks, 4200 knowledge-based companies and over 6000 startups, which aims to develop knowledge economy in the country, he said.

Can AI save us from bias in the diverse, non-binary workforce of the future?



to its algorithm that makes sure AI doesn’t introduce bias, such as showing more male candidates in search results than the available pool of applicants.

“It would be possible to create biased systems. We wanted to make sure that that bias didn’t get out of control,” John Jersin, vice president of product, talent solutions and careers at LinkedIn, said about the company’s software. “We can use techniques to influence people to reduce bias in outcomes.”

Jersin says LinkedIn’s efforts around diversity “started with gender because it’s the easiest one to get a significant dataset on. It’s a 50/50 split just about.”

The majority of LinkedIn’s users may fit into gender binaries, but for the coming workforce this may not be the case, according to Nicole Sanchez, founder and managing partner of Vaya Consulting, which leads Fortune 500 companies in diversity and inclusion training.

“Fifty percent of those who identify as Gen-Z living on the coasts thought about their gender and identify somewhere on a non-binary spectrum of gender. As much as we want to drive for something simple like gender, for the next set of workers, gender is decreasingly meaningful,” said Sanchez.

Recruiting for the existing workforce rather than the one that is coming can cause hiring professionals to reinforce biases, perpetuating a flawed system.

Although 21% of computer science degree earners are Black or Latinx, they make up just 10% of technical employees in the tech workforce, according to a 2018 study from the Kapor Center.

“What’s happening is folks are using LinkedIn, looking at a picture and guessing,” Sanchez said. “There are laws that say you can’t ask someone their race and gender on the way in, but the proxy we’re currently using solidifies our old broken system of looking at each other and assuming. Increasingly, I’m going to be wrong as Gen-Z comes into the workforce.”

As much as humans have baked their own bias into AI and machine-learning models, yet another challenge is that these systems are only as good as the data they’re based on. Sanchez isn’t convinced that technology can wholly solve hiring biases.

“In the next decade, we’re going to be a country with a majority of people of color, and our systems are not ready for it,” said Sanchez. “As much as we want to nail down data, because we’re about data-driven solutions, our data’s wrong. Some of the work that we have to do has to be shepherded in by humans.”

Cows already have 5G

The rollout of 5G in the U.S. may be hobbled and scattershot, thanks to silly marketing gimmicks and a largely meaningless race to the be first, but the next-gen wireless speeds the standard promises are already arriving in full force across the Atlantic Ocean — for a herd of cows in England.

According to Reuters, Cisco is testing infrastructure for the eventual global rollout of 5G that could be used by various industries that are not traditionally in the tech bubble but are still dependent on increasingly sophisticated hardware and software. That includes farming. In this case, Cisco is trying out 5G in three rural locations by giving farmers access to 5G-connected cow collars and

health-monitoring ear tags that can transmit biometric data and help workers monitor the herd from afar.

One of the three sites participating in the test is the government-funded Agricultural Engineering Precision Innovation Centre, or Agri-EPI Centre, in Shepton Mallet, a small town in southwest England. The farm has nearly one-third of its 180-cow herd fitted with the 5G collars and tags, Reuters reports.

It makes a whole lot of sense when you think about it: farms are large and spread-out spaces, and cows are often shuffled between grazing grounds and areas of the farm where they can be more easily milked and checked on. With the 5G collars, Cisco says farmers

can keep tabs on the animals at all times of the day without having to physically trek out to observe the cows up close.

Additionally, the 5G smart collars help automate the milking process by wirelessly communicating with a robotic milking system that lets the cow approach the station at its own leisure, pass through the gates after an ID check, and hook up to the robot all with little to no human intervention. The future is wonderful and weird, and farmers have access to it before you and I because without them, we all starve.

“We can connect every cow, we can connect every animal on this farm,” Cisco’s Nick Chrissos told Reuters, in what may be the



strangest boast a Cisco executive has ever uttered in public. “That’s what 5G can do for farming — really unleash the power that we have within this farm, everywhere around the UK and everywhere around the world.”

(Source: The Verge)

Global study shows exotic species are a complex threat

When species are introduced by humans into marine habitats, they can disrupt their new environment, according to a study at KAUST, which also identified key species for conservation efforts to focus on.

While the significant damage caused by some exotic species is beyond question, there is an ongoing debate among researchers about the overall impacts of exotic species, many of which may be innocuous. “This discussion is intensifying within the scientific community,” says Andrea Anton, the study’s lead author.

To help resolve the debate, she and her colleagues at the University’s Red Sea Research Center and around the world undertook a meta-analysis of the ecological impact of exotic species in marine environments.

They collected data from more than 150 studies covering 76 exotic species. By using a metric which measured the increase or decrease of different ecological variables, the team circumvented the need to categorize the changes as positive or negative, a source of potential bias when studying cascading effects in complex contexts, such as ecosystems.

Exotic species disrupt ecosystem

Their analysis showed that exotic species do tend to disrupt marine ecosystems. The



overall effect appears relatively modest compared with other anthropogenic factors, such as global warming or overfishing, perhaps because of differences between subgroups.

For example, although primary producers



were negatively affected by exotics, there was less impact on species at other trophic levels.

Likewise, exotic predators and primary producers consistently had a substantial disruptive impact, while exotics from other trophic levels did not.

The divergence is echoed in the ranking of marine exotic species created by the team to guide biodiversity conservation efforts. Of the 19 species that appeared in three or more studies, only two were consistently disruptive of ecosystems globally.

The impact also differed based on the origin of the exotic species -- marine species had an effect, while freshwater and terrestrial exotics did not -- and the environment to which they were introduced, with habitats on continental margins seeing a significant impact, unlike those close to islands.

Overall, exotic species reduced the abundance of native species but did not affect the diversity or survival of communities.

Their natural area

“Globally, exotic species are a threat: although we also found that only 10 percent of species introduced outside their natural area of distribution are actually destructive. However, 90 percent of them are not,” says Anton. “So both sides of the debate are partially correct.”

This divergence is echoed in the ranking of marine exotic species created by the team to guide biodiversity conservation efforts. Of the 19 species that appeared in three or more studies, only two were consistently disruptive of ecosystems globally.

However, given the extensive variability and context dependence of the impact of exotic species, the researchers recommend that policy makers look at granular results rather than just the global picture.

(Source: natureworldnews.com)

A new super-Earth may orbit the star next door, scientists find

If the planet is there, it’s at least six times more massive than Earth — making it what’s called a super-Earth — and it takes 1,936 days to loop once around its star. That means the planet’s average surface temperature is much too cold for liquid water to flow.

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In 2016, scientists with the Pale Red Dot project revealed the first known world orbiting Proxima Centauri — a planet at least 1.3 times as massive as Earth that’s perhaps warm enough for life as we know it to thrive on its surface.

Scientists identified that planet, called Proxima Centauri b, by studying how its gravity tugs on Proxima Centauri and causes the star to wobble.

Recently, Damasso and Del Sordo decided to revisit the data used to spot Proxima b. They processed it somewhat differently, removed the signals from Proxima b and intrinsic stellar activity, and added 61 measurements made over an additional 549 days by the HARPS spectrograph, mounted on a telescope at Chile’s La Silla Observatory.

Another planet in orbit

In total, they then had approximately 17 years’ worth of data on the star’s wiggles and wobbles. In it, they spotted a signal that could be another planet in orbit around Proxima Centauri.

If it’s there — and that’s still a sizable “if” — Proxima c takes a little more than five Earth-years to trudge once around its star, orbiting at a distance that’s 1.5 times farther than Earth is from the sun.

“This detection is very challenging,” Del Sordo says. “We asked ourselves many times if this is a real planet. But what is sure is that even if this planet is a castle in the air, we should keep working to put even stronger foundations under it.”

Scientists are going to continue collecting data on the star and are planning on using information from



the European Space Agency’s Gaia spacecraft to further study the motion of Proxima Centauri, which would refine their interpretation of its wobbles. They also suggest that the planet could be seen directly with future telescopes.

Surrounded by dust lanes

As well, observations of the star made by the Atacama Large Millimeter/Submillimeter Array, or ALMA, may support the possibility that multiple planets are in orbit: In those images, Proxima Centauri is surrounded by dust lanes that are presumably being sculpted by orbiting objects. Plus, ALMA detected another bright source in the Proxima system, situated at approximately the distance where Proxima c might orbit.

“There is an unknown source — it’s something. It could be a background source, it could be noise; we don’t know,” Del Sordo says.

“This is really an amazing, amazing result — I hope it withstands scientific scrutiny over the next few months and years,” says Rene Heller of the Max Planck Institute for Solar System Research.

Lauren Weiss of the University of Hawaii suggests that the team might be seeing a signal caused by a combination of other planets in the system, as well as stellar noise.

“Maybe there are additional planets, but not at the period at which you’re announcing the candidate,” she told Damasso and Del Sordo during the conference. “I don’t know really what we can do, except what you rightly said to do — continue monitoring ... it’s going to be a long road.”

(Source: nationalgeographic.com)

Is climate change really causing walrus to jump off cliffs?

Netflix released a documentary series called “Our Planet” on April 5 that sits in the pantheon of great wildlife docs alongside BBC’s “Planet Earth” and “Blue Planet.” The new series stands out, though, because it explicitly shows how every ecosystem it highlights is being changed and threatened by climate change.

David Attenborough, the series’ narrator, blames the incident on changes to the Arctic ecosystem that walrus inhabit. With sea ice receding year after year, he says, the walrus are forced to rest on crowded, tiny beaches. Those beaches are so overcrowded, he says, that some of the walrus scale cliffs for a bit of peace. But when the lumbering animals, unaccustomed to climbing or to heights, decide to return to the water, they wander right off the edge of the cliffs to their horrible deaths.

This incident isn’t the first time people have documented the mass-falling deaths of walrus. Back in 1996, Alaskan wildlife officials reported a then-nearly unprecedented incident in which nearly 60 male walrus fell to their deaths off a 200-foot (60 meters) cliff side in the state.

Sorts of walrus events

At the time, when sea ice was still more extensive and climate impacts less well-understood, researchers didn’t blame the deaths on climate change. Rather, they were perplexed, without an answer to explain the behavior, The New York Times reported at the time. The years since have seen further reports of these sorts of walrus events.

But more-recent research has indicated that climate change could be driving deadly “disturbances” at walrus “haul-outs” in exactly the way the documentary indicates.

Walrus typically spend most of their time on sea ice, with some intermittent time spent on land in large groups called haul-outs.

A May 2017 report from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) found that the retreat of sea ice from the Arctic does indeed lead walrus to engage in mass haul-outs onto crowded beaches more often.



And at those crowded haul-outs, the walrus are indeed easily spooked, with an increase in deadly “disturbance” events — though trappings, especially of young calves, are much more common than cliff falls, according to that report.

Subject matter experts suggested to Live Science that falling events typically don’t involve the walrus scaling cliffs as the documentary indicated.

Rather, the events happen as walrus go up shallow slopes on the cliffs’ far sides. Once up top, the creatures can sometimes stampede off these cliff sides if a passing plane, polar bear, boat or other unfamiliar freaky thing scares them.

Climate change

Climate change does seem to have made these sorts of events more common. However, in Alaska these mass fallings appear to local observers to have declined in recent years thanks to human efforts to manage the environments of the haul-outs.

Over 100,000 walrus hauled out along a small stretch of coast in Northern Russia.

In the absence of sea ice, walrus have no choice but to come to land in order to rest between feeding trips to the ocean floor in search of clams.

Rafi joined Live Science in 2017. He has a bachelor’s degree in journalism from Northwestern University’s Medill School of journalism.

You can find his past science reporting at Inverse, Business Insider and Popular Science, and his past photojournalism on the Flash90 wire service and in the pages of The Courier Post of southern New Jersey.

(Source: livescience.com)

Ice ages occur when tropical islands and continents collide, research says

Earth’s steady state is warm and balmy, but half a dozen times over the past billion years, the planet developed ice caps and glaciers. Researchers have now amassed evidence that these cold snaps occurred when tectonic activity propelled continents headlong into volcanic island arcs in the tropics, uplifting ophiolites that rapidly absorbed carbon dioxide, cooling Earth.

Some 445 million years ago, the Eastern U.S. (extreme left) sat in the tropics, where an island arc-continental collision created the Appalachian Mountains.

University of California scientists think they know why Earth’s generally warm and balmy climate over the past billion years has occasionally been interrupted by cold snaps that enshroud the poles with ice and occasionally turn the planet into a snowball.

The key trigger, they say, is mountain formation in the tropics as continental land masses collide with volcanic island arcs, such as the Aleutian Islands chain in Alaska.

Earth’s climate is, to a large degree, driven by the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, which traps heat and warms the planet. While fossil fuel burning since the Industrial Revolution has driven CO2 levels to heights not seen in 3 million years, CO2 levels have been even higher in Earth’s past, coinciding with warm periods when no major ice sheets existed.

In fact, Earth’s default climate seems to be warm and balmy. Periods with no glaciers dominated for three-quarters of the past 1 billion years.

Yet, half a dozen ice ages chilled Earth during that time, two of them severe enough to turn the planet into a Snowball Earth with ice covering much of the surface.

In a study appearing in this week’s edition of the journal Science, the team concludes that when volcanic arcs collide with continents in the tropics — an inevitable consequence of the planet’s constantly moving tectonic plates — they trigger global cooling, resulting in a glacial climate with extensive ice caps.

(Source: sciencedaily.com)

Voyager and Pioneer’s grand tour of the Milky Way

During the early 1990s, NASA’s Pioneer 10 and 11 probes became the first robotic missions to venture beyond Neptune. In 2012 and 2018, the Voyager 1 and 2 missions went even farther by crossing the heliopause and entering interstellar space.

Which raises an important question: where might these spacecraft eventually wander? To address this, Coryn Bailer-Jones of the Max Planck Institute for Astronomy and Davide Farnocchia of NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory recently conducted a study that examined which star systems the Voyager and Pioneer probes will likely encounter as they drift through the Milky Way over the next few million years.

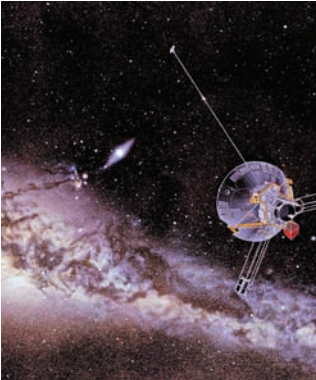
The study, “Future Stellar Flybys of the Voyager and Pioneer Spacecraft”, recently appeared in the journal Research Notes of the American Astronomical Society (RNAAS). For the sake of this study, Bailer-Jones and Farnocchia used data from the second Gaia data release (GDR2) and the SIMBAD astronomical database to determine the fate of these spacecraft.

The story of Pioneer 10 and 11 began in 1972 and 73, respectively, when they were both launched towards Jupiter. Over the next few years, these two probes accomplished a number of firsts. Between them, they were the first robotic spacecraft to cross the Main Asteroid Belt, to encounter Jupiter and its system of moons, Saturn and its system of moons, and achieve an escape velocity that would allow them to leave the Solar System.

The story of Voyager 1 and 2 began a few years later, with both spacecraft launching from Earth in 1977 to take advantage of the favorable alignment between Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune. After exploring Jupiter and Saturn, Voyager 1 continued on to the edge of the Solar System and entered the interstellar medium by 2012. Voyager 2, meanwhile, visited Uranus and Neptune as well before joining Voyager 1 in interstellar space by 2018.

Fittingly, all of the spacecraft carried a message for other sentient species, should any come across them in the future. In the case of the Pioneer probes, this took the form of the Pioneer Plaque, which was designed by famed SETI researchers Carla Sagan and Frank Drake.

(Source: universetoday.com)



Scientists have found a way to prevent water from ever becoming ice

Ice is a complex beast. While you and I only ever come into contact with one kind of it, scientists actually know of around 20 different molecular varieties — some so esoteric and rare, they may only exist inside computer simulations, or buried within distant planets.

But just because water can freeze into a solid in so many different ways, its crystallization is not necessarily inevitable.

There are a number of ways of developing so-called ‘unfreezable water’, but scientists are continually finding new approaches to test the limits of these techniques.

Some of these involve the study of what’s known as amorphous ice, an amorphous yet solid form of water, where ice never forms because water molecules are prevented from the process of crystallization.

Last year, scientists in Sweden succeeded in supercooling liquid water to a record-low temperature of around –45 degrees Celsius (–49 degrees Fahrenheit) without ice forming, but now researchers in Switzerland have gone even further.

Using a form of ‘nanoconfinement’ of water molecules with the help of synthesised lipid-based membranes, researchers from ETH Zurich and the University of Zurich were able to take water all the way down to –263 degrees Celsius (–441 degrees Fahrenheit), just 10 degrees Celsius above absolute zero, without it becoming ice.

Cramped inside those tiny tunnels, water molecules can exist in liquid form, but the space is so incredibly confined, ice crystallization is impossible at the molecular level — even when the lipidic mesophase was cooled with liquid helium down to around 10 Kelvin.

This nanoconfinement feat, the researchers say, is due to molecular modifications inside the atomic structure of the fatty material, which rearranges hydrophobic (water-repelling) and hydrophilic (water-attracting) parts of the mesophase.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

Predicting heat waves? Look half a world away

When heavy rain falls over the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia and the eastern Pacific Ocean, it is a good indicator that temperatures in central California will reach 100°F in four to 16 days, according to a collaborative research team from the University of California, Davis, and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Climate Center in Busan, South Korea.

Heat waves are common in the Central California Valley, a 50-mile-wide oval of land that runs 450 miles from just north of Los Angeles up to Redding.

The valley is home to half of the nation’s tree fruit and nut crops, as well as extensive dairy production, and heat waves can wreak havoc on agricultural production.

The dairy industry had a heat wave-induced economic loss of about \$1 billion in 2006, for instance. The ability to predict heat waves and understand what causes them could inform protective measures against damage.

Extreme events created

“We want to know more about how extreme events are created,” said Richard Grotjahn, corresponding author on the paper and professor in the UC Davis Department of Land, Air and Water Resources.

“We know that such patterns in winter are sometimes linked with areas of the tropics where thunderstorms are enhanced. We wondered if there might be similar links during summer for those heat waves.”



The scientists analyzed the heat wave data from June through September from 1979 to 2010. The data were collected by 15 National Climatic Data Centers stations located throughout the Valley.

From these data, the researchers identified 24 heat waves. They compared these instances to the phases of a large, traveling atmospheric circulation pattern called the Madden-Julian Oscillation, or MJO.

The MJO manifests as heavy rain that migrates across

the tropical Indian and then Pacific Oceans, and researchers have shown that it influences winter weather patterns.

“It’s well known that tropical rainfall, such as the MJO, has effects beyond the tropics,” said Yun-Young Lee of the APEC Climate Center in Busan, South Korea, the paper’s first author. “So a question comes to mind: Is hot weather in the Central California Valley partly attributable to tropical rainfall?”

Enhanced rainfall

Lee and Grotjahn found that, yes, enhanced rainfall in the tropics preceded each heat wave in specific and relatively predictable patterns. They also found that hot weather in the valley is most common after more intense MJO activity in the eastern Pacific Ocean, and next most common after strong MJO activity in the Indian Ocean.

The “more we know about such associations to large-scale weather patterns and remote links, the better we can assess climate model simulations and therefore better assess simulations of future climate scenarios,” Grotjahn said.

This work was supported by the National Science Foundation, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the Department of Energy Office of Science, the United States Department of Agriculture’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture, and the APEC Climate Center in the Republic of Korea.

(Source: eurekalert.org)

Flood causes \$3b of agricultural loss: minister

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran’s agriculture sector has suffered an economic loss of 130 trillion rials (nearly \$3 billion) as a result of extreme flooding which has inundated many provinces, Agriculture Minister Mahmoud Hojjati has said.



Flood caused financial damages amounting to 30 trillion rials (about \$714 million) only to Khuzestan province’s farming lands, he said, IRNA reported on Sunday.

Horticulture, animal husbandry, apiculture and poultry farming have borne the most damages in agriculture sector, as some 600 poultry farms have been damaged across the country, he lamented.

Provinces of Golestan and Mazandaran farming losses also estimated at 20 trillion rials (around \$475 million), of which, 5.4 trillion rials (nearly \$128 million) will be compensated by low interest loans, he explained.

Granting loans to damaged farms in Mazandaran and Golestan provinces began last week, loans will be also granted to farmers in other provinces in the next two days, he added.

He went on to say that some 650 billion rials (about \$15 million) have so far been provided to flood-affected farmers by insurance companies, and a total budget of 7.5 trillion rials (nearly \$178 million) is earmarked to those flood-stricken farmers who were under insurance coverage.

The crops cultivated over autumn were ready for harvest in Khuzestan province, 200,000 hectares of which have undergone massive damage beyond repair, he regretted.

Extreme rainfall, starting on March 19, has caused flooding in 28 out of 31 provinces affecting 42,269,129 inhabitants in 253 cities and causing widespread damage to municipal facilities, including roads, sewage systems, health centers, hospitals, etc.

The floods have left 78 people dead and 1,137 injured. As many as 295,787 people have been displaced.

Flood blocks roads linking 73 villages in southeastern Iran

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — Flood has reached southeastern parts of the country, blocking linking roads of 73 villages in Kerman province, crisis management director at provincial governor office announced.



“Some 8 villages are depopulated in 3 counties of the province, so far,” IRNA news agency quoted Majid Saeedi as saying on Sunday.

Heavy rain over the past 24 hours have caused flooding in southeastern province of Kerman, as well, he regretted.

Passages in the center of Kerman province have been waterlogged, he lamented, adding, risks of overflow of water from rivers remains high across the province.

Provincial crisis management organization is staying on duty, and coordination is made to reopen the roads, Saeedi concluded.

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Earthquake in Colombia

(January 28, 1999)

On Monday 25th January an earthquake struck central Colombia. The cities of Pereira and Armenia were severely damaged. Quill Lawrence and James Reynolds reported.

The **full extent** of the damage is still unknown but **heavy casualties** are counted in the cities of Armenia and Pereira, **the heart of Colombia’s coffee-growing** region. Many outlying towns within the quake’s one-hundred and fifty kilometer span have yet to be assessed. Authorities plan to **demolish** many buildings left weakened by the quake which are threatening to fall. In Armenia, hundreds were crushed to death under fallen buildings. The **slums** in the south of the city were hardest hit, where homes made of weak ceramic brick **crumbled**, leaving entire neighborhoods flattened. The region’s medical emergency has now eased. Many of those injured in the earthquake **have been sent to hospitals** in neighboring areas. For the moment, the Colombian armed forces are to continue their airlift of supplies to the region. **Aid workers** have asked for more food, clothes and medicine, and say they are in desperate need of **safe drinking water**. Communication is now slowly being re-established across the region. Roads have been re-opened, electricity and telephone lines have been restored to many areas.

■ **Words**
the full extent of : this is a set phrase in English. The extent of a situation or difficulty is its size or scale
heavy casualties: notice that we often use the adjective ‘heavy’ to describe a large number of casualties
the heart of : the heart of somewhere is the most central part of it
coffee-growing: compound words like this are a typical feature of news reports because they convey a lot of information in a concise style of writing
demolish: to destroy. Notice that we use the verb ‘demolish’ to describe the destruction of old or dangerous buildings
crumble: if something, especially something made of stone or rock, is crumbling, small pieces are breaking off it
slum: a house or an area of a city that is in very bad condition, where very poor people live
have been sent to hospitals: notice we often use the construction ‘to be sent to hospital’ meaning to be taken to hospital
aid workers: this is a general term often used in news stories to refer to people who administer aid of all kinds
safe drinking water: notice we describe water which causes harm and should not be drunk as ‘unsafe’

(Source: BBC)

Iran’s most magnificent Buxus hyrcana endangered

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — The entire Buxus hyrcana across the country has begun to die owing to pests and diseases, Kamran Pour Moqaddam, head of forest council at Forests, Range and Watershed Management Organization has said.

Buxus sempervirens, the common box, European box, or boxwood, is an evergreen shrub or small tree growing up to 1 to 9 meters tall, with a trunk up to 20 centimeters, native to western and southern Europe, northwest Africa, and southwest Asia. Buxus hyrcana of northern Iran and eastern Caucasus are commonly treated as synonyms of B. sempervirens.

Several species of oak, chestnut, hornbeam, and Buxus have been severely affected by pests and diseases in the northern forests of the country, he said, adding, the forest ecosystem is under pressure and there was no choice but to implement the “breathing plan” banning exploitation of endangered forests in northern part of the country.

In January 2017 in line with the laws regulating all aspects of policy making and project managements with regard to environmental factors Majlis [Iranian parliament] has prohibited any exploitation of endangered forests by the fourth year of implementing the sixth five-year national



development plan.

With 157 MPs voting for the bill, exploitation of forests for commercial and industrial purposes will be brought to a halt by 2020. By that time all exploitation contracts will be expired and none will be renewed.

All exploitation projects will be banned with the exception of broken branches, fallen or damaged trees which can be only authorized by the Forests, Range, and Watershed Management Organization.

Boxwood forests stretches to 40,000

Recent rainfall reduces SDSs in north central Iran

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — Recent rainfall has greatly reduced the risk of sand and dust storms (SDSs) raising from major hotspots in north central province of Qom during summer, the provincial chief of department of environment has stated.

Recent above normal rainfall resulted in dampening the soil surface and boosting the vegetation in dried dust generating areas, IRNA quoted Seyed Reza Mousavi Meshkini as saying on Sunday.

Another benefit of recent rainfall is the flow of water in seasonal rivers and wetlands which can provide the water resources needed for wildlife, he said, adding, in addition to decreasing the chance of SDSs in the province.

Many wetlands in Qom province have long been dried up which led to total disappearance of plant species and severe soil erosion, however, downpours made the soil moisturized and increased the vegetation, he explained.

Speaking of the damages caused by recent floods, he lamented that many agricultural



lands and gardens have been depleted in the province, regretting, some aquatic species also have been killed.

He further expressed hope that with proper management of rainwater the province’s environment stays in good condition.

According to the data published on National Drought Warning and Monitoring Center on Saturday Qom province received 209 millimeters of rain during the current water year (September 2018- September 2019) which shows a dramatic increase of 256 percent compared to last water year and 89 percent increase compared to long-term averages.

Intl. Environment Exhibition dedicates revenues to flood victims

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — Revenues generated from the 18th International Environment Exhibition will be allocated to the victims of the recent floods in various provinces across the country, the exhibition’s executive director has said.

The 18th International Environment Exhibition started in Tehran on Saturday.

Considering the recent environmental predicaments in the country the 4-day event is focus on flood-related issues, Arezoo Aqa Mohammadi told IRNA news agency on Thursday.

Moreover, on the sidelines of the exhibition in-kind contributions will be collected and with the revenues raised from the exhibition will be sent to flood-hit regions, Aqa Mohammadi added.

Heavy rainfall, starting on March 19, has caused flooding

in 28 out of 31 provinces affecting 42,269,129 inhabitants in 253 cities and causing widespread damage to municipal facilities, including roads, sewage systems, health centers, hospitals, etc.

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.

More than 600 companies active in environmental field are attending the event, she highlighted, adding that, water, biodiversity, forest, clean air, sustainability, clean energies and carbon footprint are among the issues being addressed in the exhibition.

The event is annually held, showcasing the latest innovations and achievements associated with the environment,

Recent flooding caused by climate change: IMO director

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — Torrential rains and unprecedented flooding recently hitting the country is the result of climate change, head of Iran’s Meteorological Organization (IMO) has stated.

That Iran is going through a wet spell is a misconception, so the country is still affected by drought; and floods are climate-related issues, ISNA quoted Sahar Tajbakhsh as saying on Sunday.

The country received 204 millimeters of precipitations since the beginning of the current water year (September 23, 2018) which indicates a 22-percent rise compared to the long term averages, she said.

Moreover, rainfalls amounted to 119 millimeters during the winter which shows a rise by 13 percent compared to the long term means, she added.

Weather forecasts are provided in short, medium and long terms, and they are not entirely reliable, she stated,



adding that “we issue an announcement 72 hours prior to any incident, and forecast the weather 48 hours ahead of the event.

She went on to say that IMO is able to predict weather condition 15-day before, however, forecasting precipitations is more precise 2 or 3 days before the event.

She further concluded that the IMO had issued 150 announcements, 90 warnings to responsible agencies and 1950 radio and television reports in risky situations during recent floods.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → چ

Rainfalls brings life back to Gomishan wetland

Gomishan international wetland, northern province of Golestan, is once again partially filled with water with recent rainfalls, the provincial chief of the department of environment has said. Over the past few days more than 60 percent of the wetland was filled due to the recent rainfalls and now 20,000 hectares of the wetland are covered with water, Amir Abdous said on Tuesday.

Due to the decrease in the water level at the Caspian Sea the wetland has been dried specially during hot seasons, Abdous said, adding that in winter a small part of the wetland was covered with water.

بارندگی های اخیر زندگی دوباره به تالاب گمیشان بخشید

مدیرکل حفاظت محیط زیست گلستان از آبرگیری بخشی از تالاب بین المللی گمیشان در این استان خبر داد

به گزارش خبرگزاری ایرنا امیر عبدوس روز سه شنبه گفت: بارندگی های اخیر زندگی دوباره به این زیستگاه مهم بخشید و بیش از ۶۰ درصد تالاب بین المللی گمیشان آبرگیری شد.

وی افزود: به علت پایین رفتن سطح آب دریای خزر تغذیه این تالاب از سوی دریا به حداقل ممکن رسیده بود و تقریباً تمام سطح تالاب بین المللی گمیشان در فصول گرم سال کاملاً خشک و در زمستان نیز بخش بسیار اندکی زیر آب قرار داشت.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-al”

■ **Meaning**: a word ending used to form nouns from verbs
■ **For example**: Recycling as the best answer to waste disposal.

PHRASAL VERB

Tell against somebody

■ **Meaning**: to make someone less likely to succeed in achieving or winning something
■ **For example**: I badly wanted the job, but knew that my age would probably tell against me.

IDIOM

Keep (one’s) chin up

■ **Explanation**: to improve one’s mood, especially when sad or discouraged
■ **For example**: Come on, the project was not a total failure—keep your chin up!

Hamas: Abbas' new government will ease way for U.S. 'deal of century'

I→ In a statement issued on Saturday shortly after the government was sworn in, Hamas, which runs Gaza, warned that the new West Bank-based administration would further divide Palestinians.

The Shtayyeh-led government, the statement read, "resorts to unilateralism and monopoly of power. This move widens the Palestinian division at the expense of the Palestinian people's interests."

"The Fatah-formed separatist government lacks legal and constitutional legitimacy and it separates the Gaza Strip from the West Bank, which is a move in line with the 'deal of the century,'" it added.

The so-called deal of the century, drawn up by the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump to address the conflict, is said to be hugely in favor of the Israeli regime.

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Hamas underlined the need to form an inclusive national unity government, which serves all Palestinian people and puts an end to the oppression they have been enduring.

The new government should invite Palestinian leaders to agree upon a national strategy to fight off all challenges facing the Palestine issue, the resistance group noted.

Shtayyeh is seen as a critic of Hamas and a proponent of Israeli-Palestinian talks as well as the so-called two-state solution.

UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Maldenov has welcomed the formation of the new Palestinian government, saying he was looking forward to cooperating with the team.

"At a time of significant financial and political challenges to the Palestinian national project, all must support the government's efforts and work to overcome internal divisions. Unity is essential to advancing the goal of a lasting peace," he said in a statement.

He further expressed the UN's commitment "to working with the Palestinian leadership and people in ending the occupation and advancing their legitimate national aspirations for statehood based on UN resolutions."

The Palestinian leadership has been divided between Fatah and Hamas since 2006, when the latter scored a landslide victory in parliamentary elections in Gaza.

Ever since, Hamas has been running the coastal enclave, while Fatah has been based in the autonomous parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

(Source: Press TV)

Nigeria's Chibok schoolgirls: Five years on, 112 still missing

The sleepy town of Chibok in Nigeria's northeast continues to grapple with the seemingly endless wait for the return of more than 100 schoolgirls who were abducted by the armed group Boko Haram, five years ago on Sunday.

Life has not remained the same for the community, which still feels haunted by the April 14, 2014 kidnappings.

The town attracted international attention after Boko Haram fighters forcibly removed at least 276 girls from the government secondary girls school in Chibok town, prompting global outrage with various organizations and celebrities calling for their release.

In the first frantic minutes of their ordeal, 57 girls managed to jump from the trucks in which they were transported, and escaped. The remaining 219 were taken away by the fighters.

A social media campaign with the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls went viral and celebrities, leaders and activists across the world joined the campaign to free the kidnapped schoolgirls.

Five years after the Boko Haram attack, more than 112 girls are still missing.

Over the years, a total of 107 girls have been found or released as part of a deal between the Nigerian government and the armed group.

"They [the government] are not talking about our girls anymore. They are acting as if they are happy about what happened to us," Enock Mark, whose two daughters are still missing, told Al Jazeera.

"We have lost hope in the government helping us. They have not shown any serious interest in ensuring that our daughters are found. It looks like it was done intentionally. They don't care about us anymore," he said.

"We won't give up. Even in a hundred years, we will keep believing that our daughters will return home. Until we all die, we won't stop believing that our daughters will come back."

Mark and other parents of the missing girls still regularly make the difficult journey of nearly 900km to the nation's capital, Abuja, for updates about their daughters.

The road leading to Chibok is often being targeted by Boko Haram with very little done by security agencies to protect commuters.

The town has also come under repeated attacks by gunmen with buildings burned and some residents killed.

Endless grief

In recent years, the Nigerian government has come under immense criticism for doing very little to free the Chibok girls.

Some of the parents have died waiting for their daughters to return. Local media reports say they died of heart attacks and grief-related ailments. Others are still grieving and hoping their children will be found.

"There is great pain in our heart every day when we remember our missing daughters. We leave it to God to help us," Mark said.

"My wife has been finding it so difficult to cope without her children. She keeps crying every time she remembers her missing daughters. I have to keep consoling her," he added.

At least 20 of the girls who escaped from Boko Haram have since moved to the US to continue their education. The remaining girls may have been forced to integrate with Boko Haram, Chibok community leaders say, adding that some may be ashamed to return home because they were forced to marry the fighters and have babies.

Boko Haram, whose name roughly translates to "Western education is forbidden", has waged an armed campaign in northeastern Nigeria since 2009.

The group wants to establish an ISIL, following a strict interpretation of Islamic law.

More than 27,000 people have been killed by the group and over two million others displaced from their homes.

Over the years, the group has kidnapped thousands of adults and children. Most of those abducted are women who are used as sex slaves, while the men are often forcefully recruited as fighters.

The group has repeatedly attacked schools, churches, mosques and markets, but state institutions such as police stations and military facilities have remained primary targets.

They have used minors and veiled women for suicide bomb attacks, attacked people with car bombs and opened fire on civilians at public places.

Boko Haram allegedly operates its largest camp in the vast Sambisa forest in Nigeria's northeast.

The forest stretches for about 60,000 square kilometres in the southern part of the northeastern state of Borno, which has borne the brunt of Boko Haram's violence.

In August 2016, the group split into two after long-time leader Abubakar Shekau rejected an attempt by the a branch of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant group's Abu Musab al-Barnawi to replace him.

Al-Barnawi is believed to be the son of late Boko Haram founder Mohammed Yusuf and used to be Boko Haram's spokesperson.

There are reports that Al-Barnawi has been removed



as the factional leader.

The northeast remains a battleground in Nigeria's decade-long fight against the armed group of the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) and Boko Haram.

Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari promised to crush Boko Haram during his first term election campaign in 2015.

But his administration has failed to end the decade-long violence, with increasing attacks on military bases and strategic towns.

The group continues to launch attacks in the country's northeast, and its leader remains at large.

Fading advocacy

Since 2014, Chibok has hosted hundreds of journalists, activists, security operatives and government delegations. Most of the advocacy groups that pleaded for the release of the girls have however gone quiet.

Bring Back Our Girls (BBOG) has kept the campaign going, but the group has become smaller, seemingly having lost its punch.

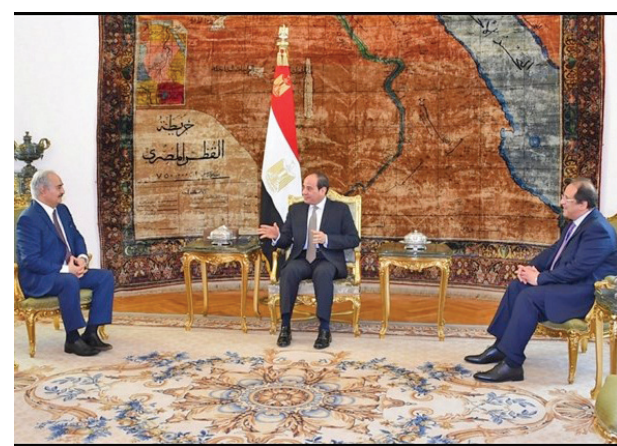
"It is quite challenging to sustain a singular core demand - #BringBackOurGirls - when facing a government that has taken up a disinterested and hostile stance for almost five years," spokesperson of the Bring Back Our Girls group, Nifemi Onifade, told Al Jazeera.

"The drain of standing for the Chibok girls is real and heavy and so, many may have had various reasons over the years for their reduced commitments," Onifade added.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Sisi meets Haftar in Cairo

Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi met Sunday with Libyan commander Khalifa Haftar, whose forces are fighting for control of the capital Tripoli, the presidency said.



"The president [Sisi] affirmed Egypt's support in efforts to fight terrorism and extremist militias to achieve security and stability for Libyan citizens throughout the country," it said in a statement.

Their discussion comes on the back of "the latest developments on the Libyan situation," it added.

Sisi has been an ardent supporter of Haftar's forces, which control swathes of eastern Libya and launched an offensive on April 4 to take the capital.

Haftar has defied international calls to halt his battle against fighters loyal to the U.N.-backed Government of National Accord based in Tripoli.

The military strongman supports a parallel administration based in the Libya's east.

Earlier this month, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry cautioned that the conflict could not be solved militarily.

His remarks came at a Cairo press conference with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov, who also called for a political solution among all sides in Libya.

The Libyan commander has modeled his political style of authoritarian leadership after Sisi, himself an army general turned president.

Egypt has provided funding and arms to Haftar's self-styled Libyan National Army, seeing him as a bulwark against militants.

Haftar, who was exiled in the United States for two decades, returned to Libya in 2011 when the revolution erupted, commanding forces that eventually toppled dictator Moammar Gadhafi.

The oil-rich north African country has been in turmoil ever since with successive weak governments in place and several militias battling for territorial control.

(Source: AFP)

Indonesians to vote in world's biggest single-day election

Tens of millions of Indonesians will vote in presidential and parliamentary elections this week after campaigns focused on the economy, but with political Islam looming ever larger in the world's biggest Muslim-majority nation.

President Joko Widodo, a former furniture salesman who launched his political career as a small-city mayor, is standing for re-election in a contest with ex-general Prabowo Subianto, whom he narrowly defeated in 2014.

Most opinion polls give Widodo a double-digit lead but the opposition has disputed survey findings. It has also said it has uncovered data irregularities affecting millions on the electoral rolls and has vowed to take legal action or use "people power" if its complaints are not resolved.

Some analysts say an unexpected win for the challenger would probably cause a brief slump in Indonesian markets, while a very close race could elevate the risk of a disputed vote.

"In a scenario in which Widodo wins by an unexpectedly narrow margin, large and prolonged protests in Jakarta would elevate tensions and pressure the currency," Kevin O'Rourke, a political analyst and author of Reformasi Weekly, said in the Indonesia-focused newsletter last week.

While most polls have put the president ahead, they could not be taken for granted, a senior government official said.

"Absolutely everybody is flying blind be-



cause we don't know how far the opinion polls can be respected," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Widodo ended his six-month campaign with a mass rally at Jakarta's main stadium at the weekend, where festive crowds overflowed into a surrounding park and streets.

Running ran out on stage in sneakers, to the cheers of the crowd after an hours-long concert by local bands, he struck an optimistic tone for the future of the world's third-largest democracy.

That was a stark contrast to his opponent, who has repeatedly warned Indonesia is on the verge of collapse.

Prabowo, as he is usually known, held a similarly big rally the previous weekend

where supporters, many dressed in Islamic robes, held a mass prayer before a fiery speech about how Indonesia was being pillaged by foreigners and the elite.

Quick counts

Widodo has touted a record infrastructure drive and deregulation as major successes during his tenure, calling it a first step to tackle inequality and poverty in Southeast Asia's biggest economy.

In a televised weekend debate, Widodo and his running mate, Islamic cleric Ma'ruf Amin, said their opponents, neither of whom has served in public office for more than a few months, did not understand managing macrolevel economics.

Widodo, a moderate Muslim from cen-

tral Java, has had to burnish his Islamic credentials after smear campaigns and hoax stories accused him of being anti-Islam, a communist or too close to China, all politically damaging in Indonesia.

Prabowo, who has close links to some headline Islamist groups, and his running mate, business tycoon Sandiaga Uno, have pledged to boost the economy by slashing taxes as much as 8 percentage points, and focus on key infrastructure projects.

Nearly 500,000 police and military will fan out across the vast archipelago to safeguard the vote. In Jakarta, the capital, officers will guard polling station to deter voter intimidation or clashes, national police spokesman Dedi Prasetyo said.

More than 192 million will also vote in national and regional legislative elections, being contested by more than 245,000 candidates, in what is being described as the world's biggest single-day election.

Overseas voting is already underway, with thousands lining up outside Indonesian missions in Singapore and Australia.

On Wednesday, polling stations will open at 7 a.m. (2200 GMT Tuesday) in eastern Indonesia and close at 1 p.m. (0600 GMT) on the western side of the country.

Voters will manually punch five separate paper ballots for president and vice president, and legislative candidates.

(Source: Reuters)

Ajax midfielder De Jong may miss Juventus tie

The participation of key Ajax Amsterdam midfielder Frenkie de Jong in Tuesday's Champions League clash against Juventus is unclear after he went off after just 22 minutes of the Dutch league game against Excelsior Rotterdam on Saturday.

Coach Erik ten Hag said it was too early to say whether De Jong would miss the quarter-final second leg in Turin, where Ajax will be on the backfoot after a 1-1 draw in last Wednesday's first leg.

De Jong, who moves to Barcelona at the end of the season, had an impressive showing in last week's clash in Amsterdam.

He was taken off after just 22 minutes of Ajax's 6-2 win over Excelsior clutching at his hamstring.

"He felt something wrong with his hamstring and so we took him off as a precaution," Ten Hag told reporters afterwards. "We were already 1-0 up so there was no point taking any risks."

De Jong had also been injured the match before the first leg but played a full 90 minutes against Juventus last Wednesday.

Saturday's victory for Ajax put them three points clear of PSV Eindhoven at the top of the standings, although PSV play at home on Sunday against struggling De Graafschap.

(Source: Reuters)

Pele recovering well after kidney stone operation



SAO PAULO (Reuters) — Brazilian soccer great Pele had a successful operation to remove a kidney stone on Saturday, doctors in Sao Paulo said.

Pele had the surgery at the Israelite Albert Einstein hospital. "The procedure was a success and the patient is back in his room," a brief statement from doctors said.

Considered by many the game's finest player and the only man to have won three World Cups, Pele had also been admitted to hospital in France last week after suffering a fever following an event in the city with French World Cup-winner Kylian Mbappe.

He was soon released but his doctors in Brazil decided to admit him again when he returned home on Tuesday.

The 78-year-old former Santos and New York Cosmos player has suffered from kidney and prostate problems and also had hip replacement surgery in recent years.

Barton being investigated by police after incident at Barnsley

Police were investigating an alleged incident involving Fleetwood manager Joey Barton after the former Manchester City player was accused of assaulting his Barnsley counterpart following the team's League One game on Saturday.

Barnsley striker Cauley Woodrow tweeted that Barton confronted the team's manager Daniel Stendel in the tunnel following a 4-2 loss for Fleetwood. Woodrow claimed Stendel was left with "blood pouring from his face" but the tweet has since been deleted.

A South Yorkshire Police spokesman told Britain's Press Association that "we are aware of something that has taken place in the tunnel after the game and we are investigating."

Neither manager spoke to media after the third-tier match.

Barnsley released a statement saying: "The club can confirm there was an alleged incident in the tunnel area that took place following the conclusion of today's match, which South Yorkshire police are currently investigating."

"The club is assisting the police with its enquiries and, as a result, we are not in a position to make any further comment at this time."

(Source: Mirror)

Juventus suffer shock SPAL defeat, denied title

Juventus were denied the chance of winning Serie A for a record eighth time in a row on Saturday, following a shock 2-1 defeat at relegation-threatened SPAL.

Kevin Bonifazi and Sergio Floccari struck as SPAL completed a most unlikely turnaround to claim three points in their battle to avoid the drop, making Juventus wait a while longer to be confirmed champions again.

Juve only needed a point to be certain of winning the league and Massimiliano Allegri made a whole host of changes, resting Cristiano Ronaldo, Federico Bernardeschi, Mario Mandzukic, Alex Sandro, Miralem Pjanic, Blaise Matuidi, Leonardo Bonucci and Giorgio Chiellini ahead of their Champions League quarterfinal second leg against Ajax.

But his selection gamble backfired after Moise Kean's 29th minute strike spurred SPAL into life. Kean found the back of the net for the fourth Serie A match in a row and a sixth in succession for club and country but his effort came against the run of play following a lively start from the home side.

And SPAL equalised on 49 minutes, with defender Bonifazi heading in from a corner, before Floccari completed the comeback 16 minutes from time when he swept home from 12 yards. SPAL faced a nervous wait while the Video Assistant Referee investigated a potential handball by Alessandro Murgia in the build up, before the goal was given.

Allegri responded by bringing on Bernardeschi from the substitutes' bench but Juventus were left to rue a missed opportunity to wrap the title up early. The only consolation for the reigning champions is that they will win Serie A again if Napoli fail to beat Chievo on Sunday.

(Source: Soccernet)

Dominant Hamilton wins 1,000th race in Mercedes one-two

Lewis Hamilton won the 1,000th Formula One grand prix Sunday after grabbing the lead from Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas at the first corner and powering to victory in blustery Shanghai.

Hamilton, who started from second on the grid, took the world championship lead after romping home to win the Chinese Grand Prix by more than 6.5 seconds from Bottas, with Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel third.

Max Verstappen of Red Bull was fourth and Charles Leclerc in the second Ferrari was fifth.

This was world champion Hamilton's sixth victory at the Chinese Grand Prix and second in a row this season.

"To have a one-two (for Mercedes) is really special in the 1,000th grand prix but the start was where it made the difference and the rest is history," said the Briton.

Hamilton was pipped for pole position by Bottas by just 0.023 seconds in qualifying and had said that he was "struggling with the car".

But the Finn laboured out of the blocks, allowing Hamilton to nip in and grab the lead at the first corner.

"I lost it on the start, honestly, shame about the start. I got some wheel spin on the start line," said Bottas, who also relinquished his hold on the standings after three races.



Talented 21-year-old Leclerc meanwhile pulled off the same trick at the start at the expense of his team-mate Vettel, darting into third.

There was more early drama when Toro Rosso's Daniil Kvyat tangled with both McLarens of Lando Norris and Carlos Sainz, earning the Russian a drive-through penalty.

Zidane: Benzema is compatible with everyone



Zinedine Zidane has dispelled the idea of replacing Karim Benzema with another striker at the Santiago Bernabeu next season.

The Real Madrid boss was speaking ahead of his side's trip to face Leganes on Monday night.

"Benzema is compatible with everyone because he can bring all the good players together," Zidane said when asked about his current forward.

"Karim is a different player, he's not a typical number nine. When I saw him start, he was playing more in midfield and out wide. He knows that he can do many things, he can score like a no.9 and he can do link-up play."

There are also rumours about the possibly precarious future of Toni Kroos, but Zidane underlined the importance of the German midfielder.

"Kroos is a very good player, not only for me," he said. "He's done many good things in his five years here, he's a calm player that doesn't wilt under pressure."

"I like him, I've always liked him. You talk and will continue to talk about Toni and other players that I don't want... all of them are important and good enough."

However, Kroos is expected to miss Monday's match with Leganes due to illness. "He has something like gastroenteritis,"

said Zidane. "He was bad last night and he hasn't come. We're going to see if he gets better between today and tomorrow, but he hasn't been able to train with us today."

Isco is a possible replacement for Kroos in Zidane's midfield but the Spaniard's future at the Bernabeu has been a hot topic for months.

"There are many players here that can be sold because they are all really good," Zidane said. "Many clubs want many Real Madrid players, it's nothing new. Isco is an important player and I like him. We'll see what happens next year."

Many have questioned whether, since the departure of Cristiano Ronaldo, Los Blancos have had a proper leader on the pitch.

"You can do what you want but you can't replace Cristiano," Zidane said. "He's gone but we can bring in other players that aren't going to do what Cristiano has done. That's life." Real Madrid will play on a Monday night for the first time in three seasons when they face Leganes and Zidane has no problem with playing on that particular day.

"There are many teams that play on a Monday, now it's our turn," he said.

"We've had a very long week with many training sessions."

(Source: Marca)

Curry becomes all-time leader in postseason 3s



Golden State Warriors star Stephen Curry is now the NBA's all-time leader in postseason 3-pointers.

The sharp-shooting point guard passed Ray Allen on that list on Saturday during the Warriors' 121-104 Game 1 win over the LA Clippers at Oracle Arena.

Curry entered the game seven 3-pointers behind Allen, but the two-time NBA MVP topped Allen in the third quarter, when he sank his eighth 3-pointer of the game, giving him 386 postseason treys.

"That's pretty special. I mean, I always talk about longevity and the all-time great shooters. Ray Allen, Reggie Miller -- anytime we can pass them in the record books, it's pretty special," Curry said after the game. "I shot a lot of [3-pointers], so I got to make a lot of them."

Allen racked up those 3s over the course of an 18-year career with 11 playoff appearances. It took Curry only 10 seasons and seven trips to the playoffs to break the record.

"That's remarkable, given that he's kind of right in his prime," Warriors head coach Steve Kerr said. "He's got a lot of years left."

Said Warriors forward Draymond Green, "I don't think there's much argument when anyone says he's the greatest shooter of

briefly protested.

Back at the front, the 34-year-old Hamilton began pulling away, establishing a more than five-second gap on Bottas with a third of the race gone.

With five-time world champion Hamilton -- winner in Bahrain two weeks ago -- serene up top, the real battles unfolded behind him.

Vettel, under pressure after a number of unforced errors going back to last season, went wheel-to-wheel with Verstappen after both pitted for fresh tyres.

Vettel, Bottas and then Toro Rosso's Alexander Albon, who missed qualifying after a nasty crash in final practice, all exchanged fastest laps.

On lap 38 of the 56 it was Leclerc and Bottas who had a skirmish in the compelling battle for second.

Leclerc then pitted and was momentarily held up by a comparatively sluggish change of tyres.

Nico Hulkenberg, who qualified eighth for Renault, saw his race come to an early conclusion after the team retired his faltering car.

Norris and Kvyat were also forced out before the end.

The fourth race of the season takes place on the streets of Baku, in Azerbaijan, in a fortnight.

(Source: AFP)

Solskjaer admits Man Utd benefitted from good fortune in victory over West Ham



It was United's second win in six games in all competitions since their remarkable comeback victory over Paris St Germain in the Champions League's round of 16.

They will now be hoping they can produce another stirring fightback against Barcelona on Tuesday.

Barcelona have won 27 of their last 30 Champions League home matches and drawn the other three. They have never lost to United at home in the competition but Solskjaer is refusing to give up hope.

"We know it is going to be a very difficult game but we beat PSG," Solskjaer added. "It will be a greater achievement if we can manage it against Barcelona because we know

what they are.

"We will go there, why not have a go but we have to be better defensively."

One glimmer of hope for United is that a much-changed Barcelona were held by La Liga bottom side Huesca on Saturday.

Controversial Cardiff defeat

While the title and fight for top-four places look set to go down to the wire, the relegation battle could be all but over should Brighton beat Cardiff on Tuesday.

The Welsh side are five points adrift of safety after a controversial 2-0 defeat to Burnley.

Chris Wood scored twice for the hosts, but Cardiff were left furious after referee Mike Dean overruled his assistant's decision to award a penalty to the visitors after the break with the score still at 1-0.

Brighton remain catchable for Neil Warnock's men as they succumbed to a humiliating 5-0 home defeat to Bournemouth.

The Cherries had lost 11 of their last 12 games on the road, but moved up to 12th thanks to goals from Dan Gosling, Ryan Fraser, David Brooks, Callum Wilson and Junior Stanislas.

Southampton further eased their relegation fears with a 3-1 win over Wolves to move eight points clear of the drop zone.

Fulham's relegation to the Championship is already assured, but they secured just a fifth win of the season by beating Everton 2-0.

(Source: Reuters)

Iran’s Tractor Sazi eye Yoann Gourcuff: report

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iranian football club Tractor Sazi have reportedly set their sight on signing French midfielder Yoann Gourcuff.

The Iranian football club had previously signed former AC Milan midfielder Kevin Constant in January but the French-Guinea international player failed to play for Tractor Sazi after failing a medical.

Constant has given his green light to play for Tractor Sazi but they have switched their attention to Gourcuff.

Gourcuff, who is currently a free agent, has most recently played for French club Dijon.

He is described as a “playmaker of real quality” who “is an accomplished passer of the ball”.

Gourcuff has been described by former French international David Ginola as the best French player of his generation.

His talent, elegant playing style, tenacity on the pitch, technical skills and precocious ability have drawn comparisons to French legend Zinedine Zidane.

Gourcuff is a French international. Prior to playing at senior level, he played on the under-19 team that won the 2005 European Under-19 Football Championship.

Gourcuff made his senior national team debut in August 2008.

He scored his first international goal two months later against Romania. Gourcuff made his first major tournament appearance for France at the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Since joining the national team, he has been inserted into the playmaker role, a position that was vacated and never filled following the retirement of Zidane in 2006.



Ethiopia sweeps Paris marathon, Calvin smashes French record

Ethiopian Abrha Milaw upstaged two-time defending champion Paul Lonyangata to win the Paris Marathon on Sunday.

Milaw clocked 2hr 07min 05sec, with Kenyan rival Lonyangata coming in third as 49,155 runners took to the streets of the French capital in cold, clear conditions.

Gelete Burka produced a spurt of extra gas in the final kilometre to ensure an Ethiopian winner in the women’s race with a time of 2:22:48.

France’s Clemence Calvin, who was only cleared to race on Friday after the last-minute lifting of a temporary ban for evading a doping test last month in Morocco, smashed the French women’s record.

Calvin finished fourth in 2:23:41, bettering by 41 seconds the previous national record set by Christelle Daunay in 2010.

It also bettered by almost three minutes her own previous best of 2:26:28 which she set when finishing second in the European championships in Berlin last year.

“I stuck with it right to the end, I don’t care what my detractors think,” said Calvin.

“There was only a very small minority of malicious people,” she added. “I have the courage of those who withstand a blow and are planted like the Eiffel Tower. I’m not afraid of anything or anyone.”

(Source: AFP)

Tokyo 2020: Paralympic pictograms revealed

With exactly 500 days to go until the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games, the Organising Committee has unveiled the official Paralympic sport pictograms. There are 23 designs, with 22 of the Paralympic sports each represented by one pictogram, and one used for each of the two cycling disciplines.

The pictograms have been created with the aim of helping people overcome language barriers through the use of internationally recognisable images to depict individual sports.

Honouring and celebrating Paralympic sports, the pictogram images depict Paralympians in dynamic poses in the various sporting disciplines. Aiming to reflect and promote an inclusive society that celebrates differences and promotes world-class athleticism, the pictograms will be a major identifier of the Paralympic Games sport programme.

This is the first time in Japan that summer Paralympic sports are individually represented in the form of pictograms. It is also the first time that badminton and taekwondo pictograms are being used, as these two sports have been



newly added to the Paralympic programme for Tokyo 2020.

The pictograms will be used in many places and formats, including at competition venues, events, on city decorations and licensed products. They will help retain visual impressions of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games in the memories of people both during and after the Games.

While following the same creative concept and design of the Olympic Sport Pictograms, the characteristics of the

individual Paralympic sports were taken into account by accurately reflecting their rules, the athletes’ posture and the equipment they use.

A team led by renowned Japanese designer Masaaki Hiromura designed the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games sport pictograms.

Said Hiromura, “It is a real honour to have participated in the design of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games sport pictograms. I have tried to express the dynamic beauty of the athletes through these pictograms, while respecting the legacy bequeathed by the pioneers of the Japanese design industry in their designs for the Tokyo 1964 Olympic Games.

“The 2020 designs took us almost two years to complete and they embody the thoughtful input of the many people involved. I hope that these pictograms will inspire everyone and help generate excitement for the different sports at Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games.”

(Source: Paralympic)

Perth Glory claim their first A-League Premiership



Perth Glory claimed their first A-League Premiership following their 1-0 victory over the Newcastle Jets on Sunday, earning themselves a place in the 2020 AFC Champions League.

In front of 11,349 supporters at HBF Park, a second half strike from defender Ivan Franjic helped lift Tony Popovic’s side to a narrow victory over the Novocastrians.

Sydney FC’s hopes of claiming the A-League 2019 Premiership suffered a blow on Saturday after they drew 1-1 with Western Sydney Wanderers FC in the Sydney Derby at ANZ Stadium.

And with Perth winning in the west on Sunday, the Glory can no longer be caught by the Sky Blues atop the A-League 2018/19 standings.

Football Federation Australia (FFA) Chairman Chris Nikou congratulated Perth Glory on their achievement.

“Perth Glory are a proud club with a proud history and are definitely deserved

A-League Premiers following their outstanding season,” Nikou said.

“Glory won two Premierships in the National Soccer League era, however this is their first in the A-League and I am sure everyone involved with their Club will be thrilled with the achievement.

“We congratulate Perth Glory Head Coach Tony Popovic, his coaching staff, captain Diego Castro and all the players for their outstanding performances throughout the season.”

Perth Glory will host their A-League 2019 semi-final on May 10 at HBF Park against the lowest ranked winner from the A-League 2019 Elimination Finals the previous week.

They also have their inaugural AFC Champions League campaign to look forward to in 2020 and head coach Popovic will be looking to steer them to more glory, having led Western Sydney Wanderers to the Continental title in 2014.

(Source: Football Federation Australia)

Olympic gold medalist Yvette Corlett dies at age 89



1952 Olympic gold medalist Yvette Williams has died aged 89.

Williams, who became the first woman to win a gold medal for New Zealand when she won the women’s long jump in Helsinki, died last night.

She wrote her name into New Zealand’s Olympic history books when she won a gold medal for long jump at the 1952 Helsinki games, becoming the country’s first female Olympic champion.

Williams’ mark of 6.24m was also an Olympic record – and two years later she leaped a further 4cm to break the women’s long jump world record.

A natural athlete, the Dunedin-born sportswoman played netball and basketball before she was introduced to athletics. Her first national title was in shot put, before she turned her attention to long jump.

In the lead up to the Helsinki Olympics, Williams was living in Auckland, where she would start her day with an hour of calisthenics before heading to work in

the city as a secretary, where she would spend her lunch breaks training, running up and down the hills of central Auckland. After work, she would reportedly train for another three hours.

Williams returned to Auckland after her Olympic win to a hero’s welcome, with a homecoming tour that included a visit to Parliament House to meet the Prime Minister and a road trip back to her home in Dunedin.

“As we headed through the South Island, lots of children and parents stood roadside waving flags and giving me bunches of flowers,” Corlett told the Herald.

In 1956, Williams (now Yvonne Corlett after marrying her husband Buddy) retired from competition but continued to coach athletics and went on to actively work with Special Olympians.

In 1990, she became one of the first people inducted into the New Zealand Sports Hall of Fame - officially recognized as one of New Zealand sport’s original trailblazers.

(Source: Newstalk)

Iranian thrower, runner-up in the U.S. int’l contest

IRNA — Iranian discus thrower stood second in the international competitions of University of California San Diego on Sunday.

Iranian silver medalist at 2012 Olympic Games Ehsan Haddadi came second with a throw of 65.79 meters.



He is being coached by American Mac Wilkins in the U.S. to get prepared for Qatar international track and field contests to be held in Doha September 27 to October 6.

In this event, Reggie Jagers from the U.S. became the champion.

Haddadi had already claimed a gold medal in Triton Invitational in Chula Vista, Southern California, the U.S., with a throw of 67.19m, in which Sam Mattis won the silver and Reggie Jagers win the third place.

Iranian chess player ranks 1st in Iceland Open

IRNA — Iranian teenage chess player Ali Reza Firouzja ranked first in GAMMA Reykjavik Open 2019 which is underway in Iceland.

Firouzja received victories and two ties.

“The Reykjavik Open is one of the strongest and most innovative open tournaments in the world, played in the magnificent Harpa building – think a black Sydney Opera House with plenty of side-events plus, of course, the chance to see amazing Iceland.

After having victory in Iceland Chess 960, he also received the permission to attend 2019 Chess 960 in Norway.

Chess960, also known as Fischer Random Chess or Fischerandom, is a variant of chess invented and advocated by former world chess champion Bobby Fischer, announced publicly on June 19, 1996, in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The first round of the Reykjavik Open was held with the attendance of 14 players in 1964.

Some 249 players participated in the 2019 round of the event.

Women’s futsal team to play Spain, Portugal

TASNIM — Iran’s women’s futsal team will play friendly matches with Spain and Portugal, according to the team’s technical director Ali Ra’di.

Iran will travel to Russia on May 4 and play Portugal one day later.

Team Melli will meet host Russia on May 6 and play Spain on May 8, Ra’di said.

“These friendlies will help us to earn more experience because they are the top teams in the world. We are also going to rejuvenate our team and have invited young players to our camp,” he added.

Two-time champions Iran are preparing for the 2020 AFC Women’s Futsal Championship.

Firouz Karimi named Naft Masjed Soleyman coach

Persian Football - Firouz Karimi has been named as new head coach of Naft Masjed Soleyman on Sunday.

The former Esteghlal coach has replaced Alireza Marzban in the Iranian top-flight football team.

Naft Masjed Soleyman are two places above the relegation zone.

The team started the new season with Abdollah Veisi but parted company with the coach in September.

Now, Naft Masjed Soleyman have reached an agreement with Karimi as the third coach in the current season.

With five minutes remaining, Naft Masjed Soleyman sit 14th with 19 points in Iran Professional League (IPL) table.

West Ham threatens to ban fans filmed chanting abuse

Premier League club West Ham says it will ban any fans who were filmed chanting anti-Semitic abuse ahead of a game at Manchester United.

Journalist Darren Richman posted the video of the offensive song about West Ham rival Tottenham, which was filmed by his mother on public transport in the northern English city on Saturday.

West Ham says it is “disgusted” by the video circulating on Twitter.

In a statement, West Ham says it is “taking immediate action to try to identify the offenders, whose details we will be handing over to the police and will be banned for life from London Stadium and from travelling with the club.”

West Ham adds that it does not “want people like this associated with West Ham. They are not welcome at our club, they are not welcome in civilized society.”

West Ham lost 2-1 at Old Trafford.

(Source: ESPN)

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Fear God even if it is slight, and place a veil between Him and yourself even if it is thin.

Imam Ali (AS)

Fajr filmfest to help victims of floods

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — The 37th Fajr International Film Festival plans to help victims of Iran’s recent floods, the organizers have announced.

All the box office receipts will be donated to Iran’s Red Crescent in a program named “We Stay with You”.

The festival as the ambassador of kindness in the field of natural disasters will continue collaboration with the Red Crescent.

The organizers also plan to select and screen foreign films that focus on natural disasters in the next editions of the event in order to attract wide attention from across the world to natural disasters and incidents.

Heavy rainfall, starting on March 19, has caused flooding in 28 out of 31 provinces in the country, affecting 42,269,129 inhabitants in 253 cities and causing widespread damage to roads, sewage systems, health centers, hospitals and other municipal facilities.

Swiss orchestra to perform in Tehran

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Da Capo, a chamber orchestra from Nyon, Switzerland, is scheduled to give a concert at Tehran’s Vahdat Hall on April 21.

Franz Josefovsky is the musical director of the performance, which will be conducted by the Egyptian conductor, Ahmed Hamdy.

A repertoire of famous classical opera arias including pieces by Giuseppe Verdi, Giacomo Puccini, Richard Wagner, Jacques Offenbach and Georges Bizet will be performed during the concert.

The repertoire also includes pieces by Pietro Mascagni, Rodolphe Kreutzer, Ruggero Leoncavallo, Albert Lortzing and Bepi De Marzi.

The concert will be organized by the Embassy of Switzerland in Tehran in collaboration with Iran’s Rudaki Foundation.

Shiraz to host Mehr Theater Group’s “Summerless”

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian director Amir-Reza Kuhestani’s Mehr Theater Group will perform their acclaimed play “Summerless” at Honar Shahr-e Aftab Cineplex in Shiraz tonight.

The play is about the relationships between members of the new generation eager to discover the world and live in a different society, an essential show to understand the current transformations of Iranian society.

The Mehr Theater Group has frequently performed the play in Italy, Sweden, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, the U.S. and several other countries over the past few years.

Mona Ahmadi, Saeid Changizian and Leili Rashidi are the main members of the cast for the play, which will be on stage until April 19.

Iranian bookstores get “A Visit from the Goon Squad”

CULTURE d e s k **TEHRAN** — American writer Jennifer Egan 2011 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel “A Visit from the Goon Squad” has recently been published in Persian by Naqsh-e Jahan Publications in Tehran.

Translated by Fatemeh Rahimi Balai, the book is a set of thirteen chapters that can be read as individual stories, yet are interrelated by its two main characters: Bennie Salazar, a record company executive, and his assistant, Sasha.

The national bestseller book has won several awards including the National Book Critics Circle Award and was also the PEN/Faulkner Award finalist.

Fajr film festival unveils lineup for Eastern Vista

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — The organizers of the 37th Fajr International Film Festival have announced the lineup of features for the Eastern Vista, a section dedicated to Asian filmmakers.

The lineup includes three films from Iran and 12 films from China, Japan, Turkey, Armenia, Malaysia and several other countries.

“Without My Friend” by Mohammad-Ali Talebi, “Numbness” by Hossein Mahkam and “23 Individuals” by Mehdi Jafari are the Iranian films to screen in the section.

The lineup also includes “Amina” by Ayman Zeidan from Syria, “Coming Home” by Darya Shumakova from Armenia,

“Crossing the Border” by Huo Meng from China, “Crossroads” by Nam Ron from Malaysia, “Fortitude” by Rashid Malikov from Uzbekistan and “Hills Without Names” by Hilal Baydarov from Azerbaijan.

Also included are “Rona, Azim’s Mother”, a co-production between Afghanistan and Iran by the Tehran-based Afghan brothers Jamshid and Navid Mahmudi, and “Hotel New Moon”, a co-production between Iran and Japan by Japanese filmmaker Takefumi Tsutsui

“Screwdriver” by Bassam Jarbawi from Palestine, “The Announcement” by Mahmut Fazil from Turkey and “The Song of the Tree” by Aibek Daiyrbekov from Kyrgyzstan will also go on screen in this section.



A scene from “23 Individuals” by Mehdi Jafari.

Iranian movies line up for Uruguay festival



“No Date, No Signature” by Vahid Jalilvand.

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Four Iranian movies will be competing in various sections of the 37th Uruguay International Film Festival, which will be held in Montevideo from April 17 to 27.

Vahid Jalilvand’s acclaimed drama “No Date, No Signature”, Iran’s submission to the 2018 Oscars, will be screened in Panorama, dedicated to international feature films.

“Dressage” by Puya Badkubeh has been selected to screen in the New Filmmaking Competition, while “Counter-Clockwise”

by Pedram Yazdani and “Lunch Time” by Alireza Qasemi will compete in the international short films section.

The festival will open with a screening of “Deslembro”, a co-production from Brazil, France and Qatar by Flavia Castro. It will come to an end with “Real Love” by Claire Burger from France.

Fifteen movies, including “So Long, My Son” by Wang Xiaoshuai from China, “Present. Perfect” by Shengze Zhu from the United States and Hong Kong, and “Piranhas” by Claudio Giovannesi from Italy will be screened in the official competition.

Children’s play “The Gruffalo” goes on stage in Yazd



A poster for “The Gruffalo”.

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — “The Gruffalo”, a play based on a children’s book by English writer Julia Donaldson, is currently on stage at the Yazd branch of the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA), the IIDCYA announced on Sunday.

Arash Sharifzadeh is the director of the play, which has been dramatized by Iranian playwright Bahram Jalalipur.

“The Gruffalo” tells the story of a clever mouse, who goes for a walk in a jungle. To scare other animals such as the fox,

the owl and the snake who intend to eat him, he invents a monster called Gruffalo as his friend.

The animals flee when they hear about Gruffalo, which is a half grizzly bear and half buffalo. But this is not the end of the story as the mouse must confront a real Gruffalo.

Nasser Ahmadifar, Parisima Benmaran and Saeid Musavi are the main members of the cast for the play, which has been acclaimed in several Iranian and international events.

“The Gruffalo” will be on stage for about one month.

Fajr to review animations by Ali-Akbar Sadeqi

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Restored versions of six animated movies by veteran Iranian artist and animator Ali-Akbar Sadeqi will be screened during the 37th Fajr International Film Festival.

The animations will go on screen in the Preserved Classics section of the festival, the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) announced in a press release published on Sunday.

The animations all produced by the IIDYA are “Golbaran”, “Zal and Simorgh”, “Seven Cities”, “Rook”, “Malek Khorshid” and “I Am Whom”.

Sadeqi, 82, is a graduate of art from the University of Tehran. His style of painting is a kind of Iranian surrealism, based on traditional forms and composition in paintings.

The Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art honored Sadeqi with a retrospective of his inspiring artworks in painting, illustration, animation and sculpture last year.

In addition, five Iranian films from the 1980s have been selected to go on screen in the Preserved Classics section.

They include “The Runner” (1984) by Amir Naderi, “Talisman” (1986) by Dariush Farhang, “Cold Roads” (1986) by Masud Jafari-Jozani, “The Scout” (1988) by Ebrahim Hatamikia and “The Last Act” (1989) by Varuj Karim-Masihi.

The films have been restored in collaboration with the National Film Archive of Iran and the IIDCYA.

The 37th Fajr International Film Festival will be held in Tehran from April 18 to 26.

Actor Burt Reynolds’ car, cowboy boots going up for auction



Burt Reynolds stands next to a 1979 Pontiac Trans Am, which was the last Trans Am owned and driven by Reynolds, in this Julien’s Auctions photo, released from Culver City, California, U.S., on April 11, 2019. (Courtesy Julien’s Auctions/Handout via Reuters)

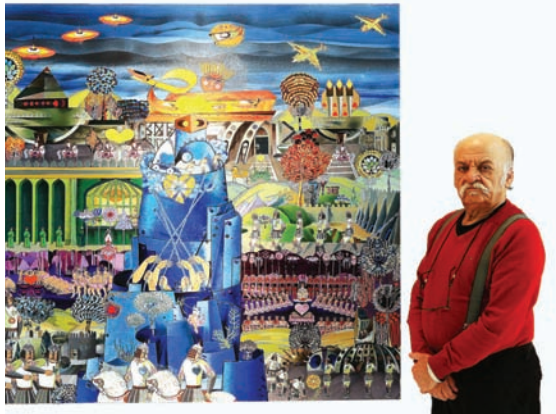
LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — One of Burt Reynolds’ favorite cars is going up for auction in June along with some of his cowboy boots, hats, sports jackets and other items from his estate, Julien’s Auctions said on Friday.

The two-day auction in Beverly Hills, authorized by the actor’s family, comes almost a year after the death at age 82 of the charming star who was one of Hollywood’s favorite actors.

The highlight of the auction is a 1979 Pontiac Trans Am car that Reynolds used on photo shoots and drove on the Bandit Run cross country rally, which re-enacts the journey at the center of his 1977 film “Smokey and the Bandit.”

The car, which Reynolds co-owned with his business partner Gene Kennedy, is expected to fetch up to \$500,000 at auction, Julien’s said in a statement.

Two pairs of leather cowboy boots - one red and one yellow - are also offered for sale with estimates ranging from \$800 to \$2,000 a pair, along with two cowboy hats.



Iranian artist and animator Ali-Akbar Sadeqi poses with one of his paintings in an undated photo.

Reynolds started out as a football player at Florida State University (FSU) before injuries suffered in a car crash wrecked his hopes of a professional career.

But his attachment to FSU remained strong. The auction includes several custom or personalized FSU baseball, basketball and varsity jackets.

Other highlights include an oil on canvas painting of the actor’s favorite horse titled “Cartouche,” which carries an estimate of \$20,000 - \$30,000. Other art works, furniture and dozens of personal items are also being offered for sale.

The auction will take place in Beverly Hills on June 15 and 16, and will be preceded by a public exhibition of some of the items from June 10-14.

Reynolds, who was also known for the 1960s television series “Gunsmoke” and the movies “Deliverance” and “Boogie Nights,” died of a heart attack in Florida in September 2018.