



Oil market fragile due to U.S. sanctions 4



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Leader regrets killing of **Muslims by** each other

Paralympic Committee



Festival unveils

official lineup 16

TEHRAN — Central Securities Depository of Iran (CSDI) has been appointed as a board member of the World Forum of Central Securities Depositories (WFC), the company's official website published. As reported, Iran was selected as the

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EFIO

board member of WFC during the 22nd annual general assembly of Asia Pacific Central Securities Depository Group (ACG), which was held in Colombo, the capital city of Sri Lanka, in last November.

CSDI is the sole registrar, central custodian and clearing house for the Iranian financial market of four exchanges including Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), and Iran Energy Exchange (IEE).

The World Forum of CSDs (WFC) is composed of five regional CSD associations, including Asia Pacific CSD Group (ACG), Americas Central Securities Depositories Association (ACSDA), Africa & Middle East Depositories (AECSD), Association of **Eurasian Central Securities Depositories** (AECSD), and Association (AMEDA) and the European Central Securities Depositories Association (ECSDA).

Iran calls claim of interference in Venezuela 'ridiculous'

TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Seyyed Abbas Mousavi on Sunday denounced the U.S. Secretary of State's claim that Iran is interfering in the internal affairs of Venezuela, describing it as "ridiculous"

Pompeo spoke during a stop in Paraguay on a trip that Washington has said will focus on developments in Venezuela. During his trip, Pompeo has been trying to build up support for Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's ouster.

Mousavi said the U.S. under Trump seeks to turn Latin America into its back yard, just like the 19th century. →2

Europe urged to reject U.S. Middle East plan if it is unfair to Palestinians

TEHRAN — High-ranking former European politicians have condemned the Trump administration's one-sided Israel-Palestine policy and called in a letter for Europe to reject any U.S. Middle East peace plan unless it is fair to Palestinians. The letter, sent to the Guardian, the EU and European governments, was signed by 25 former foreign ministers, six former prime ministers, and two former Nato secretary generals.

"It is time for Europe to stand by our principled parameters for peace in Israel-Palestine," read the letter, calling for a two-state solution in which Israel and Palestinian states live side by side. \rightarrow 13



Hazara genocide in Pakistan must stop

n the killing fields of Pakistan, the bloodletting of Hazara Shias continues unabated. In a latest incident, on Friday morning, a massive blast ripped through a crowded market in Hazara-populated neighborhood of Quetta city, killing at least 20 people, majority of them Hazara Shias.

As per the norm, the political and military leadership of the country, including Prime Minister Imran Khan, issued lengthy statements, ordering probe and expressing sympathies with the bereaved families.

All this sounds so repetitive and so eceitful now. to the extent that these



U.S. humiliates EU by calling INSTEX 'paper tiger'

ordon Sondland, the U.S. representative to the European Union, has in fact in-sulted and humiliated the Europeans by calling their special mechanism for trade with Iran, officially called INSTEX, a "paper tiger".

"EU's new proposal for trade with the Islamic Republic of Iran is nothing, but a paper tiger," Radio Farda quoted Sondland as saying in a meeting in Brussels on April 11, Radio Farda reported.

By appearing too weak in the face of the Trump administration, Europe will be considered as unimportant and spineless by other countries in the world, especially

TEHRAN — During the 2016 presidential race, the President of the United States officially and explicitly supported the withdrawal of Britain from the European Union. However, Trump is currently worried about how London is leaving Europe! Trump has repeatedly blamed the British prime minister for failing to conclude appropriate agreements with Europe. The issue is how the British government has become a passive player in the world.

Trump seeks to destroy the EU

Republicans in the White House and Congress are renewing their support for a U.S.-U.K. trade deal after Britain leaves the European Union -even as Brexit is facing significant delays across the Atlantic.

If the U.K. regains control over its national trade policy, our two nations will have a once-in-a-generation chance to forge an ambitious trade pact - a truly free, fair, and reciprocal agreement that will foster economic growth, spur innovation, and define a new global standard in trade," Rep. George Holding, R-N.C., wrote in an op-ed for the Daily Telegraph this week.

Holding, who is the ranking Republican of the British American Parliamentary Group and co-chair of the Congressional U.K. Caucus, wrote that a U.S.-U.K. free trade agreement is a "top priority" for the U.S. He said that President Trump is "extremely supportive of such a deal as are many Republican and Democratic leaders in Congress." \rightarrow 7

World slams ICC's decision to not investigate U.S. war crimes in Afghanistan

By Sved Zafar Mehdi

TEHRAN — In a stark reminder of how the U.S. military industrial complex puts pressure on international watchdog bodies to toe its line, International Criminal Court (ICC) has rejected a request to initiate investigation into U.S. war crimes in Afghanistan. In a decision that has been blasted as "deeply flawed" and a "devastating blow for victims". ICC judges on Friday turned down a request by the court's prosecutor to start an investigation into war crimes committed by the U.S. and other actors in war-ravaged Afghanistan. In a detailed ruling, judges said an investi-

because an investigation and prosecution was

unlikely to be successful, as entities like the U.S.

forces, Afghan authorities and the Taliban, are

without redress.² In a statement, the Trump administration gation "would not serve the interests of justice"

hailed the decision not to investigate U.S. personnel as "a major international victory, not only for these patriots, but for the rule of law." Pertinently, the U.S. government had recently

blow for victims who have suffered grave crimes

threatened the ICC and its judges if it opened gainst the D

by major powers such as China and Russia.

The Europeans should feel assured that they will suffer more humiliations if they try to act passively toward illegal moves and humiliating remarks by Trump and his soldiers. The Trump administration has been actually questioning Europeans' political sovereignty and independence by threatening to punish them if they do business with Iran. Since coming to power, Trump has been continuing to humiliate the world, including Europe as a trans-Atlantic ally of Washington. Europeans' lame response to U.S. embassy move to Jerusalem and its recognition of the occupied Golan Heights as Israeli land in violation of international law are all making Europe to look impotent and as a bloc that cannot to be reckoned with.

The Europeans have been long proclaiming support for sovereign rights of the nations and respect for international law and order but their passive reaction to such violations is making the Trump administration more arrogant.

A long delay by Europeans to introduce their financial mechanism for non-dollar trade with Iran and now their slow move to implement it will make Europe as a whole to look weak, something which will strengthen Sondland's discourteous remarks.

Trump and the hawks around him are showing contempt for all the things that the EU is saying it is standing for. They violate international law, rescind international agreements such as the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and the Paris climate accord, scold international bodies such as the United Nations and International Court of Justice, etc.

The EU must rise up to these threats and humiliations and stop cajoling and begging impulsive Trump to change his mind. Europeans should gradually say goodbye to trans-Atlantic alliance and guard their own dignity otherwise they will be regarded as a U.S. colony.

al watch uman l condemned the ruling, calling it "a devastating

not expected to cooperate.

ghanistan. <mark>→7</mark>

Suspense and uncertainty hang over intra-Afghan summit in Qatar

By Hamid Bayati

TEHRAN — After a lot of hullabaloo, there seems to be a tepid response from the Afghan government to the forthcoming meeting with the Taliban scheduled on April 19-20 in Qatar.

The second intra-Afghan summit was initially scheduled to be held on April 14-15, but has been postponed till April 19-20 as the government failed to finalize a team to hold talks with the Taliban.

President Ashraf Ghani was expected to

shortlist the names of delegates to sit with the Taliban representatives on April 13, but he could not reach a consensus with other Afghan leaders.

According to President Ghani's close aide and secretary of High Peace Council Umer Daudzai, the list could not be finalized as some members of the Reconciliation Leadership Council wanted more representatives in the team.

Hizb-e-Islami chief and former warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who refused to attend the Reconciliation Council's second meeting on April 10, alleged that the government was seeking to include its 'favorites in the Qatar delegation', according to Tolo TV, Afghanistan's leading news channel.

The meeting in Qatar has assumed significance since the insurgent group has softened its stand and expressed willingness to sit down with the Afghan leaders, even though clearly stating that the delegation from Kabul should not be representing the government. \rightarrow 7



Zarif meets **UN special** envoy for Iraq

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif meets on Monday with Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, the UN special envoy for Iraq, in Tehran.

Latest developments in Iraq, especially the situation of terrorist groups such as Daesh, recent hostile position of the U.S. against Islamic Revolution Guards Corps and certain regional countries' provocative activity against Iran were discussed during the meeting.

gory massacres targeting a particular community have been normalized in the national discourse.

Despite the thunderous slogans of 'Nava Pakistan' (New Pakistan), it's the same old story of pain, loss and hopelessness. Pakistan is a bleeding nation today, as it was yesterday. Minorities, especially the Hazara Shias, continue to face persecution. They continue to live on the edge.

There are heartrending tales of hopelessness and helplessness. Hazara Shias of Pakistan are a proud community and staunch nationalists. They remain loyal to their country. It is the unflinching love for Pakistan that gives them courage to walk the tightrope between life and death.

But, a miniscule minority of hate-mongering radicals have hijacked Mohammad Ali Jinnah's dream of a country where all Muslims would live in peace and harmony. They are not just the enemies of Shias but the enemies of the idea of Pakistan as well.

Hazara community, who make up about 500,000 of Quetta's 2.3 million people, is known to be one of the most peace-loving communities in Pakistan but at the same time they also happen to be the most vulnerable, especially in Quetta city of Balochistan, where they have faced kidnappings, targeted killings and suicide blasts. \rightarrow 7

Condolences

Dear Majid Rafiei, We express condolences over the death of your fother. May his soul rest in peace. Tehran Times staff and management



APRIL 16, 2019

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

INTERNATIONAL DAILY

TEHRANTIMES



Larijani: U.S. misdemeanors created unity in Iran

POLITICS TEHRAN – Parliament Speaker Ali Lari- $\frac{s}{k}$ jani has said Washington's misdemeanors against the Islamic Republic have created an atmosphere of unity and harmony inside Iran.

Such atmosphere is invaluable, though the Americans had other intentions in mind but failed to achieve their goals, Larijani said, Mehr reported on Monday.

On April 8, U.S. President Donald Trump labeled Iran's IRGC 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.



refuse to deliver humanitarian aid to Iran: Zarif

POLITICS TEHRAN – Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif says Iran has obtained documents

showing that European banks are rejecting humanitarian aid from Iranians living abroad and others who tried to help the victims of floods in Iran. Zarif made the remarks on Sunday, citing fear of U.S. pun-

ishment as the cause of such decisions. Iran will soon release the documents, he added, the Iran

newspaper reported.

Zarif also said Europeans have "no excuse" to further delay the start of an operational, non-dollar direct payment channel with Tehran

"To implement the mechanism, Iran needed to launch a parallel mechanism, which started last week. Now the Europeans have no pretext for further delay," he said.

Imran Khan's Iran visit 'vital' for ties: ex-🏹 ambassador

POLITICS TEHRAN – A former Pakistani ambassak dor has said Prime Minister Imran Khan's upcoming visit to Iran is extremely vital to strengthen ties between the two friendly neighbors.

Fauzia Nasreen, the former Pakistani ambassador to Poland and Nepal, said that it is good that the government is focusing to improve trade relations with Iran, IRNA reported, citing state media.

She added that the foreign policy of the current Pakistani administration is moving in the right direction.

"The visit of Prime Minister Imran Khan to China and Iran will be vital for strengthening our relations with these countries. China and Iran are our neighbors," she said.



POLITICS TEHRAN – The Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee on Monday published the text of a double-urgency bill on retaliating the

U.S. for designating the IRGC as a terrorist group. The bill will be submitted to the presiding board of the parliament and as chairman of the committee Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh announced earlier on Monday, it will be on the parliament's agenda next week, Mehr reported.

The committee has 15 bills on its agenda against the U.S. actions, which urge the government to follow up on the required measures in this field," Falahatpisheh said.

Army forces deployed in eastern borders to counter Daesh: general missile system, Sayyad 2, Sayyad 3, long

POLITICS TEHRAN – Chief of the d e s k Iranian Army Ground Force said on Monday that his forces have been deployed to Iran's eastern borders because of Daesh (ISIL)'s movements in Afghanistan.

Given that the Americans have brought Daesh to Afghanistan and based on a decision made by the General Staff of the Armed Forces, the Army's ground forces were deployed in eastern borders, Brigadier General Kiumars Heidari said at a press conference.

He also said Iran is now self-sufficient in armored, anti-tank, artillery, drone and helicopter technologies, IRNA reported.

'This year, we will sign a contract with Defense Ministry to buy Karrar tanks," the commander said, adding that Karrar, a domestically-built tank, is among the strongest tanks in the world.

Heidari pointed out that the upcoming military parades to mark National Army Day will not be held in flood-stricken provinces of Golestan, Khouzestan and Lorestan.



"In other provinces we will hold parades, with the same strength shown in previous years, to tell the enemies that our forces are powerful and can carry out different

Leader allows withdrawal from national fund to fix flood damages if absolutely needed

POLITICS TEHRAN — Leader

k of Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei has said that the government must take essential steps to rebuild damages caused by the recent floods

In a letter published on Monday, he asked the government to use the available financial resources for the purpose. However, the Leader suggested the administration can withdraw money from the National Development Fund only if it is absolutely necessary.

President Hassan Rouhani wrote a letter to the Leader on April 7 seeking permission to withdraw money from the NDF to reconstruct regions hit hard by flood. Avatollah Khamenei urged the government to start necessary actions through using other resources, adding he will agree to withdraw from the NDF if needed.

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 been displaced.

Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli has said that floods have left nearly \$2.5 billion in damages. 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.

Amir Abdollahian, a senior foreign policy advisor to the parliament speaker, has said that President Donald Trump is responsible for anything happens to the U.S. forces in the Middle East region.

missions simultaneously," he added.

General Heidari said in addition to the

'Various resistance forces in the region have targeted U.S. forces, and the regional sensitivity to the U.S. provocative behavior in the region has increased. This is not beneficial to the U.S. military men in the region and will never be beneficial to the U.S. policies.

"Trump, John Bolton [the national security advisor] and [Mike] Pompeo [the secretary of state] are responsible for anything happens to the U.S. forces in the region," ISNA quoted him as saying on Monday in an interview

He also described Washington's actions against Iran as "show" that comes from Trump's frustration in taking a practical action against Iran which plays an important role in the region.

Trump labeled the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps as terrorist organization on April 8.

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

President Hassan Rouhani said on April 10 that the U.S. is aware of the consequences if it takes more steps than "slogans" against the IRGC.

First Chinese studies center launched in Iran

The first Chinese Studies Center of the People's Republic of China has been launched at Allameh Tabataba'i University in Tehran, China.org news website reported Monday.

According to the report, the center started its work on Sunday evening during a ceremony in Tehran with the cooperation of Shanghai International Studies University of China in Tehran to become a major step forward in exchanging mutual knowledge and working together. Considering that it is the first Chinese science center

in Iran, the center is expected to provide a good platform for researchers from both countries to study the past and present states of the two countries, to deepen understanding and to establish a university base for joint academic cooperation and the prosperity of the Silk Road in the new era, the report said.

Behzad Shaĥandeh, a professor of Chinese studies at the University of Tehran, who began his first scientific activity in China in 1978, said during the ceremony that China was the first country in the world that did not follow the Western model of modernization and has pursued an Eastern style of development.

Jang Feng, the deputy director of the Shanghai Interna-



tional Studies University, said during the same ceremony, that in order to enhance the level of academic cooperation between the two universities, the two sides agreed to establish study centers at the University of China and also in Iran so that by introducing the cultures of their

country to other side, they would help each other in the field of research and collaboration between researchers from both countries.

He evaluated the establishment of the Center for Chinese Studies in Iran as an important step towards the exchange and cooperation of the two countries, and underlined, "Considering that this center is the first Chinese studies center in Iran, it could be a good platform for researchers of both countries in the field of past and present state of the two countries, deepen understanding and familiarity, and create an academic foundation for joint building and the prosperity of the Silk Road in the new era.

Gholamali Cheginizadeh, the head of the center at Allameh Tabataba'i University, also referred to his optimism over the establishment of an academy of Chinese studies, saying, "Since the Iranian government in the past five years focused its foreign policy strategy more on China, one of the goals of this center is to advise the government on foreign policy of Iran. This is while, given the new international political developments, academic institutions of the world are also trying to pay special attention to China."

Trump responsible for what happens to U.S. forces in region: advisor POLITICS TEHRAN — Hossein with the al-Alam TV station.

Ground Force, the Khatam al-Anbia Air Defense Base will also showcase its S-300 geographical areas.

homegrown aircraft such as Ra'd, Sa'egheh and Azarakhsh, he remarked, adding that it will also perform aerial refueling. The commander went on to say that

warfare systems.

during the parades, the Army Aviation will put its helicopters on view and Navy forces are expected to hold parades in the Persian Gulf.

and short-ranged radars and electronic

parades on National Army Day with its

The Army Air Force will stage powerful

Asked to give an account of the recent changes in the Ground Force, Heidari said some changes were made in the traditional and infantry units to boost their agility.

Today in the Ground Force, specialized units such as armored, mechanized, support and artillery, quick reaction and mobile offensive units are active," he explained.

The general said the mobile offensive units possess high offensive capabilities and can act in all weather conditions and



French envoy Minda del CENTER FO HARVARD deletes tweets after Tehran protests

POLITICS TEHRAN – French Ambassador in Washington Gerard Araud has deleted his controversial tweets about the Iran nuclear deal.

In a series of tweets on Saturday, Araud said, "It's false to say that at the expiration of the JCPOA, Iran will be allowed to enrich uranium," adding that sanctions could be reimposed.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said on Sunday that the comments were "a major violation of the object and purpose of the" deal and demanded "immediate clarification by Paris, or we act accordingly."

Iran also summoned the French ambassador in Tehran on Sunday over the remarks.

So far, France has not provided an explanation about the tweets



POLITICS TEHRAN – The United States officially designated Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) as a foreign terrorist organization, Reuters reported, citing a notice published in the U.S. Federal Register on Monday. U.S. President Donald Trump announced last week that the U.S.

will formally designate the IRGC as a foreign terrorist organization. Minutes after that, the Iranian Supreme National Security Council named the United States Central Command (CENTCOM) a terror is torganization, and the U.S. government a sponsor of terror.

It also condemned Trump's move as "baseless" and warned of the consequences of its move for peace and security in the Middle East

Iran calls claim of interference in Venezuela 'ridiculous

 $1 \rightarrow$ However, he added, nations of the world, especially the people of Latin America, have awakened and the wheel of time does not move backwards.

"While Iranian specialists are trying to improve the water and electricity systems in Venezuela at the request of the government of Caracas, America has looted \$30 billion worth of Venezuela's foreign-exchange

reserves," Mousavi noted. He lashed out at the U.S. government for targeting the Venezuelan nation with its economic terrorism, asking them to either riot against their legitimate government or face starvation.

"America's move is a blatant and arrogant interference in Venezuela's internal affairs, and is strongly condemned," Mousavi added.

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.

Zarif: No nuclear enrichment prohibition 'neither now, nor in 2025 or beyond'

POLITICS TEHRAN – In a post on his tweeter account on Wednesday, Foreign Minister Moham mad Javad Zarif told France, Britain and France – the three European signatories to the 2015 nuclear deal - that there is no prohibition for enriching uranium by Iran "neither now, nor in 2025 or beyond.

The tweet by Zarif came after French Ambassador to Washington Gerard Araud in a tweet on Saturday claimed that "it's false to say that at the expiration of the JCPOA, Iran will be allowed to enriching uranium.'

Under the international nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Iran is obliged to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions. According to the agreement, endorsed by the UN Security Council Resolution 2231, the limits on Iran's enrichment program will be lifted in 2025. "Reminder to our E3 partners in #JCPOA: There is NO prohibition on the enrichment of uranium by Iran under #NPT,

JCPOA or UNSCR 2231. Neither now, nor in 2025 or beyond," Zarif asserted. Zarif advised the French ambassador to go and study the JCPOA text.

"Might be useful for European partners to actually read the document they signed on to, and pledged to defend," Zarif noted. Also, Zarif's deputy Abbas Aragchi said on Sunday that France must explain about the remarks by its ambassador. Aragchi said if the statement by Ambassador Araud represents the French government's position it is an open violation of the JCPOA and the UN Resolution 2231.

"If tweets by @GerardAraud represent French position, we're facing a major violation of the object and purpose of the JCPOA and UNSCR 2231," Araqchi tweeted. Araqchi said it is necessary that France to immediately clarify on its ambassador's remarks

"Needs immediate clarification by Paris, or we act accordingly," noted Araqchi who acted as a leading nuclear negotiator with the 5+1 group that led to conclusion of the JCPOA.

Leader regrets killing of Muslims by each other

Heads of certain Islamic states follow infidels: Ayatollah Khamenei

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POLITICS TEHRAN – Leader of e s k Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said on Monday that heads of certain Islamic countries do not follow teachings of Quran and instead follow infidels.

"Unfortunately, heads of certain Islamic countries do not follow teachings of Quran but follow and serve the U.S. and the Zionists instead of being 'harsh on infidels' [a verse of Quran]," he said during a meeting with reciters and researchers of the holy book in Tehran.

The Leader added, "They have paved the way for division and war such as wars in Syria and Yemen and kill Muslims instead of being 'compassionate to one another' [a verse of Quran]."

Ayatollah Khamenei said, "Quran has said 'be harsh on infidels'. Some of us have forgotten this. Like those colluded with the U.S. and the Zionists who have stepped on the Palestinians' blood and violated their rights. Now, many of the Arab countries' leaders are of this group.'

"Another group has forgotten 'be compassionate to one another'. They reject and excommunicate [takfir] the believers in Allah, the Quran, and the Ka'ba. When there is no 'compassionate to one another', domestic wars are waged. Look at Syria and Yemen. Yemen has been bombarded for four years. The one who bombards is Muslim in appearance, but has no mercy for Muslims," he added.

Elsewhere, the Leader said that the Iranians will become more determined in following the teachings of Quran as enemies become harsher towards them.

"Following Quran brings us happiness, power and dignity," he noted.

He said, "Many wrongdoings, misunderstandings, disappointments, disloyalties, animosities and submissions to tyrannical powers result from being far from Quran and the spirituality and knowledge that come from it.'

Ayatollah Khamenei said, "What the enemies are doing against Iran is the last breaths of their animosity towards the Islamic Republic."

Study: Saudis look for way out of Yemen, Houthis invincible

TEHRAN — The International Crisis Group has urged the United States to help its ally, Saudi Arabia, to find a way out of its deadly war on Yemen that has left the kingdom sapped of resources and reputation.

The group, which is committed to resolving conflicts, said in a study on Sunday that the Saudi-led coalition "needs to stop thinking about how to eke out some notional victory.

The International Crisis Group added that the alliance should "instead commit itself wholly to finding a political exit, regardless of whether that means empowering the Houthis more than it is comfortable with in the short term."

Saudi Arabia and a number of its regional allies launched a devastating campaign against Yemen on March 26, 2015, with the aim of bringing the government of former Yemeni president Mansur Hadi back to power and crushing Houthis.

According to Press TV, the ICG report comes after the U.S. Congress voted to end Washington's support for Saudi Arabia's war against Yemen in response to persistent civilian casualties and widespread hunger in the improvised country as well as Saudi Arabia's



killing of dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi. President Donald Trump has threatened to veto the bill, but has not yet done so.

The report called on the U.S. to appoint a special envoy and freeze most of its arms exports to Saudi Arabia until the kingdom ends its military campaign against Yemen.

"The U.S. should lead the way by finding its own exit," the ICG said.

According to the International Crisis Group, the conflict has left Saudi Arabia sapped of resources and reputation.

"I think they see that they need to end it (but) they don't know how to end it," Robert Malley, the head of the organization, said of the Saudis.

He stressed that the Saudis have failed to achieve their goals in Yemen.

The Saudis keep thinking "a little more military power and the Houthis will crack and then we'll be able to end the war and Iran will be on its backfoot," he said. "But we have four years of evidence to disprove that.'

Democratic Senator Chris Murphy acknowledged the report's finding that the Saudis cannot win the fight against Houthis.

"This is not a question of whether or not the coalition is going to defeat the Houthis; that question has been answered," Murphy said at a briefing on the report.

"The Houthis are going to play a substantial and significant role in the future governance of Yemen, so it is a matter of deciding how the Saudis will live with that in a way that doesn't threaten their long-term security interests.

According to a new report by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), a nonprofit conflict-research organization, the Saudi-led war has so far claimed the lives of around 56,000 Yemenis.

Merkel calls Netanyahu, stresses need for two-state solution

TEHRAN - German Chancellor Angela Merkel has congratulated Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on his re-election and stressed the need to work toward a twostate solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Merkel's office said stressed in a phone conversation Monday the continued relevance of a two-state solution, which she said should be the goal of international efforts, AP reported on Monday.

Merkel also expressed her willingness to work closely and trustingly with the incoming Israeli government.

During the final stretch of his election campaign, Netanyahu pledged for the first time to annex parts of the occupied West Bank in a desperate bid to rally his right-wing base. Netanyahu has reneged on election eve promises before, but should he follow through on this one, it would mark a dramatic development and potentially wipe out the already diminishing hope for Palestinian statehood.

Trump 'deal of century' to forgo Palestine statehood

Sources familiar with U.S. President Donald Trump's "Deal of the Century" have warned that it will be void of any guarantees for a separate, fully sovereign state of Palestine, the Washington Post reports.

The unnamed sources told the paper that the proposal, which is expected to arrive soon, will only offer Palestinians some improvements in living conditions and nothing more.

The White House is poised to drop the much-anticipated package later this spring or by early summer, culminating over two years of efforts by Trump adviser and son-in-law Jared Kushner.

With officials on all sides tight-lipped about the terms of the offer, remarks from Kushner and other U.S. officials have suggested that it does away with Palestinian statehood as a per-requisite for any agreement.

Instead, Trump's plan to purportedly end the decades-long conflict between Palestinians and Israelis more than anything focuses on Israel's security concerns, the report said.

"We believe we have a plan that is fair, realistic and implementable that will enable people to live better lives," a senior White House official told the Post on Friday.

"We looked at past efforts and solicited ideas from both sides and partners in the region with the recognition that what has been tried in the past has not worked. Thus, we have taken an unconventional approach founded on not hiding trom reality, but instead speaking truth," added the official. According to a new report by U.S. news and information website Axios, King Abdullah II of Jordan said in a closeddoor meeting with American lawmakers last month that



the White House had given him zero information on how it proposes to divide the Palestinian territory.

According to the Post, the American head of state has told friends he would change traditional assumptions about ways to resolve the conflict.

However, the outcome would look nothing like his unorthodox personal diplomacy with North Korea and would rather be the product of Kushner, who became Trump's designated agent for all Middle East peace deals at the beginning of his presidency in 2017.

While with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, Trump has tried to make peace through vague promises of economic growth and sanctions removal, Arab officials familiar with Kushner's sales pitches said he has offered no specific incentives to Palestinians.

What Kushner has offered are suggestions about economic opportunities for Palestinians in exchange for Israeli annextion of the West Bank and all other disputed territories.

Kushner and other U.S. officials have indicated that peace and economic development for Palestine are intertwined with the Arab world's recognition of Israel and their acceptance of a Palestinian "autonomy" as opposed to a "sovereignty,' sources said.

"What we've tried to do is figure out what is a realistic and what is a fair solution to the issues here in 2019 that can enable people to live better lives," Kushner said in an interview with Sky News Arabia as he sought Arab support on a visit to the region in February.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gave away the most substantial hints at the deal's contents when he promised on the eve of his re-election last week that he will annex some settlements in the West Bank.

The package, according to the sources, is expected to pledge tens of billions of dollars in aid and investment in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the two areas with the most Palestinians, and billions more to Egypt and Jordan, the two Arab nations that have made peace with Israel.

Kushner stands little chance of success, analysts say, as European and some Arab leaders have already lost faith in his attempts.

A series of actions that Trump has taken in favor of Israel, including moving the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem al-Quds after recognizing it as the Israeli regime's capital, have killed any hopes of a breakthrough.

Trump has also stirred anger by cutting annual aid to Palestine and shuttering the offices of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in Washington.

Those actions have alienated the Palestinian Authority, which has boycotted all negotiations with Washington.

Kushner and former Trump lawyer Jason D. Greenblatt, who would be the lead U.S. negotiator for talks, have pleaded with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to return to the table and seal the deal.

"To the PA: Our plan will greatly improve Palestinian lives & create something very different than what exists, Greenblatt wrote in a tweet last week. "It's a realistic plan to thrive/prosper even if it means compromises. It's not a 'sell out' — if the plan isn't realistic, no one can deliver it.'

A chief adviser of Abbas said last week that while the Palestinian Authority viewed Americans as biased, they will not reject the Trump plan out of hand.

Ilan Goldenberg, the chief of staff to the lead U.S. negotiator in the last failed attempt under former U.S. President Barack Obama, said he still expects the package to be a nonstarter that would pave the way for annexation by forcing the Palestinians to reject the offer.

Former EU leaders reject no statehood deal On Sunday, 37 high-ranking ex-officials of the European Union published a call for the European Union to reaffirm its commitment to a Palestinian statehood and reject any deal that fails to account for it.

"This cannot continue. For the Israelis, for the Palestinians

Role of foreign states in focus as Iraq begins trying **900 Daesh suspects**

TEHRAN – Iraq has begun trying nearly 900 members of the Daesh (ISIL) terrorist group captured in neighboring Syria, a judiciary official says.

The suspects will be tried by the specialized terrorism court which has "received the interrogation files of nearly 900 Iraqi Daesh members coming from Syria," a court official told AFP.

Iraqi authorities say the militants have been captured in Syria and handed over to them by the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

A security source said additional Iraqi suspects, including "very influential leaders" of the Daesh terror group, are in SDF custody and "will be handed over in batches on the Syrian-Iraqi border."

One of the suspects who would soon be handed over to Baghdad was deeply involved in Daesh efforts to develop chemical weapons, the source said.

Iraq has already tried hundreds of Daesh members, many of whom were detained as the outfit's strongholds crumbled throughout the country. They have included foreigners, especially Saudi nationals.

The new trial is likely to shed fresh light on foreign links of the terror network, which has wreaked havoc in the region for years. Saudi Arabia has widely been criticized for allowing a flow

of money to finance terrorist groups.

Over the past decade, the Wahhabi kingdom has been instrumental in the spread of the ideology of Takfir, as expressed by groups such as al-Qaeda, Daesh, Nusra Front and Boko Haram.

According to Press TV, Saudi nationals reportedly comprised the biggest number of foreign terrorists arrested during Iraqi army operations against Daesh in the northern and western parts of the country.

While some countries like Britain and France are reluctant to take back their citizens arrested in Iraq, Saudi Arabia has requested the extradition of its citizens.

Last year, Iraq rejected a request from Riyadh to hand over more than 400 Saudi Arabians, whom it had imprisoned on terrorism charges. Iraq says all foreign prisoners fall under the jurisdiction of the country's legal system.

Daesh invaded Iraq in 2014 and overtook around a third of the country's expanse in exceptionally brutal attacks.

In 2016, Saudi Interior Ministry spokesman Mansour al-Turki famously said that Iraq's offensive against Daesh had sparked a flurry of new fundraising campaigns in the kingdom, prompting Iraqi Foreign Ministry to call for explanation.

In 2016, Iraq's ambassador to the UN, Mohammad Ali al-Hakim, accused Saudi Arabia of financing the Daesh terrorist group.

Since Daesh was largely defeated in Iraq and Syria in late 2017, Riyadh has tried to forge closer relations with Baghdad as a counterweight to Tehran.

Earlier this month, Saudi Arabia sent its Minister of Trade Majid bin Abdullah al-Qasabi to Baghdad with a business delegation and reopened its consulate in Iraq.

Al-Qasabi said that the kingdom would provide Iraq with one billion dollars in loans for development projects plus \$500 million to boost exports and a gift of a 100,000-seat sports stadium to be built on Baghdad's outskirts.

Riyadh has viewed Iraq's proximity to Iran with enmity. Iraqi leaders have repeatedly praised Iran's role in helping the Arab country confront the Takfiri menace.

Macron to set out fix for 'yellow vest' anger

TEHRAN - French President Emmanuel Macron was to make a series of major policy announcements Monday in response to five months of nationwide "yellow vest" protests, in what has been billed as a make-or-break moment for his presidency.

Yet the task of trying to satisfy the many, sometimes competing demands coiled up in the protests will be a tricky one for the 41-year-old leader, who was elected two years ago on promises

or for us in Europe," the letter warned, adding that, "Failing to seize this opportunity, at a point in time when this order is unprecedentedly challenged, would have far-reaching negative consequences.'

S. Korea's Moon pushes for summit with Kim despite nuclear standoff

TEHRAN – South Korea's President Moon Jae-in said on Monday he will pursue "in earnest" another summit with Kim Jong Un despite the North Korean leader's recent criticism of Seoul's self-proclaimed role as a mediator in stalled nuclear talks.

Moon has been eager to regain momentum in talks with North Korea since Kim's second summit with U.S. President Donald Trump, in Vietnam in February, failed due to conflicting demands by Pyongyang for sanctions relief and by Washington for sweeping North Korean measures to abandon its nuclear program, Reuters reported.

Kim said in a speech on Friday that he was willing to hold another summit with Trump if the United States changed its calculation and offered a "proper attitude and a methodology", setting a year-end deadline.

While North Korea and the United States have been discussing the North's denuclearization, U.S. ally South Korea has been taking steps to improve its ties with its old rival.

Moon and Kim have held three meetings over the past year, and Moon's administration has been keen for a fourth, possibly to mark the anniversary of the first one on April 27.

Moon, who visited Washington to meet Trump last week, said Kim's latest address "set the stage" for a fourth inter-Korean summit, which could be a "stepping stone for an even bigger opportunity and a more significant outcome

"Now is the time to begin the preparations in earnest," Moon told a meeting with senior secretaries, noting that as soon as the North Koreans were ready, he was willing to meet Kim "regardless of venue and form". In his first public remarks since Kim's

address, Moon said he "very much welcomed" that speech, saying it showed Kim's "unwavering" commitment toward denuclearization and the reopening of negotiations.

But Moon did not specifically respond to Kim's criticism that South Korea was too subservient to the "anachronistic arrogance and hostile policy of the United States", and that the South's military persisted in "veiled hostility" by conducting exercises with U.S. forces

Kim said South Korea should not "pose as a meddlesome 'mediator' and 'facilitator" between the North and the United States. North Korea's state media on Saturday issued a commentary criticizing South Korea's purchase of fighter jets, including two

recently delivered F-35A jets from the United States, calling it a "serious provocative act" that could intensify tension on the Korean peninsula.

However, Kim said he remained committed to improving relations with South Korea if it showed its "sincerity by practical action, not by words"

Any significant improvement in ties between the two Koreas could depend on progress between North Korea and the United States on the North's denuclearization and that looks doubtful, with neither side showing willingness to make concessions.

Trump emphasized during last week's talks with Moon that he was willing to meet Kim again but would not lift sanctions until the North took meaningful steps to dismantle its nuclear programs.

Nearly 150 killed in battle for Libya's Tripoli: WHO

TEHRAN — At least 147 people have been killed and 614 wounded in the offensive launched April 4 by Libyan military strongman Khalifa Haftar to take the capital Tripoli, the World Health Organization said Monday

The clashes have displaced more than 18,000 people, according to the latest figures from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, AFP reported.

Fighting broke out as Haftar's forces sought to take control of Tripoli from loyalists of the internationally-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) which is based in

the capital.

The rising number of casualties has prompted the World Health Organization to deploy surgical teams "to support Tripoli-area hospitals as they cope with the influx of trauma cases", the UN agency wrote on Twitter.

At least eight ambulances have been hit during clashes in the southern outskirts of the capital, as both sides have defied international calls to halt the fighting.

WHO urged "all parties to exercise restraint and avoid causing collateral damage to hospitals, ambulances and health workers".

In addition to ground fighting, both pro-government forces and Haftar's self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA) carry out daily air raids and accuse each other of targeting civilians.

The resulting casualties have left health facilities in "critical need of assistance", according to the United Nations refugee agency.

"The situation on the ground continues deteriorating and number of casualties soaring," UNHCR tweeted.

of sweeping changes, AFP reported.

His reform drive was abruptly knocked off course by the yellow vests, whose movement erupted in November over social inequality.

Macron responded by embarking on a major voter-listening exercise between January and March called the "great national debate", in which grievances were aired during thousands of town hall-style meetings and on an official website.

We have decided to transform the anger into solutions,' Macron wrote on Twitter. "For several months you told us what you think and we heard ... (Monday) night I will respond to you.'

One of Macron's aides told AFP that the country could look forward to "a new act" marked by "profound changes" aimed at drawing a line under the enduring and often violent anti-government protests

Summing up the weight of anticipation on Macron's shoulders, Senate leader Gerard Larcher, a member of the opposition Republicans, told Le Figaro newspaper: "He won't get a second chance.

French media said the content of Macron's speech could determine whether he wins re-election in 2022.

Macron's five years is at stake," said Le Figaro on Monday adding that the head of state has "no room for error".

Left-leaning Liberation said Macron had to decide whether to side with conservative supporters or placate those demanding greater solidarity between rich and poor.

Lower taxes? ·

In one of the most important weeks of the president's career, he is also due to hold a press conference at the Elysee Wednesday, an unusual move for a man who has kept his distance from the French media. What Macron intends to announce has been kept under wraps.

He has much work to do if he is to convince French citizens outside his narrow support base that he really cares about them.

According to an Ifop poll published Sunday, 85 percent of French think that Macron should pay greater attention to their concerns

But while the Ifop poll confirmed that the French want to pay less tax, it also showed strong demand for increasing small pensions and providing better health services in rural areas, all measures that could jeopardise the government's delicate budget balancing act.



STOCK МА

IFX

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

2496.68

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,511 rials
GBP	55,012 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$70.84/b
WTI	\$63.22/b
OPEC Basket	\$70.41/b
Gold	\$1,287.00/oz
Silver	\$14.98/oz
Platinium	\$888.90/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS	IN	BRI
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asters insurance fund to be established: **CBI** governor

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Governor Abdolnaser Hemmati announced that a natural disaster insurance fund will be set up in the country, IRIB reported.

Writing on his Instagram page on Sunday, the official expressed hope that the fund will be set up soon given that the country's disaster-prone status makes its establishment a necessity.

Extreme rainfall, starting on March 19, has caused flooding in 28 out of 31 provinces of Iran 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.

Beijing calls on prompt establishment of free trade area with South Korea, Japan

China, South Korea and Japan need to agree on the establishment of a free trade area as soon as possible, Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi has stated during a high-level economic dialogue with Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono.

"It is necessary to promote a comprehensive regional economic partnership and to reach an agreement in the negotiations on the establishment of a free trade area between China, South Korea and Japan as soon as possible, to lead the process of economic integration in East Asia," Wang said, as quoted by a statement published on the foreign ministry's website.

Kono, in turn, noted that in view of a large number of uncertainties in the international environment, Japan and China needed to deepen economic cooperation and jointly protect a multilateral trading mechanism.

The statement comes after Kono started a three-day working visit to China on 13 April at the invitation of Wang. The two foreign ministers held the fifth high-level economic dialogue, during which they discussed Chinese-Japanese bilateral relations, as

ΝΟΜΥ Ε Ο

Oil market fragile due to U.S. sanctions: Zanganeh

E N E R G Y d e s k **TEHRAN** – Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar said.

Zanganeh said the U.S. sanctions on Iran and Venezuela and the growing conflicts in Libya are disturbing the supply-demand balance in the market, making it fragile.

"If the United States decides to increase the pressures on Iran, the oil market will become more fragile" IRNA quoted Zanganeh as saying on Sunday.

"Oil prices are going up every day. That shows the market is worried," the minister

Zanganeh noted that Trump should choose between increasing pressure on Iran and keeping his country's fuel prices low.

"Venezuela is in trouble. Russia is also under sanctions. Libya is in distress. Part of U.S. oil production has stopped. These show the supply-demand balance is very fragile," Zanganeh said.

The U.S. reimposed sanctions on Iran in November after withdrawing from the 2015 nuclear accord between the Islamic

Republic and six world powers. The sanctions targeted Iran's oil sector, financial transactions and banks, as well

as shipping and ship-building industries in order to cut off the country's revenue sources.

'Over \$85b of working capital required to stay productive'

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iranian industry, mining and k trade minister said the country needs 3.6 quadrillion rials (about \$85.714 billion) of working capital in order to sustain the domestic production.

Speaking in an economic committee meeting on Sunday, Reza Rahmani noted that his ministry is partly improving the country's businesses and the industry ministry is taking necessary measures to do so, IRIB reported.

According to the official, improving the efficiency of important factors in production and creating a movement for promoting domestic production are among the plans which the industry ministry is following to realize a sustainable domestic production.

"Organizing trade logistics, reforming distribution systems and monitoring the market as well as developing non-oil



exports along with developing mines and mining sector are other areas of focus for the ministry to boost domestic

production." Rahmani added.

The minister further noted that currently the value of exports to the neighboring countries stands at \$25 million and it should increase to at least \$50 million in two years.

Mentioning the fact that only two percent of the total imports of Iran's neighbors comes from the Islamic country, Rahmani noted that his ministry is going to focus on developing domestic production and defining new projects to manufacture all the industrial equipment needed inside the country.

The meeting was attended by a handful of senior officials including the minister of economic affairs and finance as well as the governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), the head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA).

Annual exports from East Azarbaijan Province up 52%

Customs supervisor of East Azarbaijan Province (in northwest of Iran) said exports from the province has registered a 52-percent increase in terms of value in the past Iranian calendar year (ended March 20, 2019).

According to Leyli Orangi, in the past year some 2,146,588 tons of goods worth over \$1.873 billion were exported from the province, registering a 52-percent increase in terms of value and 43 percent increase in terms of weight compared to its previous year.

The exported goods mainly included plastics and plastic materials worth \$356 million, cast iron and steel worth \$303 million, mineral fuels and mineral oils worth \$199 million, fruit worth \$189 million, and grains worth \$88 million.



The export target countries included Turkey (\$558 million worth of exports), Iraq (\$506 million), Armenia (\$111 million), the Republic of Azerbaijan (\$110 million), and Georgia (\$109 million).

East Azarbaijan Province imported 315,159 tons of goods worth over \$974 million last year, which shows a 36-percent decrease in terms of weight and 9 percent decrease in terms of value compared to its previous year, according to Orangi. (Source: Mehr News Agency)

South Africa keen on joint investment with Iran: envoy

South African envoy to Tehran Vika Mazwi Khumalo said on Monday his country is keen on enhanced economic cooperation with Iran and carrying out joint investment projects in various fields.

The ambassador made the remarks in a conference on foreign investment opportunities in the Iranian southern province of Hormozgan.

He said that South Africa is a partner to a telecommunications project in Iran. Despite the sanctions renewed in the past year, South Africa has been among the countries that have kept their investments in Iran and proceeded with doing business with Iran.

South Africa is best known for its activities in deep-level mining and the

related technology, he said adding that it also shares interests with Iran in other various spheres such as tourism, sea transport and shipping industry.

Highlighting the maritime industries as a field for cooperation with Iran, the ambassador said that South Africa has focused its efforts on oceanography to maximize exploitation of sea-bed resources.

Expressing his gratitude for Iranian people hospitality, Khumalo also emphasized that Iran has made great achievements over the recent years.

The two-day conference was attended by a number of Iranian officials, including Gholam-Reza Ansari, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Affairs. (Source: IRNA)

Afghanistan pushes for investment as it waits for peace

Afghanistan unveiled 43 tenders for natural resource projects on Monday in a drive to attract investment in a country ravaged by decades of war.

Afghanistan's mineral assets, estimated to be worth as much as \$1 trillion, are seen as key to the country's economic viability. But development has been blocked by poor security, rampant corruption, and a lack of infrastructure.

The tenders, ranging from mineral to il and gas projects, were announced in

for large-scale projects to international companies through a competitive bidding process, with the remaining small-scale projects to be awarded to local companies. The projects have generated interest

from U.S., European, and Persian Gulf companies, Nehan said. The announcement of the tenders comes

amid peace talks between the Taliban and the United States, which wants to exit the country it invaded to overthrow the Taliban nearly two decades ago.

"There is another perspective to look at it, and that is actually finally having peace," she said.

The government hopes a royalty rate from 2.5 percent to 7.5 percent and an import duty exemption on machinery used to work on the projects will encourage investment.

The tenders cover projects in 16 of the country's 34 provinces and the government estimates \$100 million will be spent over the next year on initial assessments, exploration.



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well as international and regional issues of common concern.

A day earlier, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang stated that the world's second-largest economy is set to meet its annual economic growth target of 6.5 percent this year, according to reports. He also stressed the ongoing opening of the Chinese economy to international investment, and its solid commitment to free trade will support expansion in the private sector, while the rising prominence of domestic sources of growth could make up for the losses in foreign trade. (Source: Sputnik)

Dubai, a major Middle East investment hub, by Afghanistan's acting Minister of Mines and Petroleum Nargis Nehan.

"We have a good package of incentives for investors," Nehan told Reuters in an interview

Afghanistan is opening 14 tenders

The two sides are scheduled to meet again this month.

"There are two ways of looking at the issue ... the situation might deteriorate," Nehan said amid the uncertainty of what the two sides might agree and whether the United States will soon pull-out.

and evaluation work.

a further six-month period, Nehan said.

tender-related infrastructure but expects

many companies will choose to do it

The government will invest in some

themselves. Security on the projects will A tender can be awarded within six only be provided by local forces, she said. months and work is expected to start within

"The Afghan Public Protection Force ... will asses the areas and based on the needs of the area they will submit a budget and proposal to the company.

(Source: CNBC)

British businesses stash cash as **Brexit gloom deepens: Deloitte**

A growing number of large British-based businesses are prioritizing cashflow, fearing a downturn, as their view of the long-term economic impact of Brexit has darkened to its most negative so far, accountancy firm Deloitte said on Monday.

Some 81 percent of chief financial officers surveyed expect Brexit to lead to a long-term deterioration in Britain's business environment, the highest since the question was first asked at the time of June 2016's referendum on leaving the European Union.

This was up from 78 percent at the end of last year in the quarterly survey of 89 companies, including 15 in the FTSE 100 and 33 in the FTSE 250 share index, plus smaller firms and subsidiaries of major foreign companies.

Deloitte carried out the survey between March 26 and April 7, just after it became certain Britain would not leave on the longplanned date of March 29, and before British Prime Minister Theresa May secured a delay of up to six months.

"Large businesses are clearly looking to protect themselves against risk by raising cash levels and bullet-proofing balance sheets," David Sproul, Deloitte's chief executive for northwest Europe, said.

Official data last month showed British business investment fell every quarter of 2018, the longest decline since the 2008/09 financial crisis

Speaking on the sidelines of the International Monetary Fund's spring meeting in Washington last week, Bank of England Governor Mark Carney said a chaotic Brexit remained one of the top three risks to the world economy.

(Source: Reuters).

ECB faces stimulus pressure over falling inflation outlook

A technical measure of Eurozone investors' inflation expectations has fallen to its lowest level for three years, putting pressure on the European Central Bank to convince doubters that it is willing to use fresh stimulus to boost the region's economy.

In August 2014 ECB president Mario Draghi highlighted the so-called "five-year, five-year inflation swap rate" at the U.S. Federal Reserve's annual retreat in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. At that time, the measure of price expectations was so obscure that it could not even be found on a Bloomberg terminal, sending ECB watchers scrambling to figure out how to access it.

Six months later, after the rate had fallen further, the bank launched an economic stimulus program, buying €2.6tn of government and corporate bonds.

The rate matters to the ECB because it shows what investors believe inflation will be over a five-year horizon. If it remains persistently below the central bank's 2 percent target, it puts mounting pressure on the central bank to take action to stimulate the economy.

When the ECB halted the expansion of quantitative easing in December the rate stood at 1.6 percent. But since then it has fallen to 1.36 percent, its lowest level since 2016.

Last week Draghi paved the way for more monetary action to combat the region's latest economic slowdown, saying that the bank was "fully committed" to reviving growth to a level consistent with hitting its inflation target without undue delay".

But the downward shift in the swap rate indicates that markets doubt the bank's ability to hit its inflation



target. The danger is that expectations of low inflation become self-fulfilling, weighing on wage demands and retail prices.

Policymakers next meet on 6 June, when new economic forecasts will also be unveiled. Some believe the 25-member governing council should rethink their decision to halt the bond-buying program.

"Draghi should explicitly state that the ECB will bring back QE if inflationary expectations fall further - and the sooner he says [that], the better," said Melvyn Krauss, senior fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University.

Asked last week about the drop in investors' inflation expectations, the ECB president insisted this time was different. Unlike previous instances, the markets are not now concerned that prices will begin to fall dramatically, he said.

Instead investors are worried that there could be a period of subdued price pressures because of "a deterioration in the economic outlook", Draghi argued. That interpretation chimes with the bank's conviction that the return of stronger growth has been "delayed" rather than "derailed".

Draghi's view of the situation suggests that any changes to monetary policy in June are likely to be low-key rather than a full-blown revival of new QE. Options on the table include a pledge to keep monetary easing in place for longer, or to grant lenders cheap central bank funding on more preferential terms.

With Draghi's term up at the end of October, some interpret the swap rate fall as reflecting investors' concerns about who might succeed him, and their view of Eurozone inflation.

"The market is questioning whether his successor will be as willing and able to use unconventional tools and will be as fully committed to achieving the target as Draghi has been," said Richard Barwell, head of macro research at BNP Paribas Asset Management. "The price action suggests investors fear the worst.'

One candidate in the race, Bundesbank president Jens Weidmann, voted against several of Draghi's attempts to bring inflation closer to 2 percent.

The German central banker said in 2017 that inflation of 1.7 percent was "broadly consistent" with what counts as price stability, in contrast with Draghi, who has said such a level is too low.

"Markets may be hedging against the possibility that Jens Weidmann would become the next president," said (Source: Financial Times) Krauss.

Heavy rainfalls boost Iranian hydropower output by 5GW

ENERGY TEHRAN – Recent e s k heavy rainfalls in Iran has increased the electricity output of the country's hydropower plants by up to 5,000 megawatts, IRNA reported on Monday quoting an official with Iran's Power Generation and Distribution Company (known as TAVANIR).

According to TAVANIR Deputy Distribution Coordinator Mahmoud Reza Haqifam, in the peak consumption hours of the day, between 9,500 MW and 10,000 MW of electricity is charged to the network by hydropower plants.

The official also mentioned the program for overhauling the country's thermal power plants and said, the program has almost finished and the overhauled plants are ready to be put into operation at full capacity.

The official further noted that, along with increasing the output and power generation capacity, consumption management programs for agricultural, industrial, administrative and even household sectors are also a priority for the energy ministry and with the summer approaching we will put significant importance on such programs.

In October 2018, the head of Iran's Thermal



Power Plants Holding Company unveiled a plan for an increase in the efficiency of the country's power plants up to 40 percent. to Mohsen Tarztalab, According

following a development initiative foreseen in the country's Sixth Five-Year National Development Plan (2016-2021) the average

Gazprom Neft expands oil production in Iraq



Gazprom Neft subsidiary Gazprom Neft Middle East B.V. has commissioned a third production well at its Sarqala field in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI).

Potential production at this new well is estimated at 12,000 bpd. Cumulative daily oil production at the field following the commissioning of the Sarqala-three well has increased by 25 per cent reaching 35,000 bbl.

The well runs to a total depth of 3,291 meters, with drilling having been undertaken under the challenging geological conditions of the Sargala field, anomalously high pressure and reservoir temperature having demanded the use of a selection of 11 technological solutions.

The construction of the Sarqala-three well has, as a result, involved the use of largediameter casing pipes with ultra-strong thread

connections, weighted drilling mud for bottomhole flushing, and cement incorporating mineral-based and iron-oxide additives.

Drilling the well has involved an international team, with members from 20 countries. The project was implemented by Gazprom Neft Middle East, with technical support from the Gazprom Neft Science and Technology Centre.

Vadim Yakovlev, first deputy CEO, Gazprom Neft, commented, "The Middle East remains an area of strategic interest to Gazprom Neft, being a region with a rich resource base, and a demonstrable willingness to allow access to investors. Experience in implementing projects from scratch, both in exploration and production, is important to us.

(Source: oilreviewmiddleeast.com)

efficiency of the country's power plants would

increase 2.1 percent from the current 37.9 percent

According to the plan, new power plants in Iran should operate with an efficiency of at least 55 percent.

Last Month, deputy minister of energy for electricity affairs said that Iranian power plants are set to produce at least 51 gigawatts (GW) of electricity during the peak hours of consumption in summer.

According to Homayoun Haeri, in this regard the oil ministry plans to focus on consumption management and increasing the average efficiency of the country's power plants to 38.5 percent.

The production record high of 47,000 megawatts (47 GW) which was achieved in last summer should not only be maintained this year but we need to increase the number to at least 51,000 megawatts (51 GW),' Haeri said.

The Ministry of Energy has been trying to improve the efficiency of the country's existing power plants as part of efforts to limit harmful emissions and cut fuel consumption.

The country's current nominal power generation capacity stands at 79.325 GW.

Malaysia's Petronas acquires Singaporebased solar power company Amplus Energy



Malaysian state-owned oil and gas firm Petronas said on Monday it had acquired a Singapore-based solar energy company as part of a strategy to move into renewable energy, chasing high-growth business to complement its mainstay operations.

The solar company, Amplus Energy Solutions Pte Ltd or M+, specialises in rooftop and ground-based solar power projects with a cumulative capacity of over 500 megawatt (MW) under operation and development. It has projects across India, the Middle East and South East Asia, according to a statement from Petronas.

"This acquisition reflects Petronas" strategic intent to grow in the renewable energy space as part of our strategy to step out beyond oil and gas into the new

energy business," said Wan Zulkiflee Wan Ariffin, chief executive of Petronas, formally known as Petroliam Nasional Berhad.

Amplus Energy is Petronas' first international solar venture. Petronas didn't disclose financial terms of the deal, which sees it acquire 100 percent of the target.

Petronas, the sole manager of Malaysia's oil and gas reserves, and a significant contributor to government revenue via annual dividends, expressed interest over the last 12 months in diversifying into renewables amid volatile crude oil prices.

It said last year it would explore new business areas including new energy and assess opportunities in solar power, and in November set up a new business in the group to push into renewable energy. (Source: Reuters)

INTERNATIONAL DAILY TEHRANTIMES

Brent could hit \$80 this summer as hedge funds lose steam

Brent Crude and WTI Crude prices hit a five-month high this week amid signs of tightening market and clashes in wildcard OPEC producer Libya.

Brent Crude topped \$71 and WTI Crude rose above \$64 a barrel in the middle of this week as supply reductions outweighed fears of slowing economic growth.

Following the crash in Q4 2018, oil prices have already increased by more than 30 percent so far this year.

But there is still room for oil to run and Brent could go as high as \$80 a barrel this summer, due to geopolitical issues, OPEC and allies' cuts, resilient demand, and not-so-crowded hedge fund longs suggesting that bulls have room to add more bullish positions in crude oil futures and options, according to a research note from RBC Capital Markets, cited by CNBC.

RBC strategists raised significantly their oil price forecasts for the average prices of Brent and WTI this year. Brent Crude is now seen averaging \$75 a barrel in 2019, up from the previous call of \$69.50, while WTI is expected to average \$67 per barrel throughout the year, up from \$61.30 in RBC's previous estimate.

According to RBC's experts, this summer, Brent could even hit \$80. This is a threshold which oil consuming countries such as India consider too high and which analysts say is the beginning of demand destruction.

"We see price risk asymmetrically skewed to the upside spurred by geopolitically infused rallies that could shoot prices toward or even beyond our high-end, bull-case scenario and test the \$80/bbl mark for intermittent periods this summer," CNBC quoted RBC's research note written by strategists Michael Tran, Helima Croft, and Christopher Louney.

Yet, not all analysts believe that Brent has some \$10 a barrel upside from current levels. Goldman Sachs, for example, believes that the rally has almost ran its course and that Brent is unlikely to hit \$80. Goldman has lifted its average Brent price call for Q2 to \$72.50 from \$65 a barrel, but expects shale production to rise and OPEC to come under pressure to reverse some of the cuts in the second half of the year.

But RBC warns that we could see \$80 Brent this summer, on the back of geopolitically motivated rallies in oil.

Several geopolitical factors in the coming months could lead to higher oil prices than the current \$71 a barrel Brent.

First, the U.S. is due to announce within weeks whether it would extend the waivers for some Iranian oil buyers to continue purchasing Tehran's oil. Analysts largely believe that the 'zero Iranian oil exports' will not happen in early May, when current waivers expire, because the Administration would be more lenient, again, at least toward some buyers, so as not to drive oil (and gasoline) prices too high.

Then there is the issue with the tightening U.S. sanctions on Venezuela amid the Latin American country's collapsing oil production, which was plagued by the sanctions and massive blackouts and plunged by 289,000 bpd to below 1 million bpd-to 732,000 bpd in March, according to OPEC's secondary sources

On top of these geopolitical concerns, one of OPEC's wildest cards in recent years, Libya, is plunged in turmoil again after eastern strongman General Khalifa Haftar and his self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA) are advancing westward on Libya's capital Tripoli and clash with troops of the UN-backed government in a renewed confrontation that could escalate and threaten to disrupt, once again, Libya's oil production and exports.

Apart from geopolitical flare-ups that could suddenly tighten supply more than OPEC's cuts have intended, the positioning of the money managers in oil futures suggests that oil still has room to rise, according to RBC.

"In short, there is room to run to the upside given that geopolitical hotspots are still a clear and present danger for the market, but many wounded bulls remain following the Q4?18 washout," RBC's analysts note.

The ratio of bullish to bearish bets peaked at 13:1 in the fall of 2018 and averaged 8.5:1 throughout last year, according to RBC. (Source: oilprice.com)

National Iraniar

First Announcement Cyprus and Lebanon eye oil and gas alliance Call for public tender (First/Second publish) for oil exploration in Lebanese waters, in five N.I.O.C

Tender descriptions:

Lebanese Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil has potential", Christodoulides added. announced an agreement with Cyprus to address oil and gas order to ena

us and disagreemen eas of

They set May 7 as the date to compare the blocks, three of which are next to Cyprus. "We cannot waste m will seek to strengthen our cooperation and reach the oil and gas alliance as we hope.

One -Stages (semi compressed) tender Subject of Tender: AIR MOTOR FOR VARCO PNEUMATIC SAFETY SPINNING MODEL 55-WIU

alliance" to be formed.

Lebanon's Mediterranean territory is due to contain 10 oil and gas blocks, four of which border Cypriot waters.

"We have set dates for reaching joint agreements," Bassil told the Beirut media alongside his Cypriot counterpart Nikos Christodoulides.

The Cypriot minister told the media, according to Lebanon's Foreign Ministry: "We agreed to initiate discussions on a bilateral framework agreement concerning the development [of] hydrocarbons resources which cross the median line between our exclusive economic zones."

A deal would provide "the much-needed legal certainty for international companies wishing to invest in the region's huge hydrocarbons

Any deal between Nicosia and Beirut will anger Turkey, which refuses to recognize the Republic of Cyprus and opposes any attempt to exploit Cypriot fossil fuels.

In December 2017, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said he wanted to renegotiate an early 20th-century treaty marking the maritime boundaries of Turkey and Cyprus.

Minister of Energy, Tourism and Commerce Georgios Lakkotrypis said in Beirut: "We have agreed with Lebanon to co-operate in finding export markets for our oil and gas produce in addition to implementing a project for creating a gas pipeline between Lebanon and Cyprus.'

The bilateral meeting comes a week after Lebanon launched the second licensing cycle

Oil pauses; focus on future supply direction

Lebanon last year signed contra France's Total, Eni of Italy and Russian to drill for oil and gas in two blocks, tensions with Israel over the ownership of

"The conflict with Israel will not Lebanon from taking advantage of the p reserves of oil and natural gas in b Lebanon's Energy Ministry said when was signed.

Cyprus, Egypt and Israel agreed ear year to form an "Eastern Mediterrane Forum" based in Cairo to create a regi market that benefits nations in the trouble (Source: energy-reported

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Oil prices nudged lower on Monday after international benchmark Brent hit a fresh five-month high in the previous session, with investors eyeing mixed signals on global supply.

Brent crude oil futures were at \$71.44 a barrel at 0629 GMT, down 11 cents, or 0.2 percent, from their last close, having hit their highest since Nov. 12 on Friday at \$71.87.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were at \$63.63 per barrel, down 26 cents, or 0.4 percent, from their last settlement.

^{*}I would expect oil to trade in a relatively tight band around \$70 per for the time being," said Virendra Chauhan, oil analyst at Energy Aspects in Singapore, pointing to differing signs from the United States and OPEC on future supply.

"Leading edge indicators on U.S. supply suggest activity levels are stepping up, which is supportive for strong production growth in the second half," said Chauhan

But at the same time, "murmurings from various ministers of the OPEC+ pact suggest supply from



the group will not be ramped up pre-emptively as per last summer," he said.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies meet in June to decide whether to continue withholding supply. OPEC, Russia and other producers, are reducing output by 1.2 million bpd from Jan. 1 for six months.

OPEC's de facto leader, Saudi Arabia, is considered keen to keep cutting, but sources within the group said it could raise output from July if disruptions continue elsewhere.

The head of Libya's National Oil Corp warned on

Friday that renewed fighting could wipe of production in the country.

Meanwhile, Russia's Finance Ministe Siluanov was quoted by the TASS news a saying on Saturday that Russia and OPEC m to boost production to fight for market sh the United States but this would push oil p low as \$40 per barrel.

"The danger is to the downside as both contracts are still very overbought from a technical standpoint," said Jeffrey Halley, senior market analyst at OANDA in Singapore.

 $U.\bar{S}.$ energy companies last week increased the number of oil rigs operating for a second week in a row, bringing the total count to 833, General Electric Co's Baker Hughes energy services firm said in its closely followed report on Friday.

The rig count fell for the past four months as independent exploration and production companies cut spending on new drilling to focus on earnings growth instead of increased output.

(Source: Reuters)

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Arab Spring 2.0' is a reboot full of bugs

By Nick Paton Wals

The acts of hope and courage shown in Algeria and Sudan over the past weeks felt ever so fleetingly like a reprise of 2011's broad social awakening across the Arab world. But "Arab Spring 2.0," as it has been called, is a reboot full of bugs that many users may seek to uninstall.

As in Zimbabwe in 2017, these movements of peaceful change have achieved what decades of opposition failed to do: unseat a superannuated and wildly corrupt strongman.

Robert Mugabe was 93 when he left his seat in Harare, mired in economic collapse.

Algeria's President finally resigned. Will that be enough to quell protests?

In Algeria, Abdelaziz Bouteflika was 82 when he resigned, having barely been seen in public since a 2013 stroke, setting an all-new low bar for a dictator's interaction with his regime. Wanted by ICC

And Omar al-Bashir, forced out by the military last week at the age of 75, let living standards fall inexorably after three decades of repressing Sudan.

He's also wanted by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide.

None had the ability or desire to relate to the young populations rising up to demand their removal.

None had militaries willing to sustain them anymore or, for the most part, use violence on protesters.

But the world has evolved, perhaps slipping backwards, since 2011 -- more cynical, less ideological in its centers of power.

We witness these changes less enamored with the aspirations for a better life that are keeping many in Algeria and Sudan still out, protesting, as their dictators' successors measure up for curtains in the palace.

The Arab Spring's momentum emerged after years of doubt in Western processes,

The U.S. State

Department's

Palladino has said

"Sudanese people

should determine

who leads them"

and should have

than those

quicker elections

currently planned

-- hardly a strident

and supportive

Rose Garden.

speech from the

meekly that the

Deputy

fueled by the disastrous Iraq war.

Suddenly, despite how deeply discredited the West and its Spokesman Robert democracies had found themselves, Tunisians and Egyptians wanted little other than more freedom, and would take risks to get it.

The Obama administration somehow saw part of its agenda for change as reflected in this inevitable shaking of the regional carpet, and fomented it.

The internet made this desire for change real, new and immediate for anyone who cared to see it.

The 22-year-old activist in that iconic photo

says she chanted from atop a car to declare, 'Sudan is for all':

The 22-year-old activist in that iconic photo says she chanted from atop a car to declare, 'Sudan is for all'

The social media

Today we are older, if not necessarily wiser. In 2011, social media was the catalyst. Yet now, as we admire the image of a Sudanese woman, Alaa Salah, in flowing white to be and gold moon earrings, standing on a car and addressing the crowd, she is surrounded by a sea of smartphone screens capturing her bravery

That is the norm, an accepted part of life. Videos of brutality or defiance aren't so much cause for viewers to pause in horror or awe of their contents anymore, but instead tend to incite

Twitter spats about their authenticity.

The ICC was wrong to deny prosecution request for Afghan probe

U.S. officials will never end up before ICC judges, but speaking truth to power could still boost the court's credibility.

By Mark Kersten

Judges at the International Criminal Court (ICČ) have denied a request to open an investigation into atrocities committed in Afghanistan.

Their decision comes one and a half years after the prosecutor requested authorization from the judges to open an official investigation into war crimes and crimes against humanity in Afghanistan.

The judges ruled have ruled that an investigation would not be in the "interests of justice".

This marks the first time that judges have invoked this argument, yet the ruling was meagre on its application, devoting just three and a half pages to the subject and, remarkably, not referencing any other cases or jurisprudence on the subject.

Prosecutors will now appeal that decision and the court still has a chance to reverse course. For some, however, the decision is a "good" one for the court. They believe that an investigation could only hurt the court because no American would ever end up before judges at the ICC.

In denying the investigation, judges stated that changes in the "political landscape" in non-member states (i.e. the U.S.) "make it extremely difficult to gauge the prospects of securing meaningful cooperation from relevant authorities for the future".

In short, they believed that an investigation would be too difficult to be worth trying, and therefore, not in the interests of justice or the court.

Alleged atrocities in Afghanistan But they are wrong. A lack of cooperation from Washington or other states should not have prevented the ICC from investigating alleged atrocities in Afghanistan. Even without cooperation, such an inves-

tigation would likely bolster - not undermine the court's credibility. That it took the ICC judges one and a half years to come to today's decision will only in-

crease speculation that they were acting politically, fearful of the political implications of an investigation and, possibly, Washington's wrath. At the same time, the ICC prosecutor's office has been plagued by numerous high-

profile setbacks. Within the last 12 months alone, judges acquitted both former Vice President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo Jean-Pierre Bemba and former President of Ivory Coast Laurent Gbagbo.

It has also come to light that the ICC's own president, Chile Eboe-Osuji, is suing

merely on the basis of its legitimacy as a court, where surrenders and trials are of the essence. They judge it as an international organization going where none has gone before: putting major powers on notice for their abuses.

focusing only on suspects who are likely to be surrendered to the court.

been ill-advised for the ICC to investigate atrocities in Afghanistan as cooperation wouldn't be forthcoming. Such is the advice of many observers of the ICC.

Followers of the ICC have repeatedly pointed out that U.S. cooperation with the court would cease if the ICC opened an in-

tion from the Afghan government, the Taliban, or the U.S.". Moreover, without any prospects of a successful trial of U.S. officials along with the cessation of cooperation, "there would be significant cost to the ICC, for little gain".

These fears were confirmed when U.S.

roborated when Washington revoked ICC Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda's entry visa to the U.S.

APRIL 16, 2019

There is no reason to believe that the ICC could "win" any confrontation with the U.S. Washington has promised to pull out all

the stops in an attempt to isolate the court. Any investigation into Afghanistan would preclude cooperation and there is a virtually no chance that U.S. officials would end up facing judges at the ICC.

As a result, many worry that an investigation would further sap the ICC's already sagging credibility. They needn't.

An organization's credibility is partly a measure of the gap between the expectations that people have of the institution and its actual performance.

If the performance of an institution falls

would be enforced so that they face justice in The Hague.

The court's credibility suffers precisely because neither has appeared before the ICC more than a decade after warrants were issued for their arrest.

But that wouldn't have happened with Afghanistan because those aren't the expectations at play when it comes to alleged U.S. crimes.

As observers rightly point out, no one reasonably expects the U.S. to cooperate with an ICC probe into alleged crimes committed by its officials. No one.

Therefore, if the court were to ever issue arrest warrants for a Dick Cheney or a George W. Bush, no one would expect them to be surrendered to the ICC.

The expectation will be that Washington vociferously defends its former political lead-ers while belligerently attacking the court at every opportunity.

US vitriol won't fit the global narrative of an ineffectual ICC so much as the narrative of American exceptionalism and refusal to take responsibility for a government-planned and implemented era of torture.

In the words of a former international judge, it will be "consistent with the new American line: 'We are No 1 and we stand above the law'.

The ICC versus U.S.

The ICC versus the U.S. would be a tale of David versus Goliath. But even if David misses with all of his stones, no one would blame him.

The ICC has failed to meet many expectations. It hasn't contributed to a spate of peace or reconciliation and it hasn't held the worst mass murderers to account. And to be clear: unenforced arrest warrants can hurt the ICC's credibility. But in this case, they wouldn't.

The global community doesn't judge the court merely on the basis of its legitimacy as a court, where surrenders and trials are of the essence. They judge it as an international organization going where none has gone before: putting major powers on notice for their abuses.

The inevitable tantrums that would follow any arrest warrants for U.S. officials would only boost the perceived legitimacy of the court, especially among those who never expected that an international tribunal would ever confront American power.

No one believes that American officials will end up at the ICC. The assumption is that the ICC will wilt before American power. Many will the decisions as the judges proving them right. But if there is any chance, on appeal, for the court to reverse course, it should do so and surprise us - and exceed expectations. (Source: aljazeera.com)

Why Mohammed bin Salman may not want more reform

Saudi Arabia's crown prince will keep his 2030 goals as window dressing in the West, as part of an effort to repolish his image as a reformer, but he will not actively seek political reform.





the court for higher pay at a time when the institution is struggling to resource its current workload. Against this backdrop, it is tempting to conclude that the ICC should be risk-averse,

In line with such thinking, it would have

vestigation into Afghanistan.

The Afghan government

They insist that there "will be no coopera-

National Security Adviser John Bolton threatened the ICC and its staff with sanctions while declaring that the U.S. would "use any means necessary to protect our citizens and those

of our allies from unjust prosecution by this illegitimate court." They were further cor-

But the most significant change in the past eight years is in the White House and Brussels.

Places that once stood tall, demanding that outdated and unjust dictators heed the will of the streets, are too absorbed by their own rifts now to forcefully articulate convictions.

The U.S. State Department's Deputy Spokesman Robert Palladino has said meekly that the "Sudanese people should determine who leads them" and should have quicker elections than those currently planned -- hardly a strident and supportive speech from the Rose Garden.

Similar noises have been made about Algeria, despite the interim president Abdelkader Bensalah -- who has pledged elections in three months -- hailing from the same "pouvoir," or social elite, that enabled Bouteflika for two decades.

Tear gas and further demonstrations will follow, even if the European Union has too much on its internal plate to speak up louder than the usual call for free and fair elections.

Those eight years have given us reasons to see strongmen successors as the lesser of some evils and, you could argue, mean that Western leaders are more silent due to experience.

Turmoil in Libya

The turmoil of Libya, unable to find peace or coherent government since 2011, has spawned a human trafficking nightmare for exploited migrants on their way to Europe, along with an ISIS affiliate.

The Syrian people's hasty bid to replicate Tunisia's peaceful change led to al Qaeda and ISIS taking partial hold, hundreds of thousands dead, the use of sarin gas on babies, Russia's brute force emerging as a new totem in the Middle East, and the dark reassurance of Bashar al-Assad that his father's ways will win out.

Egypt went full circle, veering wildly off towards Islamist leadership after the fall of Hosni Mubarak, and then after an unspeakably brutal military crackdown, back into a dictatorship likely worse than that which brought Egyptians out in Tahrir Square in 2011.

But the vectors that led us to change in 2011 and 2019 are the same. People are younger, poorer, less equal and slowly hotter, hungrier and thirstier before.

These are problems that exacerbate each other, and while strongmen always stand in the way of progress, rare is the successor who offers a new path forward.

(Source: cnn.com)

The image in the West of Saudi crown prince and de facto ruler Mohammed bin Salman (MbS) certainly took a big hit with the slaying of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in a consulate in Istanbul

Many who had viewed MbS as an exciting young reformer came to see him more as a murderous thug. But MbS's image within Saudi Arabia has not suffered as much, according to an account by Stephen Grand based on conversations within the kingdom.

Much of the complaining by Saudis about the Khashoggi affair has been directed at the West rather than at their own government. Grand attributes this response to goodwill that MbS accumulated through curbing the religious police, permitting women to drive, and introducing forms of entertainment previously missing from Saudi society such as cinema, concerts, and amusement parks.

These measures constitute small-ball reform. They do not involve fundamental change in the Saudi economy, let alone of Saudi politics. They are essentially favors the regime bestows on its subjects.

The measures nonetheless have won gratitude because the bar that any reform needed to clear to be noticed was so low.

The Saudi extremists

Saudi society, ever since the regime's concessions to religious conservatives after extremists temporarily seized the Grand Mosque in Mecca in 1979, has been so stiflingly closed that even small favors win friends.

MbS has declared an ambition for more sweeping reform under the label of Vision 2030. The declared goals include reducing dependence on oil revenues and expanding the private sector so it would account for most Saudi GDP, which it does not now.

Such changes, if they ever occur, would be fundamental reform involving a growth in centers of economic power.

Such changes would raise questions, which social scientists have long debated and analyzed, of the effects that economic development has on the prospects for political development.

A significant expansion of an entrepreneurial class and of a middle class not dependent on the state can lead to increased dissatisfaction with authoritarian rule and demands



for a say in how society is to be governed.

The demands flow from the emerging classes having a larger stake in the decisions about how society is to be governed as well as a larger awareness of their own capabilities.

The great counterexample to this line of reasoning is China, where the economic vibrancy and amazing growth that Deng Xiaoping set in motion with his market reforms four decades ago have not significantly shaken the political power of the ruling Chinese Communist Party.

China thus has been an attractive model for rulers elsewhere who hope for strong economic growth without endangering their own rule.

Dynamic economics

But as for whether a combination of dynamic economics and oppressive politics can endure indefinitely, the answer is — as former Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai said when asked about the impact of the French Revolution — "it's too early to tell.

Many Chinese have been too busy getting rich to devote yet more of their energies to politics. And just as Saudi society set a low bar for any welcome loosening of social mores, pre-Deng Chinese poverty set a low bar for welcome economic betterment.

Moreover, the Chinese regime has some advantages, which the Saudi regime does not, in keeping the combination of

open economics and closed politics going as long as it has

The Communist Party has a well-practiced ability to combine ideology and popular mobilization to portray everything as a revolution in which the party is the guide but in which everyone participates.

Even President Xi Jinping's move from collective to more personal rule – a move that parallels in some respects MbS's consolidation of power — has exploited that revolutionary and ideological tradition. Today one hears from China about "Xi Jinping thought;" don't expect to hear anything from Saudi Arabia about "MbS thought."

The starting point for any estimation of where MbS goes from here with reform is that political reform is not on his agenda at all. The prime consideration in his decisions about economic and societal change will be to avoid anything that endangers his political power.

A rentier state

With that as his overriding priority, one specific consideration will be whether the Saudi regime will have the financial wherewithal to continue the arrangement of a rentier state buying, partly through small favors, obeisance of a dependent population.

China never had such an option, and Deng realized that sweeping economic reform was essential to keep a billion people from indefinite misery.

Saudi Arabia, with its oil wealth and far smaller population, has kept its much different game going for decades. Low oil prices can threaten the game, but as MbS views the meager efforts (not least of all in the United States) to move away from a fossil fuel economy, he has reason to think he can keep the game going even longer.

Another consideration will be how MbS, or anyone advising him, views the social scientific question of how opening an economy may lead to pressure to open the political system. To the extent he assesses there is such a connection, he has an incentive not to open the economy at all, notwithstanding his professed goals in Vision 2030.

He will keep the goals as window dressing in the West, as part of an effort to repolish his image as a reformer. But at home he will slow-roll fundamental reform to the point of stasis, while occasionally throwing his subjects another bone equivalent to letting them go to the movies.

(Source: nationalinterest.org)

Hazara genocide in Pakistan must stop

1 → When a person leaves home in the morning, he is not sure whether he will be back in the evening. This frightening uncertainty and unpredictability defines their daily lives.

'Hazara genocide' is not a new phenomenon as it has consumed thousands of innocent lives over the years, both in Pakistan and neighboring Afghanistan. It has been one of the biggest internal security challenges for the successive governments in Islamabad, and has now become a matter of concern for the Imran Khan-led PTI government as well.

The carnage in Hazarganji market area on Friday morning was not the first attack against the community and perhaps won't be the last. Community activists have blamed the country's security agencies of not providing them adequate security and not announcing a comprehensive plan to ensure their wellbeing. They have warned that if the government does not wake up to the challenge, the juggernaut will roll on.

Like on previous occasions, the families of victims took to streets again to protest against the government for not ensuring their safety and protection. They refused to bury the dead and staged a sit-in in Quetta city, demanding attention of the Imran Khan government.

They are incredibly brave and resilient but they are also helpless. They can raise their voices but they cannot make their voices heard.

The Quetta attack snatched away many precious lives and shattered many dreams, leaving behind mourning families, orphans and widows. The world will never be the same



again for those families.

A heartbreaking story of one of the victims Ali Hazara brought tears to many eyes. Ali Hazara, the only breadwinner for his family, did menial jobs to earn livelihood. He was sent by his mother that fateful morning to the vegetable market to buy some stuff. While leaving, his mother told him: "if you won't bring anything, we would have just dry bread to eat at night". He replied, with a dash of humor: "eating dry bread with water has its own taste". He left and never came back. His bereaved mother stood next to his lifeless body, pleading with him: "Just open your eyes. I wouldn't ask for anything."

Condemnations have poured in from different quarters, including from PM Khan. He took to Twitter to express his sadness and asked for "an immediate inquiry and increased security for the (Hazara) people". Such statements have been issued before also by his predecessors. And it has been business as usual.

Global watchdog bodies have urged the government to take immediate measures for

protection of these vulnerable people. Amnesty International said in a statement the blast was a "painful reminder" of the many attacks suffered by the Hazara community in Quetta over the years, and called for the government of Prime Minister Imran Khan to give them better protection.

The sit-in has entered its third day and the protestors have refused to go home despite assurance by the federal government. They have reiterated the demands and called for the identification and arrest of the perpetrators of Hazarganji market attack, adequate security measures and implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP).

Jaleela, one of those participating in the sit-in, was quoted as saying that they won't budge until their demands were implemented.

"We demand that the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) come here and see the misery and hardships of Hazara people. How much should they suffer," she asked. "Why are they being killed, where is the NAC, where is the project of Quetta safe city." Apparently, government seems to have no answers.

Condolences and sympathies are fine but the government officials need to move beyond that. They need to identify the killers of Hazara Shias, and hand over exemplary punishment to them. They need to stop this madness, and assure these loyal citizens of Pakistan that they are safe in their homes. Otherwise, the bloodletting will continue and 'Naya Pakistan' (New Pakistan) will remain a pipedream.

Suspense and uncertainty hang over intra-Afghan summit in Qatar

1 \rightarrow So far, Taliban has refused to hold direct negotiations with the Afghan government, calling it a "puppet administration" of the Western powers led by the U.S.

While the Taliban has already announced its readiness for the Qatar meeting, the Afghan government is facing the dilemma of who to include in its delegation.

All senior Afghan leaders, cutting across the political and ideological lines, have extended their support to the intra-Afghan summit in Qatar, including the likes of Hamid Karzai, Haneef Atmar, Atta Mohammad Noor, Ismail Khan, Younas Qanooni, and Mohammad Mohaqiq.

The U.S. government representatives have held a series of talks with the Taliban representatives in many countries over the past many months but they have failed to produce a breakthrough.

The direct talks between the U.S. and the Taliban, sidestepping the democratically elected government in Kabul, has angered President Ghani's team and many senior Afghan politicians who see it as an attempt to undermine the credibility of the Afghan government and its people.

Hamdullah Mohib, the national security advisor of President Ghani, recently launched a scathing attack at the U.S. government representative Zalmai Khalilzad for sidelining the main stakeholders and going ahead with talks with the insurgent group.

Mohib's statement in the UN Security Council meeting incensed the hawks in Washington, who announced that they would not deal with him anymore. However, Mohib got support from many Afghan leaders and civil society activists back home.

Many observers have questioned the logic of holding talks with the Taliban while it continues to attack Afghan security forces and civilians. They say talks and violence should not go together.

Meanwhile, in a fresh development, Chief Executive Dr. Abdullah Abdullah announced on Sunday that he and his election team will not participate in the 'Loya Jirga' a grand assembly convened to discuss talks with the Taliban in Kabul on April 29.

Trump seeks to destroy the EU

1 → BREXIT has become a major riddle in the country. Many English citizens do not have a complete understanding of the EU, the British government and the UK Parliament's move to leave the European Union. However, the British authorities seem to have planned a tentative game.

The fact is that the president of the United States is still looking to destroy the European Union. One of the main reasons for Trump's concern about how Britain is leaving the EU is precisely this. Trump knows well that if the British exit experience is negative from Europe, then other European Union countries will not be excluded.

It should be noted that the White House has repeatedly and openly denied its opposition to the nature and existence of the European Union and the euro area, but people like the German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the French President Emanuel Macroon and the British prime minister still remain in the illusion of a relationship Good with Washington! Undoubtedly, many European officials are once again seeing the consequences of their game on the trump ground, which is too late!

Finally, Trump and John Bolton will target the European Union more intense in the coming months. White House officials are waiting for the full realization of British withdrawal from the European Union.

Trump's sanctions could kill the deal with Kim

TEHRAN (FNA) — Just to start down a long list, US President Donald Trump continues to continue with the default use of sanctions and aggressive ambitions to put pressure on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to dismantle its nuclear weapons program, while he also expresses a willingness to hold a third summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

On Thursday, April 11, and beyond the bounds of international morality and law, Trump made his erratic policies amply clear during talks in Washington with South Korean President Moon Jae-in.

Take this one, for instance: "It could happen. A third summit could happen. And it's step by step. It's not a fast process. I've never said it would be. It's step by step."

The two presidents discussed the possibility of Moon having an inter-Korean summit with Kim to advance dialogue between the United States and North Korea on denuclearisation. This is while Washington has also moved aggressively to curtail Pyongyang's ability to finance national development plans by blocking its access to foreign technology and finance.

Trump is still so amazed to wield the sanctions weapon despite the fact that Pyongyang has suspended nuclear tests and missile launches, and wants sanctions relief. The two leaders have managed to build goodwill, but failed to agree on a deal in February to lift sanctions in exchange for Pyongyang abandoning its nuclear and missile programs.

To his credit, Trump says he is prepared to ease some sanctions, such as "certain humanitarian things." But it's not enough to convince Kim that after the collapse of the second summit in Hanoi there's still some room for a longer "process," and that the door should remain open to a third summit.

Here, then, is a small suggestion: Trump needs to appreciate that history is passing the sanctions regime by. If he continues this default policy, he will kill the prospects for a denuclearization deal. It is evident that those who have hardened their position against a phased approach sought by Pyongyang, in which gradual steps would be rewarded with relief from sanctions, are not in favor of diplomacy.

As with any application of force, sanctions against Pyongyang entail substantial risks and the geological facts speak otherwise. The escalation will not only drive up the risk of yet another collapse, but will make it harder for the two sides to focus on long-term "process" challenges.

The irony is that US wars and trade restrictions against other nations have backfired, dealing a major blow to the commercial interests of Western companies and investors. The economic sanctions, military pressure, and intemperate threats against Pyongyang will equally prove counterproductive.

North Korean media says Kim, for his part, plans to push forward with efforts to make the economy more self-sufficient "so as to deal a telling blow to the hostile forces who go with bloodshot eyes miscalculating that sanctions can bring (North Korea) to its knees."

The warning comes amid reports from Pyongyang that Kim might also rethink a moratorium on missile launches and nuclear tests in place since 2017 - unless Washington eases sanctions.

At a time when all American wars, trade conflicts and

sanctions now seem to be permanent, why should Kim tolerate a peculiar and lopsided diplomatic arrangement in which he'd be so clearly the loser?

In a strange sense, there should be retaliatory plans in place in the event that Trump follows through on the default use of sanctions. Moon also made a mistake to put his political reputation on the line in trusting Trump's off-the-cuff belligerence and backhanded compliments at Kim. Even if Seoul hosts the third summit, Trump won't offer Kim real concessions. His "various smaller deals" will also go nowhere – he wants capitulation.

We live in a very different world. Trump needs observation, insight, and audacity for a Pyongyang deal to win the next US presidential election. If he was to use foreign policy to enhance his political standing at home, the one place he could do it would be North Korea. It's "the best investment" he'll ever make.

In the international system of economic and geopolitical negotiations, the GOP golf mates also know that nothing could hurt Trump more than an aggressive stance against Pyongyang that failed to achieve its goals.

The conclusions seem self-evident: Except for showing more transparency in its nuclear and missile programs, Pyongyang has nothing else to offer but "strategic patience" and goodwill. Whatever you might think of Kim, Trump needs to stop throwing a wrench into his diplomatic effort. It's way past time for Trump to rid himself of the dystopian turn of mind and prove he's ready for a peaceable and reasonable deal with Kim without precondition, beyond which there is no double-talking, no sabotage, and certainly no savage and deliberate "process".

World slams ICC's decision to not investigate U.S. war crimes in Afghanistan



1 → "The U.S. will withdraw or deny visas to any ICC personnel investigating possible war crimes by U.S. forces or allies in Afghanistan," U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said last month.

The court, which has its headquarters in The Hague, responded that it was an independent and impartial institution and would continue to do its work "undeterred" by U.S. threats. ICC did hit back then but soon felt intimidated by mafia-style threats by the administration in Washington.

The ICC's decision comes just days after the U.S. government revoked the ICC chief prosecutor Fatou Bensouda's visa because the investigation involved crimes committed by the U.S. forces.

Bensouda's request to open an investigation said there is information that members of the U.S. military and intelligence agencies "committed acts of torture, cruel treatment, outrages upon personal dignity, rape and sexual violence against conflict-related detainees in Afghanistan and other locations, principally in the 2003-2004 period."

She also said that the Taliban and other insurgent groups have killed more than 17,000 civilians since 2009, including almost 7,000 targeted killings. She also alleged that Afghan secu-

rity forces have tortured prisoners in government-run jails.

The ICC decision does acknowledge that the November 2017 request from Bensouda to open a probe "establishes a reasonable basis to consider that crimes within the ICC jurisdiction have been committed in Afghanistan and that

potential cases would be admissible before the Court," said a report in AP. In a written reaction, the court's prosecution office said it "will further analyze the decision and its implications, and consider all available legal remedies."

The ICC judges claimed that their decision was influenced by the prospect of investigators having to deal with challenging investigations, a lack of ready state cooperation and budgetary constraints, the AP report said.

Patrick Baudouin, president of the International Federation for Human Rights, called the rejection a "dark day for justice" and a "shocking decision, which is based on a deeply flawed reasoning."

Sima Samar, the chairman of Afghanistan's Independent Human Rights Commission, said the decision was a disappointment for victims.

Human Rights Watch said the ruling establishes a dangerous precedent. "The judges' logic effectively allows states to opt out on their obligation to cooperate with the court's investigation," said Param-Preet Singh, the group's associate international justice director. "This sends a dangerous message to perpetrators that they can put themselves beyond the reach of the law just by being uncooperative."

Amnesty International said the ICC's decision not to authorize an investigation into crimes committed in Afghanistan under international law marks a shocking abandonment of victims and will further weaken the court's credibility.

"Afghanistan has been witness



to heinous crimes committed with near-absolute impunity, across the country, for more than a decade and a half. The ICC's decision today is a shocking abandonment of the victims which will weaken the court's already questionable credibility," said Biraj Patnaik, South Asia Director at Amnesty International.

"None of the reasons given by the ICC judges justifies this decision. The gravest crimes can only ever be investigated in trying circumstances. If anything, the court's reluctance to proceed with investigations in the face of such constraints only reveals its overreach and signals its weak resolve," said Patnaik.

The successive U.S. governments have always arm-twisted global watchdog bodies, especially the ICC, and prevented it from investigating its crimes against humanity.

"If the ICC begins and is allowed to investigate crimes against human-

ity committed by the West, the entire twisted concept of the U.S. and Europe being pioneers of freedom and democracy could easily and quickly collapse," wrote Andre Vltchek in an article in New Eastern Outlook.

"Even criticism by Washington, Paris or London of countries such as Venezuela, China or Russia, for their 'human rights violations', would become absurd and grotesque. Entire concept of 'regime change' could clearly be exposed for what it always really was – lawless gangsterism," Vltchek added. He said no country in the post-WWII era has committed so many crimes against humanity, and supported so many genocides, as the U.S.

"The 'foreign policy' of the U.S. is directly derived from colonialist policies of the former European powers. Therefore, crimes against humanity committed by the West have never stopped; never stopped for centuries," he noted.

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For more information contact:



Can genetic variants predict depression risk in young people?

A new study looks at the genetic makeup of thousands of adults with depression to try to find an accurate way of predicting which children and adolescents may be at risk of developing this mental health problem.

Researchers identify a genetic risk score that could help predict depression risk in the young.

Many factors determine a person's risk of depression, and these include both genetic and environmental factors, such as going through difficult life events or taking medications with certain side effects.

However, while we already know some of the probable risk factors, it is not always easy to predict who is most at risk of depression, especially early on in life.

Recently, researchers from institutions all over the world have joined forces to investigate whether they can find a way of predicting a child or adolescent's risk of depression by analyzing the genetic makeup of adults with depression and coming up with a "map" of likely genetic culprits.

Their efforts, the investigators say, would also make it easier to understand which individuals have more exposure to mental health events before some potentially confounding factors set in.

The researchers hail from the Max Planck Institute of Psychiatry and the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universitaet in Munich, Germany, the Emory University in Atlanta, GA, the University of Coimbra in Portugal, and the University of Helsinki in Finland.

In their study, the researchers calculated polygenic risk score — the quantification of the possible effects of different combinations of genetic variations - using the findings of the Psychiatric Genomics Consortium, which looked at data from more than 460,000 adults



They now report the results in the American Journal of Psychiatry

the rescue

vidual basis, the different genetic variants that previous studies have associated with depression do not make a significant difference to the risk of depression. However, cumulatively, they have a substantial effect on this risk.

calculated from genetic data obtained

Halldorsdottir.

Complex genetic risk score to

The researchers explain that on an indi-

"The [polygenic risk] score was first from a very large number of adults with depression," notes first author Thorhildur

Following this first step, the researchers assessed this risk score in groups of chil-dren and adolescents aged 7–18 years, of whom 279 had symptoms of depression and 187 were healthy. The latter acted as the control group.

"This parameter was then evaluated in smaller cohorts of children and adolescents to determine whether it could predict depression and symptoms of depression in this age group," adds Halldorsdottir.

The researchers also looked at the effect of early experiences of abuse on the young participants' mental health, since this is a

verified risk factor for depression. Doing this allowed the investigators to show just how important the polygenic risk score is in assessing depression risk.

"We found that both the polygenic risk score and exposure to childhood abuse were informative in identifying young people at risk for depression," notes Halldorsdottir.

The researchers believe that the results of this study and other similar research could, in the future, help mental health experts identify which young people are most at risk of developing depression, allowing them to implement prevention strategies where appropriate.

'By applying the findings of studies like this one, it should be possible in future to target young people who are at greatest risk for depression, i.e., those with a high polygenic risk score and/or a history of childhood abuse, for these effective in-terventions," says the study's joint lead investigator, Gerd Schulte-Körne

Co-author Elisabeth Binder calls this the first study to show that the polygenic risk score calculated from adults with depression can be used to identify [at-risk] children [...] before any clinical symptoms have emerged."

Although Binder admits that the work of finding the best methods of identifying young people at risk of mental health issues does not stop with this study, she believes that this is an important first step toward implementing better preventive strategies more effectively.

"[I]dentifying which children are more likely to go on to develop depression would give us the opportunity to implement effective prevention strategies and reduce the huge health burden associated with depression."

(Source: flipboard.com)

Could this protein explain why migraine is more common in women?

For reasons that scientists do not fully understand, women are three times more likely to experience migraine headaches than men. Now, new research into the activity of a protein could start to explain why.

Women tend to develop migraine more often than men, and new research may explain why.

Research going back more than 30 years has confirmed that calcitonin gene-related peptide (CGRP) plays a major role in migraine. However, this work has revealed little about the locations of the protein's migraine activity in the body.

That was until researchers at the University of Texas at Dallas, who carried out a preclinical investigation in rats and mice, pinpointed where certain pain-related CGRP activity takes place in the body. They also found that this particular activity occurs only in females.

The mechanism that they observed happens in the meninges, the protective layer of three tissues that surrounds the brain and spinal cord. Introducing CGRP into the meninges triggered pain responses in the female rodents but not in the males.

The Journal of Neuroscience has recently published a paper on the University of Texas study.

The research team suggests that the findings could start to explain why women are much more likely to experience migraine headaches than men.

"This is just the beginning," says corresponding study author Dr. Gregory Dussor, who is an associate professor of neuroscience, "of demonstrations showing that CGRP



most common cause of "years lived with disability" during that year.

The authors of that global study concluded that, even though their analysis drew on limited data, it showed a need to give migraine and other headache disorders "greater attention in health policy debates and research resource allocation

According to the Migraine Research Foundation, 28 million of the 39 million people in the United States who experience migraines are women.

and also in the peripheral nervous system, "which,' Dr. Dussor explains, "goes everywhere else, including the meninges.

Although the nerve cells of the meninges can send the signals for head pain, because of the other symptoms involved, scientists believe that migraine actually starts in the brain.

However, an interesting feature of CGRP in this context is that it cannot cross from one nervous system into the other because it is too big to pass through the bloodbrain barrier that protects the central nervous system.

Dr. Dussor and his team began their investigation by injecting CGRP into the meninges of male and female rats. They introduced small doses into the dura mater, which is the outer of the three layers of the protective tissue.

The results showed that only the female rats demonstrated symptoms of headache. There was a similar response again, just in females - to CGRP injection in the paws.

Dr. Dussor points out that the greater sensitivity to CGRP in the female animals occurred not only in the meninges but also in other parts of the body. He and his team confirmed many of their findings in mice.

"But we don't know," he adds, "what that means for other types of pain yet.'

He suggests that the full explanation for more females experiencing migraines than males is likely to be much more involved than these findings might suggest.

He cautions, for example, that because only female

How to control anger: tips to help you stay calm

Anger is a normal feeling and can be a positive emotion when it helps you work through issues or problems, whether that's at work or at home.

However, anger can become problematic if it leads to aggress sion, outbursts, or even physical altercations.

Anger control is important for helping you avoid saying or doing something you may regret. Before anger escalates, you can use specific strategies for controlling anger.

Here are ways you can control your anger:

Count down

• Count down (or up) to 10. If you're really mad, start at 100. In the time it takes you to count, your heart rate will slow, and your anger will likely subside.

Take a breather

2. Take a breatner Your breathing becomes shallower and speeds up as you grow angry. Reverse that trend (and your anger) by taking slow, deep breaths from your nose and exhaling out of your mouth for several moments.

Go walk around

3 Go walk around Exercise can help calm your nerves and reduce anger. Go for a walk, ride your bike, or hit a few golf balls. Anything that gets your limbs pumping is good for your mind and body **Relax your muscles**

• Progressive muscle relaxation calls on you to tense and slowly relax various muscle groups in your body, one at a time. As you tense and release, take slow, deliberate breaths.

5 • Find a word or phrase that helps you calm down and refocus. Repeat that word again and again to yourself when you're upset. "Relax," "Take it easy, and "You'll be OK" are all good examples. Stretch

🕖 🛛 Neck rolls and shoulder rolls are good examples of nonstrenuous yoga-like movements that can help you control your body and harness your emotions. No fancy equipment required. Mentally escape

• Slip into a quiet room, close your eyes, and practice visualizing yourself in a relaxing scene. Focus on details in the imaginary scene: What color is the water? How tall are the mountains? What do the chirping birds sound like? This practice can help you find calm amidst anger.

Play some tunes • Let music carry you away from your feelings. Put in earbuds or slip out to your car. Crank up your favorite music (avoid heavy metal), and hum, bop, or sashay your anger away. **9** Stop talking • When you're steamed, you may be tempted to let the angry

words fly, but you're more likely to do harm than good. Pretend your lips are glued shut, just like you did as a kid. This moment without speaking will give you time to collect your thoughts. **10.** Give yourself a break. Sit away from others. In this

quiet time, you can process events and return your emotions to neutral. You may even find this time away from others is so helpful you want to schedule it into your daily routine.

Take action Take action • Harness your angry energy. Sign a petition. Write a note to an official. Do something good for someone else. Pour your energy and emotions into something that's healthy and productive.

Write in your journal What you can't say, perhaps you can write. Jot down what you're feeling and how you want to respond. Processing it through the written word can help you calm down and reassess the events leading up to your feelings.

13. You might be angry that your child has once again left their room a mess before going to visit a friend. Shut the door. You can temporarily end your anger by putting it out of your view. Look for similar resolutions in any situations.

14 • Prevent an outburst by rehearsing what you're going to say or how you're going to approach the problem in the future. This rehearsal period gives you time to role-play several possible solutions, too.

Picture a stop sign

• The universal symbol to stop can help you calm down when you're angry. It's a quick way to help you visualize the need to halt yourself, your actions, and walk away from the moment.

Change your routine If your slow commute to work makes you angry before

might act differently in women.

He suggests that one of the reasons that previous animal studies have not uncovered male and female differences in migraine-related CGRP activity could be because they have tended to use only male rats or mice.

Migraine not just about hormones

A migraine is a severe type of throbbing headache that happens periodically, often with disturbance of vision, nausea, vomiting, and increased sensitivity to light and sound.

According to a recent study, migraine was the sixth most common disease worldwide in 2016 and the second

While boys are more likely to experience these severe headaches in childhood, once children pass puberty, migraine prevalence in girls overtakes that in boys. Experts suggest that the main reason for this is the effect of estrogen. However, not all migraine headaches involve hormones.

Following research into migraine prevention that has implicated CGRP, regulators in the U.S. have approved three migraine drugs that work by blocking the protein. Taking a closer look at CGRP in migraine

The body makes CGRP in the central nervous system, which comprises the brain, spinal cord, and optic nerve,

rodents showed a pain-signal response to having CGRP injections into their meninges, it does not follow that this is the reason for migraine being more prevalent in females.

Also, Dr. Dussor states that while "CGRP plays a clear role in migraine, this does not imply that migraine is exclusively a CGRP-based disorder.'

"This is the first study to show that CGRP might act differently between sexes. It also shows that CGRP can have a pain-related effect in the meninges, which is something that has been questioned in the literature previously." (Source: Medical News Today)

5-minute breathing 'workout' may benefit heart and brain health

Preliminary research reveals that a technique called Inspiratory Muscle Strength Training can boost cognitive and physical performance, as well as cardiovascular health. New research adds another tool in the toolbox for preventing high blood pressure. Most of us know that exercising and eating right are good for us.

However, putting in the effort to do so can often require more willpower than we have.

What if there was a way to reap all the benefits of a workout without having to lift a finger?

New research introduces a 5-minute technique that might improve blood pressure, lower heart attack risk, boost cognitive ability, and enhance sports performance - all while barely having to move.

The technique is called Inspiratory Muscle Strength Training (IMST), and researchers led by Daniel Craighead – a postdoctoral researcher in the University of Colorado Boulder's Department of Integrative Physiology – have tested the technique in a clinical trial.

"IMST is basically strength-training for the muscles you breathe in with," explains Craighead. The researcher and his colleagues presented the preliminary results of their research at the annual Experimental Biology conference, which this year takes place in Orlando, FL.

Why study the benefits of IMST? IMST involves inhaling through a resistive hand-held device called an inspiratory muscle trainer. Its creators initially developed it for people with respiratory problems such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, bronchitis, or cystic fibrosis, or to wean people off ventilators.

Craighead and team explain that in 2016, a 6-week trial on the effects of IMST on obstructive sleep apnea — during which participants performed 30 inhalations per day — revealed that using the device $\frac{1}{2}$ also lowered systolic blood pressure by 12 millimeters of mercury.

Exercising for the same amount of time usually only lowers blood pressure by half that amount, and the benefits seem to exceed those normally achieved with hypertension medication.

This trial piqued the researchers' interest, so they set out to study the possible bene-



fits of IMST for the vascular, cognitive, and physical health of 50 middle-aged adults.

"Our goal is to develop time-efficient, evidence-based interventions that [...] busy midlife adults will actually perform," explains senior investigator Prof. Doug Seals, the director of the University of Colorado Boulder's Integrative Physiology of Aging Laboratory.

Lowers blood pressure and boosts cognition

The researchers compared participants who tried IMST with people who used a sham device that provided no resistance

on inhalation. They found that the blood pressure was significantly lower among IMST participants and that the function of their large arteries had improved considerably

IMST participants also performed better on cognitive tests and treadmill tests. In the treadmill tests, they were able to run for longer and keep their heart rate and oxygen consumption low.

'[IMST is] something you can do quickly in your home or office, without having to change your clothes, and so far it looks like it is very beneficial to lower blood pressure and possibly boost cognitive and physical performance.

"High blood pressure," claims Craighead, 'is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease, which is the number one cause of death in America. Having another option in the toolbox to help prevent it would be a real victory.'

However, the study authors caution that their results are preliminary, and that people interested in the technique should consult their physician first.

(Source: Medical News Today)

you've even had coffee, find a new route. Consider options that may take longer but leave you less upset in the end.

17. Talk to a friend Don't stew in the events that made you angry. Help yourself process what happened by talking with a trusted, supportive friend who can possibly provide a new perspective.

B. Laugh Nothing upends a bad mood like a good one. Diffuse your anger by looking for ways to laugh, whether that's playing with your kids, watching stand-up, or scrolling memes.

Practice gratitude Take a moment to focus on what's right when everything

feels wrong. Realizing how many good things you have in your life can help you neutralize anger and turn around the situation.

Set a timer 20. The first thing that comes to mind when you're angry likely isn't the thing you should say. Give yourself a set time before you respond. This time will help you be calmer and more concise.

Write a letter

21. Write a letter or email to the person that made you angry. Then, delete it. Often, expressing your emotions in some form is all you want, even if it's in something that will never be seen.

22. Finding the courage to forgive someone who has wronged you takes a lot of emotional skill. If you can't go that far, you can at least pretend that you're forgiving them, and you'll feel your anger slip away.

23 • Try to walk in the other person's shoes and see the situation from their perspective. When you tell the story or relive the events as they saw it, you may gain a new understanding and become less angry.

24 Express your anger It's OK to say how you feel, as long as you handle it in the right way. Ask a trusted friend to help you be accountable to a calm response. Outbursts solve no problems, but mature dialogue can help reduce your stress and ease your anger. It may also prevent future problems.

25 Find a creative channel Turn your anger into a tangible production. Consider painting, gardening, or writing poetry when you're upset. Emotions are powerful muses for creative individuals. Use yours to reduce anger.

(Source: healthline.com)



220 historical sites, objects found in Larestan

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — Remnants of some 220 his-torical sites and relics have been found during a recent archaeological survey conducted in Larestan and its surroundings across the southern Fars province.

"The study's first season is currently underway in the northern districts [of Larestan] such as Jouyom, Banarouyeh, Karyan, Evaz, Bidshahr, Dehfish and Fishvar, which has so far yielded finding 220 historical sites and objects," archaeologist Alireza Sardari who heads the survey said on Sunday, IRNA reported.



"The project will be continued on southern districts such

as Bayaram, Sahra-ye Bagh and Baladeh," he added. This project can be a basis for recognizing cultural sequence of the region. Its results will also be useful in the arenas of archaeological excavations, preservation and restoration of historical monuments, tourism development and monitoring urban development plans, Sardari explained.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the archaeologist said that the study will contribute to Iran's archeological map and atlas, which is being completed under the supervision of the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism. Celebrated as the heartland of Persian culture for over

2000 years, Fars is home to magnificent historical sites dating back to Medes, Achaemenid, Parthian, Sassanid and Islamic eras. Shiraz, its capital, has long been synonymous with education, nightingales, and poetry embedding splendid gardens, exquisite mosques and whispered echoes of ancient sophistication.

Ancient manuscript seized from smugglers

Turkish gendarmerie caught smugglers with an 1100-yearold Hebrew manuscript in southeastern Diyarbakir, security sources said on April 13.

The smugglers were seeking a buyer in Ergani district. The 21-page ancient book written in Hebrew is said to be around 1100 years old with leather cover, golden scripture, and religious patterns.

According to the chief public prosecutor the seized historical artifact is taken under protection and the six suspects will be held for investigation.

(Source: Hurriyet Daily News)



The shrines and temples of Nikko, together with their natural surroundings, have for centuries been a sacred site known for its architectural and decorative masterpieces. They are closely associated with the history of the Tokugawa Shoguns.

HERITAGE & TOURISM

UNESCO-tagged hydraulic ensemble unaffected by flooding flooding still exists in the area.

HERITAGE TEHRAN — Shushtar ^s ^k Historical Hydraulic

System, a UNESCO-registered ensemble in southwest Iran which is known as a 'masterpiece of creative genius', has not been affected by flash floods and heavy rainfall that stroke almost all of the country in the past weeks. 'Fortunately, up to the moment, no major

damage has been caused to the World Heritage site of Shushtar in Khuzestan [province],' Mohammad-Hassan Talebian, a deputy for the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, told IRNA late on Saturday.

The ensemble comprises bridges, weirs, tunnels, canals and a series of ancient watermills powered by human-made waterfalls. It is named after an ancient city of the same name with its history dating back to the time of Darius the Great, the Achaemenid king.

Referring to the intensity and duration of the recent rainfalls in the country, particularly in Khuzestan, the official said that some northwestern sections of Shushtar's watermills have been collapsed and the

Italian team to partially restore Persepolis



HERITAGE TEHRAN – A team of k Italian archaeologists and restorers is scheduled to partially rehabilitate some ruined monuments and bas-relief carvings in Persepolis, which was once the ceremonial capital of the mighty Achaemenid Empire.

The team is associated with the foundation "Archaeology Without Borders", which reportedly supports archaeological education and training in developing countries and helps to strength regional networks of students in archaeology.

The restoration project is set to be conducted from April 27 to June 7 based on an agreement Iran's Cultural

Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization had reached with the

foundation, IRNA reported. The open-air stone works of Persepolis face threats of spreading lichens, and eradication from periodic moisture that many experts believe that is impossible to eradicate.

A UNESCO World Heritage site, Persepolis lies just only an hour's drive from north-east of Shiraz, itself a major tourist destination of the country.

Persepolis boasts extensive structures, including monumental staircases, exquisite reliefs and imposing gateways as one of the great wonders of the ancient world.

More Chinese people travel during holidays

More Chinese people take trips during holidays compared to 10 years ago,

APRIL 16, 2019



tamian knowhow. According to UNESCO, the ensemble was probably influenced by

the Petra dam and tunnel and by Roman civil engineering.

Iranian police seize historical relics in three provinces



HERITAGE TEHRAN — Iranian authorities have recently confiscated a number of historical relics and coins from smugglers in provinces of Markazi, Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari and Tehran, Persian media reported.

"Eight Islamic-era objects and two handmade pistols were recovered from a smuggler in Shahrekord (the capital of Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari province)," said Amir Rahmatollahi, a senior police official in charge of protecting cultural heritage.

In another seizure took place in Markazi province, the police recovered eleven relics, which date back to 4th and 5th AH centuries, he added.

The culprits were detained and handed over to judicial system for further investigation, Rahmatollahi noted, IRNA reported.

On Saturday, the law enforcewho carried a sack walking along the subway platform at Tehran's Haram-e Motahhar Station.

An inspection of the sack yielded 1300 antique coins which they brought them to Tehran to sell, Fars reported.





previously happened in the region. "The representative will also conduct researches on flooding and its consequences on the World Heritage.'

"Large volumes of water do not make

Earlier in March, Mohammad-Hossein Arastouzadeh, the director of the world heritage site, announced that the ensemble is under threat of mineral salt and wastewaters that perpetually pass through.

These days, due to the increase in salt contents in the waters flowing into this [world] heritage complex, dandruff and salt deposits are seen in different parts of the structure." Inscribed on UNESCO World Heritage list

in 2009, the Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System may testify to the heritage and the synthesis of earlier Elamite and Mesopo-

The Shrines and Temples of Nikko form a single complex composed of one hundred three religious buildings within two Shinto shrines and one Buddhist temple located in an outstanding natural setting.



The UNESCO-inscribed property is located in Tochigi Prefecture, in the northern part of Japan's Kanto region. The religious buildings, many of which were constructed in the 17th century, are arranged on the mountain slopes so as to create different visual effects.

The first buildings were constructed on the slopes of the sacred Nikko mountains by a Buddhist monk in the 8th century. Today, they testify to a centuries-old tradition of conservation and restoration as well as the preservation of religious practices linked to a site considered to be sacred.

They are also closely associated with prominent chapters of Japanese history, especially those relating to the symbolic figure of the great Shogun, Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616).

The unusual character of the property is the result of a combination of very important long-standing values: the 50.8-hectare property provides evidence of a long tradition of worship, a very high level of artistic achievement, and a striking alliance between architecture and the surrounding natural setting, and it serves as a repository of national memories.

(Source: UNESCO)

according to official statistics and academic reports

Both the number of domestic and outbound tourists have seen a steady increase from 2008 to 2018, with the number of domestic tourists rocketing from merely 1.71 billion in 2008 to a stunning 5.54 billion in 2018, data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) show.

Tourists in China have become more active in spending their public holidays on traveling, according to a report from China Tourism Academy.

Four public holidays in 2018, namely the Spring Festival, Tomb-sweeping Day, May Day and Dragon Boat Festival, all saw a marked increase in the number of domestic tourists.

During the three-day Tomb-sweeping Day holiday that ended on April 7, the number of domestic tourists reached 112 million, a 10.9 increase year-on-vear.

Apart from sightseeing, more Chinese tourists now opt to experience the cultural essence of their destinations by visiting local museums.

Over the past three years, visitors to Chinese museums have been growing by about 100 million each year, Liu Yuzhu, head of the National Cultural Heritage Administration, told reporters earlier this year.

During the week-long Spring Festival Holiday in 2019, more than 40 percent of the 415 million domestic tourists visited museums, a report from the China Tourism Academy showed.

(Source: chinadaily.com)

Genting Dream cruise returns to Bintan, boosts local tourism

Luxury cruise liner Genting Dream returned to Bintan, Riau on Saturday, bringing hundreds of foreign tourists onto the exotic island.

Bintan Tourism and Culture Agency head Wan Rudy said he was enthusiastic about the return of the luxury cruise as the arrival of foreign tourists would boost the region's tourism.

We are proud that Bintan has once again been recognized as a worthy destination for foreign tourists arriving on the luxury cruise. [Their arrival] has fueled our spirit to keep working hard and improve our local tourism,' Wan said on Monday, as quoted by kompas.com.

Around 400 of the total 2,679 passengers disembarked the cruise ship to enjoy various tourist destinations on the island, according to the agency.

Those who disembarked mostly flocked to Lagoi Beach, including Bintan Lagoi Resort.

Wan said the vast majority of cruise passengers were from Singapore, with 2,180 tourists.

(Source: The Jakarta Post)

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Tender Guarantee					
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Scientists warn of danger from dengue fever in hotter, wetter climate in northern latitudes

Insect-borne diseases such as dengue fever, leishmaniasis and encephalitis are on the rise and are now threatening to spread into many areas of Europe, scientists have warned.

Outbreaks of these illnesses are increasing because of climate change and the expansion of international travel and trade, the European Congress of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases was told in Amsterdam on Saturday

Even previously unaffected areas in higher latitudes and altitudes, including some parts of northern Europe, are at risk of outbreaks unless action is taken to improve surveillance and data sharing, the researchers said.

"Climate change is not the only, or even the main, factor driving the increase in vector-borne diseases across Europe, but it is one of many factors alongside globalization, socioeconomic development, urbanization and widespread changes to land use which need to be addressed to limit the importation and spread," said the lead author Professor Jan Semenza, of the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control in Stockholm.

Vector-borne diseases

This point was backed by Giovanni Rezza, of the Istituto Superiore di Sanità in Rome. "Lessons from recent outbreaks of the West Nile virus in North America and the chikungunya virus in the Caribbean and Italy highlight the importance of assessing future vector-borne disease risks," he said.

Global warming has allowed mosquitoes, ticks and other disease-carrying insects to



proliferate, adapt to different seasons and invade new territories across Europe over the past decade, with accompanying outbreaks of dengue in France and Croatia, malaria in

Greece, West Nile fever in south-east Europe and chikungunya in Italy and France. Worryingly, the authors said, this might only be the tip of the iceberg. "Mediterranean

Global warming has allowed mosquitoes, ticks and other disease-carrying insects to proliferate, adapt to different seasons and invade new territories across Europe over the past decade, with accompanying outbreaks of dengue in France and Croatia, malaria in Greece, West Nile fever in south-east Europe and chikungunya in Italy and France.

Europe is now a part-time tropical region, where competent vectors like the tiger mosquito are already established," added Rezza. And in future, hotter and wetter weather could provide ideal conditions for the Asian tiger mosquito, which spreads the viruses that cause dengue and chikungunya, to breed and expand across large parts of Europe, including the south and east of the UK and central Europe

Tropical and subtropical regions Previously dengue transmission was largely confined to tropical and subtropical regions because freezing temperatures kill the mosquito's larvae and eggs, but longer hot seasons could enable the Asian tiger mosquito to survive and spread across much of Europe within decades, the researchers warned.

"Given the ongoing spread of invasive mosquitoes and other vectors across Europe, we must anticipate outbreaks and move to intervene early," added Semenza.

"Public health agencies need to improve surveillance, for example through early warning systems, and increased awareness of the potential risks among healthcare workers and the general public.

More people are reading and supporting our independent, investigative reporting than ever before. And unlike many news organizations, we have chosen an approach that allows us to keep our journalism accessible to all, regardless of where they live or what they can afford.

(Source: The Guardian)

Scientists explain how giant sea spiders may survive in warming oceans

INTERNATIONAL DAILY

TEHRANTIMES

Sea spiders are abundant in waters across the globe, and most are so small that you could hold one on the tip of your pinkie. But in the swirling waters around our planet's icy poles, these spiders are giants. If you held the largest of these creatures, its gangly legs would just dangle off the palm of your hand.

Antarctic sea spiders got so big because some 30 million years ago, the Southern Ocean got cooler. This trait, known as polar gigantism, is thought to be essential to why they and many other cold-dwelling invertebrates of unusual size managed to survive

Researchers wondered what allowed animals like these to reach such gigantic sizes. They also want to know what will happen as the waters they inhabit continue to get warmer, because it's thought that extremely cold water marine animals can only tolerate a tiny range in temperature, making them particularly vulnerable to global warming. In a study a team of scientists challenged giant sea spiders collect-

ed in Antarctic waters to exercise to exhaustion in a kind of aquatic crossfit class

Observing how many times they could make the spiders flip over before giving up in water with increasing temperatures and decreasing oxygen, they discovered that the key was in their swiss-cheese-like skin. As the spiders grow bigger, their skin gets holier, allowing them to fuel their larger bodies by absorbing the abundant oxygen packed into cold waters. It turns out this helps them get oxygen during hot workout sessions, too, suggesting they may find a way to survive as their habitats heat up.

"We thought the giant spiders are going to be the first to disappear from the Antarctic Ocean," said Caitlin Shoshido, a doctorate student at the University of Hawaii at Mnoa who led the study.

Sea spiders, a kind of marine arthropod called a pycnogonida, are bizarre. They have no lungs, no gills - no organs for breathing at all. They get oxygen by just sitting there, allowing it to pass through the pores of their shell-like skin, called the cuticle.

(Source: NYT)

Ethically fraught experiment has produced monkeys with added human brain genes

In a bid to learn more about the way the human brain develops, scientists in China have added a human brain gene to the genome of rhesus monkeys. It's called MC HP 1, or microcephalin, and it's involved in regulating the fetal growth of the brain.

The addition does seem to have made the monkeys smarter. The transgenic animals' brains took longer to develop - more like those of human children - and they also exhibited better memory skills, and faster reaction times, compared to their unmodified peers.

'This was the first attempt to understand the evolution of human cognition using a transgenic monkey model," geneticist Bing Su of the Kunming Institute of Zoology told Technology Review.

Transgenic organisms are nothing new. The first was published in 1974, when Staphylococcus aureus genes were spliced into Escherichia coli. The first transgenic monkey, inserted with jellyfish genes, was created in 2001.

Human genes have been added to monkeys to study diseases and conditions such as autism, and mice have been modified with human cognition genes, including altered microcephalin. But the researchers believe that this is the first time researchers have used transgenic monkeys to look into the genetic origins of the human brain.

It is, scientists say, an experiment with concerning ethical implications The team exposed the monkey embryos to a virus carrying human

microcephalin. This generated 11 transgenic rhesus monkeys carrying the human gene, only five of whom actually survived.

'Our findings demonstrated that transgenic nonhuman primates (excluding ape species) have the potential to provide important - and potentially unique - insights into basic questions of what actually makes humans unique, as well as into disorders and clinically relevant phenotypes," the researchers wrote in their paper.

(Source: extremetech.com)

Interplay of pollinators and pests influences plant evolution, study suggests



Fountains of plasma rain might explain one

Solar rain occurs when super-heated plasma rises up the sun's looping magnetic field lines, then falls back to the surface. The discovery of a mysterious new structure on the sun may explain where all the rain is coming from

Today's weather forecast on the sun calls for a high of 10,000 degrees Fahrenheit (5,500 degrees Celsius), constant supersonic wind, mysterious eruptions of giant lava-lamp-blobs and, oh yes, light rain. So, you know, pack an umbrella.

As bizarre as it sounds, rain on the sun is a relatively common occurrence.

Unlike rain on Earth, where liquid water evaporates, condenses into clouds, then falls back down in droplets after growing sufficiently heavy, solar rain results from the rapid heating and cooling of plasma (the

hot, charged gas that comprises the sun). Scientists expect to see fiery rings of during all observations provides compelling support for the conclusion that this is a ubiquitous phenomenon," the authors wrote in the study

The detection of these drizzly structures came as a surprise to NASA researcher Emily Mason, who was scouring the SDO footage for signs of rain in massive structures called helmet streamers - 1 million-mile-tall (1.6 million km) magnetic field loops named after a knight's pointy headgear.

These streamers are clearly visible leaping out of the sun's corona, or the outermost part of its atmosphere, during solar eclipses, and seemed as good a place as any to look for solar rain, the researchers wrote.

Mysterious structures

However, Mason couldn't find a trace of falling plasma in any SDO footage of the streamers. What she did see were nu-

Singapore and Australian scientists build a machine to see all possible futures



In the 2018 movie Infinity War, a scene featured Dr. Strange looking into 14 million possible futures to search for a single timeline where the heroes would be victorious. Perhaps he would have had an easier time with help from a quantum computer.

A team of researchers from Nanyang Technological University, Singapore (NTU Singapore) and Griffith University in Australia have constructed a prototype quantum device that can generate all possible futures in a simultaneous quantum superposition.

"When we think about the future, we are confronted by a vast array of possibilities," explains Assistant Professor Mile Gu of NTU Singapore, who led development of the quantum algorithm that underpins the prototype "These possibilities grow exponentially as we go deeper into the future.

their probability of occurrence.

The "functioning of this device is inspired by the Nobel Laureate Richard Feynman," says Dr. Jayne Thompson, a member of the Singapore team. "When Feynman started studying quantum physics, he realized that when a particle travels from point A to point B, it does not necessarily follow a single path. Instead, it simultaneously transverses all possible paths connecting the points. Our work extends this phenomenon and harnesses it for modelling statistical futures.

The machine has already demonstrated one application measuring how much our bias towards a specific choice in the present impacts the future. "Our approach is to synthesize a quantum superposition of all possible futures for each bias.' explains Farzad Ghafari, a member of the

plasma rain rise and fall along the sun's huge, looping magnetic field lines after the eruption of solar flares, which can heat the plasma at the sun's surface from a few thousand to nearly 2 million F (1.1 million C).

Days-long rain storms

Now, however, NASA scientists believe they've discovered a completely new structure on the sun that may create days-long rain storms, even without the intense heat of solar flares.

In a new study in the Astrophysical Journal Letters, the NASA team describes the structures as raining null-point topologies (RNPTs) - superbright, comparatively small magnetic loops that rise up to 30,000 miles (50,000 kilometers) above the sun's surface. While studying five months of solar observations taken by NASA's Solar Dynamics Observatory (SDO), the team detected three clearly visible RNPT structures, each of which blazed with plasma rain for days at a time.

The "ease with which these structures were identified and the frequency of rain

merous bright, low, mysterious structures that she and her team later identified as the RNTPs.

The relatively low altitude of the structures may be the most interesting aspect of the results, the researchers wrote. Reaching a maximum of 30,000 miles (50,000 km) over the sun's surface, the RNTPs were only about 2% as tall as the helmet streamers Mason and her team were looking at. That means that whatever process was causing the plasma to heat up and rise along the magnetic field lines was occurring in a much narrower region of the sun's atmosphere than previously thought.

That means the processes that drive these ubiquitous fountains could help explain one of the enduring mysteries of the sun - why is the sun's atmosphere nearly 300 times hotter than its surface?

"We still don't know exactly what's heating the corona, but we know it has to happen in this layer," Mason said in a statement

(Source: livescience.com)

For instance, even if we have only two possibilities to choose from each minute, in less than half an hour there are 14 million possible futures. In less than a day, the number exceeds the number of atoms in the universe." What he and his research group realized, however, was that a quantum computer can examine all possible futures by placing them in a quantum superposition - similar to Schrödinger's famous cat that is simultaneously alive and dead.

Photonic quantum devised

To realize this scheme, they joined forces with the experimental group led by Professor Geoff Pryde at Griffith University. Together, the team implemented a specially devised photonic quantum information processor in which the potential future outcomes of a decision process are represented by the locations of photons - quantum particles of light. They then demonstrated that the state of the quantum device was a superposition of multiple potential futures, weighted by

experimental team, "By interfering these superpositions with each other, we can completely avoid looking at each possible future individually. In fact, many current artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms learn by seeing how small changes in their behaviour can lead to different future outcomes, so our techniques may enable quantum enhanced AIs to learn the effect of their actions much more efficiently.'

The team notes while their present prototype simulates at most 16 futures simultaneously, the underlying quantum algorithm can in principle scale without bound. "This is what makes the field so exciting," says Pryde. "It is very much reminiscent of classical computers in the 1960s. Just as few could imagine the many uses of classical computers in the 1960s, we are still very much in the dark about what quantum computers can do. Each discovery of a new application provides further impetus for their technological development.'

(Source: eurekalert.org)

Brassica rapa plants pollinated by bumblebees evolve more attractive flowers. But this evolution is compromised if caterpillars attack the plant at the same time. With the bees pollinating them less effectively, the plants increasingly self-pollinate. In a greenhouse evolution experiment, scientists have shown just how much the effects of pollinators and pests influence each other.

Brassica rapa plants pollinated by bumblebees evolve more attractive flowers. But this evolution is compromised if caterpillars attack the plant at the same time. With the bees pollinating them less effectively, the plants increasingly self-pollinate. In a greenhouse evolution experiment, scientists at the University of Zurich have shown just how much the effects of pollinators and pests influence each other.

In nature, plants interact with a whole range of organisms, driving the evolution of their specific characteristics. While pollinators influence floral traits and reproduction. herbivorous insects enhance the plant's defense mechanisms. Now botanists at the University of Zurich have investigated the way these different interactions influence each other, and how rapidly plants adapt when the combination of selective agents with which they interact changes.



In a two-year greenhouse

experiment, Florian Schiestl, professor at UZH's Department of Systematic and Evolutionary Botany, and doctoral candidate Sergio Ramos have demonstrated a powerful interplay between the effects of pollinating insects and those of herbivores. For their experiment they used Brassica rapa, a plant closely related to oilseed rape, interacting with bumblebees and caterpillars as selective agents.

"These plants had adapted to the bees' preferences during the experiment," explains Sergio Ramos. By contrast, bee-pollinated plants with herbivory were less attractive, with higher concentrations of defensive toxic metabolites and less fragrant flowers that tended to be smaller. The "caterpillars compromise the evolution of attractive flowers, as plants assign more resources to defense,' says Ramos. (Source: sciencedaily.com)

NICICO aids \$15,579,710 to flood-hit regions

National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO) contributed \$15,579,710 to flood-stricken people in Iran, the Public Relations Dept. of the company reported.

NICICO stands by the Iranian people in difficult situation.

CEO of the National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO) Eng. Mohammad-Reza Baniasadirad announced the above statement and said, "in the early hours of devastating flood overshadowed almost some provinces in the country, NICICO rushed to help flood-hit people in the provinces of Golestan, Khuzestan, Lorestan and Ilam.

Totally, 215.580 billion rials worth of cash contribution was allocated by NICICO and three copper complexes of Shahr-e Babak, Sarcheshmeh and Songun to the flood-hit people of the country, he added.

Of total this amount, 157 billion rials will be deposited into the account of Iranian Disaster Management Organization in cooperation with the Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO), he added.



Moreover, about 58 billion rials of which was allocated to the flood-hit people within the framework of buying health, food,

clothing and machinery supplies and sent to the flood-hit areas in the provinces of Lorestan, Ilam, Golestan and Khuzestan.

Elsewhere in his remarks, CEO of the company added, "presently, a disaster taskforce has been set up in the provinces of Kerman and East Azarbaijan provinces in order to dispatch supplies to the flood-hit areas in the best form possible.'

So far, more than 6 tons of red meat and also 4 tons of quality rice have been dispatched to the flood-hit areas, he said, adding,



New study reveals the dangers of long commutes during pregnancy

When Flor Bacasegua was pregnant with her fourth child, she endured a 45-minute commute from her home in Mendota, California to a winery in Madera, where she worked overnight security.

The drive, the distance, and the hours were more strenuous than what she'd faced during her previous three pregnancies, cutting into her time for doctors' appointments. By the time she was five months along, she'd quit the job. "Sometimes I would have to reschedule appointments," Bacasegua, 31, says. "It didn't let me enjoy my pregnancy."

Her son was born—healthy—in 2015. But a new study shows just how risky the added stress of a commute like Bacasegua's can be for pregnant women.

In a new study published earlier this year, researchers at Lehigh University and the University of Wisconsin-Madison found a link between the distance a woman travels to work every day while pregnant and the health outcomes for her child, including low birth weight, the likelihood of a C-section, and intrauterine growth restriction, or when a baby doesn't reach a normal size as measured throughout the pregnancy. While previous research has examined how the distance between a woman's home and her doctor's office affects the health of her child, this is the first to home in on the daily travel of pregnant women's commutes.

For pregnant workers who already travel at least 50 miles to work—the Census definition of a long-distance commute increasing the distance by 10 miles raises the likelihood of low birth weight and intrauterine growth restriction by 0.9 and 0.6 percentage points, respectively. Commuting these kinds of distances every day also increases the likelihood that those carrying a male fetus will deliver via cesarean section (male fetuses have been shown to be more sensitive during pregnancy.)

The authors did not find a link between commuting and preterm births once they controlled for prenatal visits. But those appointments are one factor that is dramatically affected by commuting, as Bacasegua found. Difficulties making it to prenatal appointments, along with maternal stress, are the two reasons authors Yang Wang and Muzhe Yang identified behind the link between long commutes and adverse infant health outcomes.

The average woman in the study traveled 64 miles, or about 78 minutes by car, to work. Women in the sample had an average of 11 prenatal doctors' visits—on the low end of the usual 10-15 range. (Source: Fortune)

RECIPE OF THE WEEK Strawberry angel food dessert

" Angel food pieces are topped with sweetened cream cheese, whipped topping and strawberries in glaze in this chilled, layered dessert."

Ingredients



1 (10 inch) angel food cake 2 (8 ounce) packages cream cheese, softened 1 cup white sugar 1 (8 ounce) container frozen whipped topping, thawed 1 quart fresh strawberries, sliced 1 (18 ounce) jar strawberry glaze Directions:

Crumble the cake into a 9x13 inch dish. Beat the cream cheese and

sugar in a medium bowl until light and fluffy. Fold in whipped topping. Mash the cake down with your hands and spread the cream cheese mixture over the cake.

In a bowl, combine strawberries and glaze until strawberries are evenly coated. Spread over cream cheese layer. Chill until serving.

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Testing an AIDS vaccine

February 11, 1999

Iran, Indonesia call for boosting ties in women's and family affairs

WOMEN TEHRAN – The Indonesian Ministry of Women Empowerment hosted the first meeting for implementing the memorandum of understanding signed by Iran and Indonesia in women's and family affairs.

Zahra Javaherian, a senior advisor to President Hassan Rouhani, attended the meeting which was held at the Indonesian city of Semarang, IRNA reported.

During the five-day meeting, which started on April 8, the two sides exchanged information and experiences on women's empowerment and developing women's activities in economic affairs.

Officials from the Interior Ministry, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Red Crescent Society participated in the meeting.

Increasing life expectancy in women from the age of 56 to 75, decreasing maternal mortality rate, women's empowerment in economy and removing gender inequalities in women's affairs are among the measures done by the Islamic Republic of Iran during the last 40 years, elaborated Javaherian.



An amount of \$46 million for women's insurance and developing women's employment share of management positions is also allocated, she added.

The MOU was signed by Iranian Vice President for Women's and Family Affairs, Masoumeh Ebtekar, and Indonesian Minister of Women's Empowerment and Children Protection, Yohana Susana Yembise, in Iran, in July 2018.

The MOU aims at empowering women, supporting children and promoting the resilience of family based on equality, respect and mutual benefit.

The MOU includes 9 clauses with the purpose of developing women's role in policymaking and supporting women and children against violence.

It also follows the aim of increasing women's role in business and technology, especially information technology, promoting women's economic empowerment in the family and exchange of experiences about women and children. The MOU is valid for two years and can be extended for the same period.

Women must be at 'center of peacekeeping decision-making', UN chief tells Security Council

Women's rights, voices and participation must be at "the center of peacekeeping decision-making", United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres told the Security Council on Thursday, describing them as "central to sustainable solutions" to challenges facing the Organization worldwide.

Through its landmark resolution 1325 on women and peace and security, the council reaffirmed the participation and involvement of women, which the UN chief hailed as "a key element in the maintenance of international peace and security". He also noted the UN's "essential system-wide effort" to enhance women's representation at all levels and in all arenas, through his Strategy on Gender Parity.

"This is not just a question of numbers, but also of our effectiveness in fulfilling our mandates", he stated, citing evidence that more women peacekeepers lead to more credible protection responses that meet the needs of all.

In patrol units women can better access intelligence to provide a holistic view of security challenges, and at checkpoints they promote a less confrontational atmosphere, he said.

Within troop contingents they lower incidences of sexual exploitation and abuse; yield greater reporting of sexual and gender-based violence; and can access local women's networks, leading to more inclusive peace processes.

Step towards parity'

The secretary-general thanked the more than 150 member states who have signed on to his Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative, which calls for women's participation in every stage of peace operations, and integrates a gender perspective into all analysis, planning, implementation and reporting.

And he was grateful to the states who, at last week's ministerial on peacekeeping, launched the Elsie Initiative to break down barriers to increasing women's participation in peace operations.

In support of the UN's commitments in these areas, Mr. Guterres noted a range of actions, including the Gender-Responsive Peacekeeping Operations Policy, which "commits us to promoting leadership and accountability both for gender equality and for the women, peace and security agenda".

Flagging that since December 2015, the number of women in uniform has increased by only around one percent, he

Women-only bus: Not a solution to harassment but a means of relief



Zambian female peacekeepers provide medical support to the local population in Birao, Central African Republic.

spelled out that "this is clearly not enough".

"This year", he informed the chamber, "we rolled out the Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy", which, among other things, targets by 2028 a range of 15 to 35 percent of women's representation, including military, police and justice and corrections personnel.

While acknowledging that it "has been more challenging", Mr. Guterres vowed "to press ahead", adding that "keep on track, we need assistance from you, the member states".

He asked for a greater focus on women in battalions and formed police units and for the sustained recruitment and deployment of women within national services.

Noting that for the first time in UN history the senior leadership is close to achieving gender parity, Mr. Guterres reiterated his commitment to sustaining that progress: "We need to bring the same spirit to our peace operations", he stressed. "This is crucial for our effectiveness, credibility and reputation".

'Pushing gender equality'

The first female force commander and current Head of the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) mission, Major General Kristin Lund told the council that the "momentum of pushing gender equality must be kept".

As force commander of the UN mission in Cyprus, she teamed up with Lisa Buttenheim, the special representative at the time. "For once I did not need to convince my boss that gender was important" she said. "Both of us had gender equality in our spine".

The major general enumerated some examples of her work in increasing the number of women, helping them in missions and reaching out to local communities.

Noting many reasons why the armed forces have a difficulty keeping women in the ranks, she outlined frequent obstacles thrown up by male culture in military settings. Troops at the Peace Mission Training Center in the Zam-

bian capital, Lusaka, undergoing training provided courtesy of the United States ahead of their deployment to CAR.

She also mandated that the all-male teams in military skills competitions had to have females.

"Gender is on the top of my agenda", she said, adding that she initiated a female military network, engaged women to become more visible and increased the number of female observers. Troop and police contributing countries "must do more" she said.

"We, out in the field, need to be able to reach out to the whole society. Only you can make that happen", the Force Commander concluded.

Diversity is a strength

Chairing the meeting, German Federal Minister of Defense, Ursula von der Leyen said: "Women are no better peacekeepers than men, but they are different. And this diversity is a strength".

Pointing out that Resolution 1325 has been in effect for almost 20 years, she maintained that it is "still far from full, effective and meaningful participation of women in peace operations".

To change that, Ms. von der Leyen suggested, among other things, to have successful female mentors to share their stories to younger women; have more women in national forces for deployment to international peacekeeping missions; and assess national barriers that keeps more women from joining peace operations.

"The peacekeeper's blue helmet symbolizes protection and security", she said. "Let us make this helmet be worn by more women. For the sake of peace".

(Ŝource: UN News Center)



Thailand announced the first trial of an AIDS vaccine in the developing world. Two-and a-half thousand Thai drug users will take part in the four-year scheme. We heard from BBC Correspondent Claire Doole and from Sam Avrett, Executive Director of the U.S. Aids Vaccine Advocacy Coalition.

The Thai project to test two-and a-half thousand volunteers **over the next four years** with an AIDS vaccine is an important step towards developing an effective means of fighting AIDS. It's the first **large-scale** human testing programme in the developing world, where the majority of HIV cases occur. [The Californian Company, VaxGen, which began a large-scale trial in the United States last June, is funding the nine-million dollar Thai **scheme**. The first results of both trials will be known **in the next two to three years**.

I think in the developing world we need treatments that are more **affordable** and more **accessible**, and we need an HIV **vaccine** that can have the same impact on the HIV epidemic as vaccines have had on polio, smallpox and other diseases.

Costs, **ethical concerns** and lack of scientific results have **stymied** progress worldwide. Only eleven percent of the world aid budget is spent on vaccine research. Campaigners hope the large-scale human trials will encourage greater investment and lead to the development of a safe and effective vaccine against HIV early in the next decade.

Words

over the next four years: over this period of time - during the next four years (see <in the next two to three years' below) **large-scale:** in this context 'large-scale' means involving a lot of people

in the next two to three years: before the end of this period of time **scheme:** here it means a formal, official plan on a large scale **affordable:** if something is affordable it means that you have enough money to be able to pay for it

accessible: if something is accessible to people, they are able to use it easily

vaccine: a substance containing a harmless form of the germs that cause a disease. The vaccine is given to people to prevent them getting the disease

ethical: influenced by a set of moral beliefs about right and wrong **concerns:** a concern is something that is important to you, and it can also imply worry about a thing or situation **stymied:** this is an informal word. If something stymies you, it

makes it difficult or impossible for you to take action

It was the day the first nor'wester of the season hit the city. Jhuma was in Farmgate, desperately looking for any kind of transport to return home after work. Waiting for over half an hour, a bus pulled up in front of her. She boarded the bus, amazed to find that it was a women-only bus.

Dolonchapa women-only bus service was launched in June last year by Rangs Group and Volvo Eicher Commercial Vehicles.

The service is providing a sense of relief to women on two routes -- from ECB Chattar to Azimpur and from Mirpur 12 to Motijheel.

Four Dolonchapa buses are carrying passengers on the routes at Tk 5-25. A regular passenger of Dolonchapa, Roni, on her way back home last week, said it was comfortable travelling in all-women buses. "I don't have to constantly be on my guard, worrying about unwanted grabbing and harassment that women often face in crowded local buses."

A recent Brac study reveals that 94 percent of sexual harassment happens in public transports.

Roni was seemingly relaxed and listening to music during her commute. Other passengers seemed at ease as well -- some were talking on the phone, some browsing Facebook, while others trying to take a nap.

More than reaffirming testimonials, their attitude and actions were validating that this kind of service should be increased so that more women can safely travel in the capital.

The helper, Shanta Begum, was collecting bus fare while also having casual chitchats with passengers.

Shanta Begum, who started assisting the driver four months ago, said she liked the work because she did not feel intimidated -- dealing with women.

There is a rush of passengers during peak hours in the morning and evening. "But there is no fear of harassment by men," she said.

Each Dolonchapa bus has 36 seats with nine reserved for physically challenged and pregnant women. It is also equipped with four CCTV cameras, a fire extinguisher and a first-aid box.

"Women are responding to this service very positively and they demand more buses on different routes," said Sohana Rouf Chowdhury, managing director of Rangs Motors.

Moreover, this is the first public bus service with a mobile app that can help commuters avail emergency security, fire and ambulance services. They can also find out real-time location of a bus with the help of a vehicle tracking system. When 54 percent of Dhaka's population are women and increasingly more of them are joining the workforce, it is imperative that the government take some measures to facilitate their safe journey.

Sohana, however, said, "Women-only bus is not the solution to rampant sexual harassment of women in public transports."

(Source: The Daily Star)

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Europe urged to reject U.S. Middle East plan if it is unfair to Palestinians

Europe, it said, should reject any lan that does not create a Palestinian state alongside Israel with Jerusalem as the capital for both countries.

"Unfortunately, the current U.S. administration has departed from longstanding U.S. policy," it said, criticising Donald Trump's 2017 recognitionof "only one side's claims to Jerusalem"

Washington had also "demonstrated a disturbing indifference to Israeli settlement expansion" in the occupied West Bank and cut hundreds of millions of dollars in aid to Palestinians, a move the letter said was "gambling with the security and stability of various countries located at Europe's doorstep"

Since taking office, and amid praise from Israel's government, Trump has taken measures seen as both punishing to Palestinians and which also stifle the viability of a Palestinian state.

The U.S. president has promised to unveil a still-secret "ultimate deal" for Israelis and Palestinians, although the Palestinian leadership preemptively rejected it as biased, and Israel's leader, Benjamin Netanyahu, categorically ruled out a Palestinian state.

The U.S. team tasked with drafting the plan includes Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, and the U..S ambassador to Israel, David Friedman, a bankruptcy lawyer who has been vocal in his support for Jewish settlements in the Palestinian territories.

Friedman told the pro-Israel lobby group the American Israel Public Affairs Committee in Washington last month that Trump was "Israel's greatest ally ever to reside in the White House" and now was the time to push through a plan as his administration



understood Israel should have permanent military control over the Palestinian territories

On Tuesday, Netanyahu won the Israeli election and is expected to secure a fifth term in office by forging a coalition government from rightwing and pro-settler parties.

A few days before the polls, the prime minister said that, if he won, he planned to annex settlements in the occupied West Bank, a move Palestinians see as the end of their hopes for a state as there would be no unbroken land on which to build it.

Asked in an interview with the domestic Israel National News website if his "friends" in the White House knew about the plan, Netanyahu replied: "Sure." He said: "Three things I said to them: first, I'm not tearing any Jew out [of the West Bank]; any community. There aren't going to be any settlers or settlements that are going to be torn. The second point is we're not going to divide Jerusalem. The third point is, we're going to continue controlling the entire territory west of the Jordan [River]," he said in reference to the occupied West Bank.

Queried about Netanyahu's annexation plans, Trump's secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, said they would not damage the undisclosed peace plan, hinting the US proposal did not envision Palestinian statehood.

"I think that the vision that we'll lay out is going to represent a significant change from the model that's been used," said Pompeo, who has previously stated he believes, as a Christian, it was possible God made Trump president to save the Jewish people.

The letter by former European officials said Europe must "be vigilant and act strategically" when Trump presented the new plan. It was sent on Sunday to Federica Mogherini, the EU's high representative for foreign affairs, and serving European foreign ministers.

Its signatories included Jean Marc Ayrault, Carl Bildt, W?odzimierz Cimoszewicz, Massimo D'Alema, Guy Verhofstadt, and Dacian Ciolo?, former prime ministers of France, Sweden, Poland, Italy, Belgium and Romania respectively.

Former Nato secretary generals Willy Claes and Javier Solana, and the former Irish president Mary Robinson also signed. Two former UK foreign secretaries, David Miliband and Jack Straw, also added their names

'[We] are convinced that a plan that reduces Palestinian statehood to an entity devoid of sovereignty, territorial contiguity and economic viability would severely compound the failure of previous peacemaking efforts, accelerate the demise of the two-state option and fatally damage the cause of a durable peace for Palestinians and Israelis alike." it said.

If that was not possible, the letter said, "Europe must pursue its own course of action"

Among the 37 signatories are former French Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault, former British foreign secretaries David Miliband and Jack Straw, former German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel, former EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana and other leaders.

U.S. to use all economic, political tools to hold **Maduro accountable:** Pompeo

INTERNATIONALDAILY

TEHRAN — The United States will use all economic and political tools at its disposal to hold Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro accountable for his country's crisis and will make clear to Cuba and Russia they will pay a price for supporting him, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said.

Pompeo made the comments in the Colombian border city of Cucuta, the final stop of a three-day trip to Chile, Paraguay and Peru, a clutch of fast-growing countries in a region where Washington's concerns are focused on the Venezuelan crisis and China's growing presence, Reuters reported.

Maduro blames U.S. sanctions for the country's economic problems and dismisses opposition leader Juan Guaido - who in January invoked the constitution to assume an interim presidency, arguing the socialist leader's 2018 re-election was illegitimate as a U.S. puppet.

More than 3 million Venezuelans have fled hyperinflation, food and medicine shortages and political crisis.

"The United States will continue to utilize every economic and political means at our disposal to help the Venezuelan people," Pompeo said after visiting with migrants at a Cucuta shelter and touring border bridges and a warehouse storing humanitarian aid.

"Using sanctions, visa revocations and other means, we pledge to hold the regime and those propping it up accountable for their corruption and their repression of democracy.

Cucuta receives a significant portion of Venezuelan migrants arriving in Colombia, many of whom come with only what they can carry

Although most Western nations, including the United States, have recognized Guaido as interim head of state, Russia, China and Cuba have stood by Maduro.

"You watch the political and diplomatic noose tighten around Maduro's neck," Pompeo told reporters accompanying him on the trip before taking off for the United States.

"Cubans must understand too that there will be cost associated with continued support of Nicolas Maduro," he said. "And we're going to have that same conversation with the Russians as well.'

Washington has imposed a raft of sanctions against Maduro's government in an attempt to dislodge him from power, but he retains the backing of the country's military. On Friday, the U.S. Treasury Department added four firms and nine ships to its blacklist, some of which it said carried oil to Cuba.

Donald Trump's national security adviser, John Bolton, said on Friday he would deliver a speech in Miami to Cuban exiles on Wednesday about actions the White House is taking on Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua, countries he has called a "troika of tyranny."

While no final decision has been made on punitive measures Bolton is expected to announce, the Trump administration has been considering a range of options, including new targeted sanctions and further tightening of business restrictions on the Communist-ruled island that had been eased by former President Barack Obama, according to two people familiar with the matter. Critics have warned that heavy sanctions on Venezuela could

hurt ordinary Venezuelans. Pompeourged Maduro to leave his post and Venezuela so the

country can return to normalcy. "I hope that you will care now, when you see the horror, when you see the tragedy, to change your ways and to leave your coun-

try," Pompeo said. During his trip, Pompeo echoed previous U.S. criticism of China's growing presence in Latin America, warning of "predatory' lending practices and "malign or nefarious" actions.

China, whose booming economy over the past two decades has driven up demand for raw materials, is already the top trade partner for nations from tiny Uruguay to Brazil, Latin America's largest economy and the world's top soybean exporter.

Sudan protesters move to protect Khartoum sit-in

TEHRAN — Sudanese protesters moved to block an attempt on Monday to break up a sit-in outside the Defense Ministry, where demonstrators have been pushing for a quick transition to civilian rule after President Omar al-Bashir was ousted, a Reuters witness said. Troops had gathered on three sides of the sit-in and tractors were preparing to remove stone and metal barriers, but protesters joined hands and formed rings around the sit-in area to prevent them.

European politicians protest outside Assange's London jail

Ecuador's president says Assange tried to use its embassy to spy

TEHRAN - German and Spanish lawmakers protested against Julian Assange's detention Monday, gathering outside a London prison to urge Britain and the EU to prevent his extradition to the United States, AFP reported.

Two far-left German MPs, Heike Hansel and Sevim Dagdelen of Die Linke, and a Spanish Green member of the European Parliament, Ana Miranda, had been due to meet their "friend" Assange in London's Ecuadoran embassy later Monday.

Instead, following his expulsion and arrest last week, they protested outside the top-security Belmarsh prison in southeast London where he is being held, carrying placards demanding his release.

"We are faced with a humanitarian imperative now that Assange is in U.K. custody and a U.S. extradition request is out for him, after high ranking officials of the U.S. – including President Donald Trump – have threatened the publisher with death," said Miranda.

The WikiLeaks founder is in custody awaiting sentencing for breaching his British bail conditions in 2012 by seeking refuge in Ecuador's London embassy to avoid extradition to Sweden.

He was arrested at the embassy on Thursday after Ecuador revoked his asylum, and is now also fighting a U.S. extradition warrant relating to the release by WikiLeaks of a huge cache of official documents.

The U.S. indictment charges Assange with "conspiracy" for working with former U.S. Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning to crack a password stored on Department of Defense computers in March 2010.

Extradition to the United States would set "a dangerous precedent" for journalists worldwide, said Miranda, adding: "this threatens to criminalize journalism globally."

Dagdelen urged Britain and the EU to block any extradition request.

"We call on the British government not to extradite Julian Assange to the USA.

"The European Union must take action to protect a politically-persecuted publisher and journalist," said the German politician, calling on Spain and her home country to grant Assange asylum.

The three women were trying to see Assange in prison, but their application was "still pending."

"I'm a friend of Julian Assange. He's a son, a father, a brother and a good friend," said Dagdelen.

"His whole life he sacrificed for the truth."

They also accused the Ecuadoran government of engaging in a disinformation and slander campaign against Assange" after a series of reports emerged detailing his increasingly dysfunctional relationship with embassy staff.

Belmarsh has frequently been used in high-profile na-



tional security cases, including that of former Finsbury Park Mosque hate preacher Abu Hamza, who now resides in a U.S. "supermax" prison following extradition.

Radical preacher Anjem Choudary, who was convicted in 2016 of encouraging support for Daesh (ISIS), spent

some of his sentence there. Belmarsh earned the moniker "the U.K.'s Guantanamo Bay" in the period following the 9/11 attacks after it was used to detain a number of people under

anti-terror laws.

U.S.-Russia chill stirs worry about stumbling into conflict

TEHRAN — It has the makings of a together control more than 90 percent relationships with a country that has not response to NATO's 70th anniversary

TEHRANTIMES

new Cold War, or worse. The deep chill in U.S.-Russian relations is stirring concern in some quarters that Washington and Moscow are in danger of stumbling into an armed confrontation that, by mistake or miscalculation. could lead to nuclear war.

American and European analysts and current and former U.S. military officers say the nuclear superpowers need to talk more. A foundational arms control agreement is being abandoned and the last major limitation on strategic nuclear weapons could go away in less than two years. Unlike during the Cold War, when generations lived under threat of a nuclear Armageddon, the two militaries are barely on speaking terms, AP reported on Monday.

"During the Cold War, we understood each other's signals. We talked," says the top NATO commander in Europe, U.S. Army Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti, who is about to retire. "I'm concerned that we don't know them as well today.'

Scaparrotti, in his role as Supreme Allied Commander Europe, has met only twice with Gen. Valery Gerasimov, the chief of the Russian general staff, but has spoken to him by phone a number of other times.

"I personally think communication is a very important part of deterrence," Scaparrotti said, referring to the idea that adversaries who know each other's capabilities and intentions are less likely to fall into conflict. "So, I think we should have more communication with Russia. It would ensure that we understand each other and why we are doing what we're doing." He added: "It doesn't have to be a lot.

The United States and Russia, which

of the world's nuclear weapons, say that in August they will leave the 1987 treaty that banned an entire class of nuclear weapons. And there appears to be little prospect of extending the 2010 New Start treaty that limits each side's strategic nuclear weapons.

After a period of post-Cold War cooperation on nuclear security and other defense issues, the relationship between Washington and Moscow took a nosedive, particularly after Russian forces entered the former Soviet republic of Georgia in 2008. Tensions spiked with Russia's annexation of the Crimea in 2014 and its military intervention in eastern Ukraine. In response, Congress in 2016 severely limited military cooperation with Russia

The law prohibits "military-to-military cooperation" until the secretary of defense certifies that Russia "has ceased its occupation of Ukrainian territory" and "aggressive activities." The law was amended last year to state that it does not limit military talks aimed at "reducing the risk of conflict.'

Relations frayed even further amid U.S. allegations that Russia interfered in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, although President Donald Trump has doubted Russian complicity in what U.S. intelligence agencies assert was an effort by Moscow to boost Trump's chances of winning the White House. After a Helsinki summit with Putin in July. Trump publicly accepted the Kremlin leader's denial of interference.

Marine Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said in an interview Friday that Russian behavior is to blame for the strained relationship.

"It's very difficult for us to have normal

behaved normally over the last few years,' Dunford said. "There are major issues that affect our bilateral relationship that have to be addressed, to include where Russia has violated international laws, norms and standards.

Dunford said he speaks regularly with Gerasimov, his Russian counterpart, and the two sides talk on other evels.

"I'm satisfied right now with our military-to-military communication to maintain a degree of transparency that mitigates the risk of miscalculation," he said. "I think we have a framework within to manage a crisis, should one occur, at the senior military-to-military level."

James Stavridis, a retired Navy admiral who was the top NATO commander in Europe from 2009 to 2013, says the West must confront Russia where necessary, including on its interventions in Ukraine and Syria. But he believes there is room for cooperation on many fronts, including the Arctic and arms control.

'We are in danger of stumbling backward into a Cold War that is to no one's advantage," he said in an email exchange. "Without steady, political-level engagement between the defense establishments, the risk of a true new Cold War rises steadily.'

No one is predicting a deliberate Russian act of war in Europe, but the decline in regular talks is a worry to many.

Moscow says it is ready to talk.

"Russia remains open for interaction aimed at de-escalating tension, restoring mutual trust, preventing any misinterpretations of one another's intentions, and reducing the risk of dangerous incidents," the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement last week in celebration.

Sam Nunn, who served in the Senate as a Democrat from Georgia from 1972 to 1997, argues that dialogue with Russia is too important to set aside, even if it carries domestic political risk. "You can't call time out," he said in an interview. 'The nuclear issues go on, and they're getting more dangerous.'

Nunn co-wrote an opinion piece with former Secretary of State George Shultz and former Defense Secretary William Perry arguing that the U.S. and its allies and Russia are caught in a "policy paralysis" that could lead to a military confrontation and potentially the first use of nuclear weapons since the U.S. bombed Japan in August 1945.

"A bold policy shift is needed." they wrote in the Wall Street Journal Thursday, "to support a strategic re-engagement with Russia and walk back from this perilous precipice. Otherwise, our nations may soon be entrenched in a nuclear standoff more precarious, disorienting and economically costly than the Cold War.'

A group of U.S., Canadian, European and Russian security experts and former officials in February issued a call for talks with Russia on crisis management. "The risks of mutual misunderstanding and unintended signals that stem from an absence of dialogue relating to crisis management ... are real," the Euro-Atlantic Security Leadership Group said in a statement.

It said this could lead to conventional war with Russia or, in a worst case scenario, "the potential for nuclear threats, or even nuclear use, where millions could be killed in minutes.³

The protesters, numbering about 5,000 with more arriving, chanted "Freedom, freedom" and "Revolution, revolution", and appealed to the army to protect them.

Some drummed and waved national flags as they mingled in the street, while others took shelter from the sun under parasols and makeshift tents.

Earlier, Sudan's main protest group, the Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA), issued an urgent call for people to join the sit-in and foil any attempt to disperse it.

'We hope that everyone will head immediately to the areas of the sit-in to protect your revolution and your accomplishments,' the SPA said.

It said there were continuing attempts to disband the sit-in.

The sit-in outside the compound, which also includes the intelligence headquarters and the presidential residence, began on April 6, after more than three months of protests triggered by a deepening economic crisis.

On Thursday, Sudan's army announced that it had removed and detained Bashir after three decades in power and was setting up a transitional military council to run the country

Since then the head of the military council and of Sudan's powerful National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) have both been replaced, as protesters have continued to call for change.

The SPA has demanded the immediate handover of power to a civilian transitional government as well as the prosecution of former officials.

On Monday the military council said it was restructuring the joint forces command, appointing a new chief of staff for the army and a deputy.

Britain's ambassador to Sudan, Irfan Siddiq, said he had met the deputy head of the transitional military council, Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, and had "asked for clarity on whereabouts of former President Bashir and other senior former regime figures".

When the military announced Bashir's ousting, they said he had been arrested and was being kept at a "safe place". Sudanese sources told Reuters that Bashir was at a presidential residence under "heavy guard".

Bayern keeper Neuer sidelined with calf muscle injury

Bayern Munich goalkeeper Manuel Neuer will be out for an un-specified period of time after tearing calf muscle fibre during their 4-1 victory over Fortuna Duesseldorf, the German champions said on Monday.

INTERNATIONAL DAILY TEHRANTIMES

Bayern did not say how long Neuer would be sidelined. Such injuries usually take several weeks to heal, meaning he

will miss at least some if not all of their last five league games as they battle with Borussia Dortmund for the title. Defender Mats Hummels pulled a muscle in the same game

but he is only expected to be out for a few days, Bayern said. The Bavarians, hunting a record-extending seventh consec-

utive league title, are on 67 points, one ahead of rivals Borussia Dortmund.

(Source: Reuters)

Sources: Lakers to meet with **76ers' Williams**

The Los Angeles Lakers' senior management has plans to travel east to meet with Philadelphia 76ers assistant Monty Williams between Games 2 and 3 of the Sixers' playoff series, league sources told ESPN

General manager Rob Pelinka is spearheading the Lakers' coaching search, in which Williams and former Cleveland Cavaliers coach Ty Lue are central candidates, league sources said.

The Lakers will interview Lue and Miami Heat assistant coach Juwan Howard this week, too, sources told ESPN's Ramona Shelburne. The Lakers received permission to interview Howard, sources told Shelburne.

Howard, who will also meet with Cleveland for its head-coaching opening, was a college teammate of Pelinka at the University of Michigan. After Game 2 on Monday night, the Sixers-Nets series has off days on Tuesday and Wednesday before resuming with Game 3 in Brooklyn on Thursday.

Williams returned to coaching this season as Brett Brown's top assistant. He spent the previous two years in the San Antonio Spurs' front office after the death of his wife, Ingrid, in early 2016.

Williams left the Oklahoma City Thunder as associate head coach in the aftermath of his wife's death. He and his children relocated to San Antonio, where Williams had extended family. Before his time with the Thunder, Williams coached the New

Orleans Pelicansfor five seasons. He reached the playoffs in his first season (2010-11) and his last (2014-15).

He won a gold medal as part of Mike Krzyzewski's USA Basketball coaching staff at the Rio Olympic Games in 2016. (Source: ESPN)

Mercedes' double-stack pitstop had Bottas "very concerned"

Valtteri Bottas admits he had some concerns about being told to pit on the same lap as Mercedes teammate Lewis Hamilton during the Chinese Grand Prix.

Mercedes opted to give both drivers a second pitstop on lap 36 after Max Verstappen and Sebastian Vettel had pitted over the preceding two laps.

The Brackley team had to respond, knowing that Bottas was more vulnerable to being jumped, and that pitting him first might have unfairly disadvantaged race leader Hamilton. The decision was thus taken to double-stack them.

Bottas realised that pitting both cars on the same lap would ensure that there would be no change in the order over the rest of the race, and he was also worried that he might lose time waiting behind his teammate.

However, Mercedes pulled off an impressive double stop, with the drivers entering the pitlane just five seconds apart, while Tiger Woods completed one of sport's great est comebacks to end an 11-year major title drought at the Masters on Sunday by claiming a fifth Green Jacket.

A gritty two-under 70 clinched a oneshot victory over Dustin Johnson, Brooks Koepka and Xander Schauffele and earned the $\bar{4}3$ -year-old a 15th major title that many thought would never come and instantly sparked talk of Woods making a run at Jack Nicklaus's record of 18 majors.

Not since the 2008 U.S. Open had Woods hoisted a major trophy and the last of his

four Augusta titles came in 2005. But after a beaming Woods slipped on his fifth Green Jacket, he will be aware that Sunday's win has brought him tantalisingly close to another Nicklaus record - that of six Augusta titles. The victory also marked the first time Woods had reached the winner's circle at major without leading after 54 holes and broke Gary Player's record (13 years) for the longest gap between Masters wins.

It also gave him 81 PGA Tour titles, one away from the career record held by Sam Snead.

Woods's girlfriend Erica Herman, mother Kultida and two children Sam and Charlie watched while a massive gallery roared as he marched up to the 18th green to put the finishing touches on a milestone victory.

When his final tap in bogey putt disappeared into the cup, Woods delivered one of his trademark fist pumps and then raised both arms in the air while screaming in ab-



Woods wins Masters to claim first

solute delight as the crowd chanted, "Tiger, Tiger, Tiger"

He then quickly spotted his family and raced over to hug his children before making his way to the scorers room while being congratulated by his fellow golfers who lined the way

FULL CIRCLE

"To have my kids there – it's come full circle. My dad was here in 97 (when he won his first Masters) and now I'm the dad with two kids there.

Juve's old guard bidding to finish job against Ajax kids



Cristiano Ronaldo will spearhead Juventus' old guard as they look to finish the job on Tuesday against Ajax's impressive young guns in a quarter-final clash between two sides desperate to end years of Champions League heartbreak.

Juventus have the edge on away goals thanks to Ronaldo's 125th Champions League goal in a 1-1 draw in Amsterdam, but Ajax's David Neres ensured the teams will start on a knife-edge in Turin in a repeat of the 1973 and 1996 finals.

Juventus have put their bid to wrap up an eighth consecutive Serie A title on the back burner as they focus on their European ambitions. Massimiliano Allegri lined out with a young squad against lo Saturday and the champions fell to a 2-1 defeat when a point would have sufficed for another Scudetto. "The Scudetto will come sooner or later," said Allegri, whose side hold a 17-point lead on second-placed Napoli with six games left. "If we had put all our starters in, it would have been easier to win it, but there is the goal to obtain on Tuesday.

Juventus have won the Champions League twice, most recently in 1996 when they beat Ajax in the final.

Four-time winners Ajax won their third consecutive title in 1973 at the expense of Juventus, last lifting the trophy in 1995.

Allegri said he was prepared for "a difficult match against a very impressive team". Ronaldo was rested at the weekend along with regulars Leonardo Bonucci, Blaise Matuidi, Alex Sandro, Mario Mandzukic and Miralem Pjanic.

Teenager Moise Kean's fine form continued with the 19-year-old scoring his sixth

goal in as many games. Captain Giorgio Chiellini, however, re-ains a doubt with the 34-year-old defender

Woods. "A truly Great Champion!"

Nicklaus, 23-times tennis grand slam winner Serena Williams, Super Bowl champion Tom Brady also applauded the victory on Twitter while swimmer Michael Phelps, the winner of a record 23 Olympic gold medals, was at Augusta National to cheer Woods on.

Written off as too old and too beaten up from four back surgeries and multiple knee operations, Woods underwent a back fusion procedure in 2017 and slowly returned to form.

He ended last season by winning the Tour Championship and showed signs of a breakthrough at the majors by being a title contender at last year's British Open, where he led in the final round, and PGA Championship, where he finished runner-up.

All those moments built to Sunday, when Woods was once again his old familiar dominating self. "I had serious doubts after what transpired a couple years ago," said Woods. "I could barely walk. I couldn't sit. Couldn't lay down. I really couldn't do much of anything.

"Luckily I had the procedure on my back, which gave me a chance at having a normal life. "To have the opportunity to come back like this it is probably one of the biggest wins I've ever had for sure because of it."

 $\ \ \, \text{All eyes were on overnight leader Francesco}$

Molinari, who led by two shots, Woods and the weather when play began on Sunday as the race for the Green Jacket turned into a final sprint with the forecast predicting rain and thunderstorms.

(Source: Reuters)

Subdued Nadal enters the unknown in **Monte Carlo**



Rafael Nadal offered a low-key appraisal Monday of his chances for a record-ex-tending 12th Monte Carlo Masters title as he prepares to return from his latest injury lay-off.

Along with coping with a number of

njuries over the past decade, Woods also

had to deal with the damage done from a

very public and scandalous divorce and an

from world leaders and sporting greats alike,

with United States president Donald Trump

and his predecessor Barack Obama both

offering congratulations via social media.

Trump, who earlier this year played golf with

"Congratulations to Tiger Woods," tweeted

Woods's return to the top garnered praise

embarrassing DUI arrest.

The 32-year-old Spaniard, whose bad knees and constant stoppages from competition have defined his career as king of clay, was extremely hesitant to even rate his chances as he gets set to face Roberto Bautista Agut in Wednesday's second round start.

"I cant give you any feeling, it's been a rough year and a half for me," Nadal said ahead of his first match since withdrawing hurt prior to an Indian Wells semi-final against Roger Federer

US Open came on hardcourt in Toronto, where he beat young gun Stefanos Tsitsipas in the final.

Nadal is seeded second here behind Novak Djokovic, who is hoping to build for the French Open as he attempts to complete a personal sweep by winning his fourth straight Grand Slam title.

While Bautista Agut fought back to beat Australian John Millman 3-6, 6-1, 6-1, Denis Shapovalov's 20th birthday celebrations fell flat as he lost 5-7, 6-3, 6-1 to German Jan-Lennard Struff.

The 15th seed has yet to claim a win in the Principality after losing in the first round a year ago to Tsitsipas.

The nearly two-hour effective two-hours of the second seco

Bottas lost just half a second relative to Hamilton.

"I was very concerned," said Bottas. "You know you're going to lose time being the car behind, but it was due to the start that I was in that position. I was questioning the team - if if I could stop later, or carry on without stopping – but there was too big a risk in terms of tyre life, if we can make it or not.

"I was questioning because if I could do something different, other than stopping behind Lewis, that was going to be my only chance to win the race. I knew if we were [both] coming in, that's going to be pretty much it unless something crazy happens. (Source: Motorsport)

FIFA bans disgraced ex-**Brazil football chief Marin** for life

FIFA on Monday slapped a lifetime ban on the disgraced former boss of Brazilian football, Jose Maria Marin, after a US court convicted him of massive corruption.

The 86-year-old Marin was one of the key figures swept up in the graft scandal that began with a series of stunning arrests in 2015 and subsequently upended world football.

He had already been sentenced to four years in a US prison after a court in New York found him guilty in connection with nearly \$6.6 million in bribes from sports marketing companies in exchange for contracts to broadcast major tournaments.

But the decision from FIFA's independent ethics judges definitively confirms that Marin is finished in football

FIFA's ethics committee said in a statement that Marin had participated in various bribery schemes.

Judges "banned him for life from all football-related activities (administrative, sports or any other) at both national and international level", a FIFA statement said.

FIFA also imposed a 1 million Swiss franc (\$1 million) fine against Marin, once one of the most powerful figures in world football.

Following his May 2015 arrest at a luxury hotel in Zurich, Marin spent five months in a prison in Switzerland before being extradited to the United States

(Source: Mirror)

recovering from a calf injury, with Daniele Rugani a possible replacement.

Ronaldo was signed for 100 million euros (\$117 million) last summer, and pocketed an annual 31 million-euro salary to help Juventus win a competition they have finished runners-up in a record seven times, most recently in 2015 and 2017. (Source: France 24) last month.

"It's tough for me to get a clear view of how I am. It's all hard for me personally.

Nadal has a vast number of ranking points to defend on clay after lifting titles in a spectacular 2018 run at Monte Carlo, Barcelona, Rome and Roland Garros.

His only other trophy during a season in which he did not play at all after the

marred by 10 double-faults from the Canadian youngster, who was broken six times.

Russian 10th seed Daniil Medvedev advanced easily over Portugal's Joao Sousa 6-1, 6-1, but Hungarian Marton Fucsovics dumped out Nikolaz Basilashvili, the 12th seed, 7-5, 3-6, 6-1.

(Source: Eurosport)

Quarter-final curse looms as Barca and Messi look to set record straight

Four years have passed since Lionel Messi last reached a Champions League semi-final and his drought has become a source of unease for Barcelona ahead of their latest attempt on Tuesday.

Manchester United are the ones looking to emulate Atletico Madrid, Juventus and Roma by sending Barca out in the quarters for a fourth year running but for the Catalans, another failure would be unforgivable, not least because of the implications for their captain.

"Last season we did the double but we all felt bad about how it went in the Champions League," Messi said in August. "We promise this season we will do all we can to bring that beautiful cup back to Camp Nou."

Barcelona's dominance in Spain has been shaped by Messi, who only this month overtook Iker Casillas as the player with the most La Liga victories, 335, in its history.

Those wins have helped them capture seven of the last 10 league titles, a figure that will surely become eight from 11 next month, given their nine-point lead at the top of the table.

There could be an historic fifth consecutive Copa del Rey too if Ernesto Valverde's side beat Valencia on May 25.

But in Europe, Barca would appear under-marked, with only one success in the last seven years, three in 10 since Pep Guardiola took charge in 2008 and set in motion what has felt, in playing terms at least, like an iconic era.

The list of clubs etched onto the cup hoisted at the Wanda Metropolitano on June 1 will instead show a decade swallowed up by Real Madrid, whose domestic failings in that



period have been exonerated by four Champions League triumphs in five years

"Obviously it's infuriating," Luis Suarez said. "Madrid have made history and it's a thorn in our side.'

Rome pain still raw

Messi's record is similarly unbalanced. He has nine La Liga titles and is by a distance the competition's top scorer, with an astonishing 414 goals. Cristiano Ronaldo, closest in second, has 311. But in the Champions League, Messi has lifted the trophy four times, a relatively modest return given it puts him on a par with 11 current Real Madrid players alone, including Nacho, Casemiro and Dani Carvajal. This year, Ronaldo is hunting his sixth.

And while Messi dwarfs the Portuguese for goals in La Liga, the opposite is true in Europe, where Ronaldo has 125 goals to his 108.

The game's most illustrious pair could yet meet in this year's final, should Barca capitalise on their 1-0 first-leg win over United and then overcome either Liverpool or Porto in the semis. Ronaldo and Juventus, meanwhile, would have to beat Ajax, and then either Manchester City or Tottenham.

A showdown in Madrid would throw an even brighter glare on Messi's record compared to Ronaldo, whose sensational hat-trick against Atletico Madrid last month only enhanced the sense this tournament belongs to him.

Messi is not one to complain, particularly given he cannot be blameless in Barca's underachievements in Europe.

But the fans are frustrated, with last season's double doing little to ease the disappointment of the collapse against Roma.

And his teammates feel it too, the weight of history on their shoulders from a need to square arguably the game's greatest ever player with a Champions League haul that befits that status.

"It is an important trophy," Suarez said after following up the league title by winning the Copa del Rey last season. "But this does not hide what happened in Rome."

It means the pressure on Barcelona in this competition runs deep, a psychological burden that perhaps United, or their next opponents, will use to their advantage. For Messi, there is work to do.

Hadi Rezaei appointed Iran **Paralympic Committee Chief Executive**

PORTS TEHRAN — Iran's sitting volleyball coach Hadi Rezaei has been appointed as the new Chief Executive of the Iran's National Paralympic Committee for a four-year term.

The 59-year-old had been previously named as Chef de Mission for next year's Paralympic Games in Tokyo

Rezaei fulfilled the same role at last year's Asian Para Games in Jakarta where Iran finished third overall in the medals table, ahead of Tokyo 2020 hosts Japan. Rezaei is one of the Iranian most decorated para

athletes and coaches. He won three consecutive Paralympic Games gold

medals in 1988 (Seoul), 1992 (Barcelona) and 1996

(Atlanta) as a player. As a coach, Rezaei also led Iran sitting volleyball team to three Paralympics gold medals in Sydney 2000, Beijing 2008 and Rio 2016 and two silvers in Athens 2004 and London 2012.

Iran's best performance at the Paralympic Games since they made their debut at Seoul in 1988 was at London 2012 when they finished 11th with a total of 24 medals, including 10 gold. They won the same number of medals at Rio

2016 but only eight of them were gold, meaning they slipped to 15th.

Iran sent a record number of competitors to Rio 2016, being represented by 110 athletes in 12 sports.

Iran won a total of 136 medals at the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta, including 51 gold, finishing behind China and South Korea, who won 319 and 144 medals respectively.

They finished ahead of Tokyo 2020 hosts Japan, who won more medals than Iran - 198 - but fewer gold - 45.



Mehdi Torabi proud to join Persepolis

PORTS TEHRAN — Mehdi Torabi says he is happy and proud of joining Persepolis football team.

The 24-year-old player joined Persepolis from Saipa in the last year's summer on a three-year contract, however he was sent back to Saipa on loan for the first half of the season.

Torabi spent his entire career at Saipa prior to join-ing Persepolis. He made his debut in 2012 and after impressing in the Iranian Professional League, he received his first Team Melli call-up in 2015, scoring on his international debut against Uzbekistan.

He was a member of Iran national football team in the

2019 AFC Asian Cup. Now, he says he is happy to join the Iranian most popular football team.

"I don't regret joining Persepolis despite I had several offers from the European clubs. I now have the honor of wearing Persepolis shirt. I'm very happy and proud. Persepolis have so many fans who always inspire the players. Playing in Persepolis is very pleasant," Torabi said. "I Persepolis it doesn't matter who plays. Winning is the

most important thing and Persepolis players do their best to be a useful player for the team. I will also give my best effort when playing for the team and pray for our team's success while I'm not in the starting lineup," he added.

Ezatolahi sends message to Reading FC fans after injury comeback

The Iranian midfielder made his return for Royals with the U23s on Friday night.

Reading midfielder Saeid Ezatolahi has sent a message to fans following his comeback from a lengthy quad injury.

The Iranian international, who is on a season-long loan with Royals from Russian club FC Rostov, has been limited to just four Championship appearances this season.

The 22-year-old picked up the injury while on international duty back in October and only returned to competitive action on Friday night with Reading's U23 side.

He played 45 minutes as Scott Marshall's team came from behind to beat Aston Villa 3-2 in Premier League 2 Division 2 at Wycombe Wanderers' Adams Park.

Ezatolahi said on Instagram: "[It] is great feeling to be back to play from tight injury after almost six months...

I'd like to say thank you to all people those who working for our family club (Reading FC) and our fans for supporting and helping me whole time to get back. "Now all focus to help the team and my teammates. But be

thankful for everything you have in your life." Reading have just four games left this season and gave them-

selves a huge boost in their battle with relegation with a 2-1 win over Brentford at Madejski Stadium on Saturday afternoon.

Speaking after the game, boss Jose Gomes said Ezatolahi could feature between now and the end of the campaign for Royals. "He only worked with me in the past two or three days," said

the Portuguese manager. "I gave him the chance to play 45 minutes on Friday night for the U23s – maybe we'll need him before the end of the

season. I don't know. "The idea was to give him minutes in case we needed him. If

he's ready he can be used."

(Source: GetReading)

Jurgen Klinsmann linked with Team Melli

PLDC — Former Germany coach Jurgen Klinsmann has been reportedly nominated for Iran hot seat.

The 54-year-old coach is without a team after he was fired as head coach of the United States national team in 2016.

Klinsmann is a famous name for the Iranian people because he scored against Iran in the 1998 FIFA World Cup as midfielder of Germany football team.

Stoke City consultant Amir Soltani has published an Instagram post and welcomed Klinsmann as new head coach of Team Melli. Morocco coach Herve Renard is also a candidate to take charge

of Iran national football team.

Qatari club Al Shahaniya eye Iran's Mehrdad Pooladi

TASNIM — Qatari top-flight football club Al Shahaniya are eying to sign ex-Iran winger Mehrdad Pooladi.

Pooladi has most recently played at Bangkok United of Thailand. He joined the Thai football club from Al Shahaniya in 2017 after three years playing for the Qatari club and now is going to

return to his former club. Pooladi will join his compatriot Ramin Rezaeian in the Qatari club. The Iranian media reports suggest that Al Shahaniya have set their sight on signing the 32-year-old midfielder.

Pooladi was a member of Iran national football team in the 2014 World Cup. He was named as the second best-ranked player in the first week of the tournament behind Thomas Müller by FIFA, after receiving 9.7 points in the opening match against Nigeria.

Pooladi also showed a good performance in the next match against Argentina.

Visa named Paralympic Gold Partner

The Tokyo Organizing Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (Tokyo 2020) has welcomed Visa as a Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Gold Partner in the category "Payment Systems". Its addition brings the total number of Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Partners to 71.

By becoming a Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Gold Partner, the highest tier of the domestic sponsorship program, Visa will provide valuable support to the successful delivery of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games.

Tokyo 2020 President Yoshiro Mori said: "We are delighted to welcome Visa, a Worldwide Paralympic Partner, as a Gold Partner of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games. Visa is the International Paralympic Committee's longest serving partner having

first come on board in 2003. "The company has also supported



further enthusiasm for the Paralympic Movement.

Stephen Karpin, Representative Director and Country Manager of Visa World Wide Japan Co., Ltd., added: "It is a great honor to be a part of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games as a Gold Partner. Visa embraces a vision of 'a place where everyone is accepted everywhere, that's

Ex-U.S. star Marsch to coach RB Salzburg

Former United States international Jesse Marsch will take over as the new head coach of RB Salzburg, the Austrian club have announced.

Marsch will join from RB Leipzig, where he is an assistant, for next season.

The 45-year-old ex-New York Red Bulls coach takes over from Marco Rose, who will move to Bundesliga side Borussia Monchengladbach, and has signed a three-year deal.

"I am really pleased and feel honoured to be able to work for this fantastic club as their next coach," Marsch said.

RB Salzburg sporting director Christoph Freund said: "We have followed his career and development very closely in recent years, and we



and way of playing football very well.³ Having joined New York Red Bulls in January 2015, Marsch was named

MLS Coach of the Year later that year. He had been linked with the Salzburg job in 2017, but instead joined Leipzig as assistant to Ralf Rangnick last year. Marsch will be aiming to end a run

that has seen Salzburg fail to get past

athletes aiming to excel at the Paralympic Games via its Team Visa program. I am confident they will provide huge support for the Tokyo 2020 Games and generate

where we want to be', and the importance of promoting of inclusion and diversity guides our business.

(Source: Paralympic.org)

have spoken often.

"We are completely convinced about him both as a professional and as a person. He knows our philosophy

the Champions League qualifiers for 11 seasons in a row, although they did reach last season's Europa League semifinals. (Source: ESPN)

Yao vs Haddadi: Who is the best center ever in Asia?

The rise of the top two basketball nations in Asia can be traced back to two figures: Yao Ming of China and Hamed Haddadi of Iran. Both were, literally and figuratively, the biggest figures in revolutionizing basketball in their respective countries and continue to do so up to this day. Since they both played the same position and were among the best that FIBA Asia has ever seen, it is inevitable for fans to ask among themselves who the best center in Asia is.

Background Check

By the start of the new millennium, Yao Ming was already the face of Chinese basketball. After just turning 20 years old, Yao starred for China at the 2000 Sydney Olympics. His rise to stardom shot up at a frantic pace from there onwards. He won his first FIBA Asia Cup in 2001, his first Chinese Basketball Association (CBA) title in 2002, became the first overall draft pick in the 2002 NBA Draft for the Houston Rockets, before having a breakout performance at the FIBA World Cup 2002. Since then, the 2.29M (7'6") center continued to lay his claim as one of the best players in the world.

Yao has retired from playing since 2011, but continues a role impacting the basketball world as the chairman of the Chinese Basketball Association and was also enshrined to the Basketball Hall of Fame in 2016. The success of Yao Ming drew interest of the basketball world to the Asian region, giving a chance for other Asian talents to get worldwide exposure. One of those players was Hamed Haddadi. The 2.18M (7'2") big man played in his first FIBA Asia Cup in 2005 and continued to roll on at FIBA Asia Cup 2007 and the 2008 Beijing Olympics before signing with the Memphis Grizzlies in the NBA. Haddadi has consistently been a star for the Iran national team since, as well as playing premier roles in the CBA and the local Iran Superleague. After over a decade of playing basketball at the highest level, Haddadi is still going strong at



33-years-old playing professionally in Lebanon. FIBA Asia Cup: Individual Success

Both Yao and Haddadi were their country's main option from their very first game in the FIBA Asia Cup. They were either the first or second leading scorer on the team in each FIBA Asia Cup, while also impacting the game on the boards and on defense

The dominance of Yao in the FIBA Asia Cup is evident and clear with him winning an MVP in each appearance. He even led the tournament in scoring with 22.9 points per game in 2003.

Haddadi gets a slight edge here for his longevity by competing in over a decade of FIBA Asia Cup play and maintaining his excellence with an MVP award in the recent 2017 edition.

FIBA Asia Cup: Team Success

Iran and China are two of the most triumphant teams in the FIBA Asia Cup. Both Yao and Haddadi are at the center - pun intended - of these successful runs.

Both players have the same amount of titles and an outstanding win percentage with their teams. However, it's hard to not acknowledge how ridiculous it was for China with Yao in the middle to go through 22 games in FIBA Asia Cup play without a loss. If that's not definite proof of the team's dominance, you can also point to how China beat all of their opponents by double-digits in every game. During that 6-year span, Yao's team won with an average of 34.7

points per game in games that he played.

Ever since Yao retired, Haddadi and Iran have taken over the mantle as the most winningest team in Asia. Over the past 6 FIBA Asia Cup tournaments, Iran has 3 championships, one runner-up finish, and another finish at third place.

Iran with Haddadi managing to lose only 5 games in the past decade of FIBA Asia Cups is undeniably an impressive feat, but Yao's undefeated run with China is just on another level.

Verdict: Asia's best center is?

It's remarkable how Haddadi has maintained his high level of success in the FIBA Asia Cup for such a long time, not only individually but by leading Iran as a team. How he's managed to win FIBA Asia Cup MVP awards 10 years apart is the biggest piece of evidence for how great of a player he is. As impressive as it is to have seen Haddadi play in the FIBA Asia Cup 7 times already, it's not out of the picture for him to make a 7th appearance at the FIBA Asia Cup 2021 either.

On the other hand, Yao Ming went undefeated in crushing fashion and also won the title and the MVP trophy in each edition of the tournament. In the three FIBA Asia Cups that Yao played with China, the Asian powerhouse did not lose a single game in all of their 24 contests. Though his reign as FIBA Asia Cup's best player was shorter than that of Haddadi, you could make an argument that his domination was more superior during that stretch.

It's just a shame that the fans didn't have a chance to witness the two towers go up against each other in their prime at the FIBA Asia Cup. Their only duel was in 2005 when Haddadi was only 20 years old and Yao was already a budding star in the NBA at 25. With both having outstanding runs in the FIBA Asia Cup, who do you think is the best Center in Asia?

(Source: FIBA)

Mehdi Taremi linked with **Persepolis return: report**

IRNA - Al Gharafa striker Mehdi Taremi has been reportedly linked with a move to Persepolis football team.

The Iranian international striker joined the Qatari club in last year's January but his performance has been not satisfying in the team. It seems Al Gharafa coach Christian Gourcuff is reluctant to continue with his Iranian player.

Taremi, who helped Persepolis win Iran Professional League title in 2017, was one of Iran's best players in the 2019 AFC Asian Cup, scoring three goals for Team Melli.

Peaty to focus on 100m breaststroke in Tokyo

LONDON (Reuters) – Olympic 100 meters breaststroke champion Adam Peaty has ruled out adding the 200 meters to his schedule at next year's Tokyo Games.

The Briton had talked about possibly targeting two individual medals by adding the longer distance but told the BBC on Monday he had decided against.

I want to focus on pushing the boundaries in the 100m,' said the 24-year-old breaststroke specialist ahead of the British swimming championships that start in Glasgow on Tuesday.

"If you look at the 200m swimmers they're all kind of skinny and long in their stroke and I'm the complete opposite. I'm quite muscly and have a short stroke," he added.

Peaty holds the world record in both the 50 and 100m breaststroke but the shorter distance is not on the Olympic program.

He has spoken in the past about "Project 56" - the challenge to beat the world record of 57.10 seconds he set at the European championships in Glasgow last August and take the time below 57 seconds.

"I've changed my mindset and don't really talk about 'Project 56' now, but it's looking nice," he told the BBC. "I'm pleased with the progress, so that progress will show at the World Championships or Olympics.

The 2019 world aquatics championships are in Gwangju, South Korea, in July.

TEHRANTIMES

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No one can hide something in his heart without revealing it with his slip of the tongue and the color of his face.

Imam Ali (AS)

Indonesian reciter Salman Amrillah finishes first at Iran Quran competition

CULTURE TEHRAN — Indonesian reciter Salman Amrillah won first prize at the 36th International Quran Competition in Tehran on Sunday. Winners of the competition in various categories received their prizes during the closing ceremony of the event at Tehran's Imam Khomeini Mosalla. In the reciting section, Mehdi Gholamnejad from Iran

received second prize while Iraqi reciter Muhammad Reza Salman took third place.



Salman Amrillah from Indonesia recites during the closing ceremony of the 36th International Quran Competition at Tehran's Imam Khomeini Mosalla on April 14, 2019. He won first prize at the competition. (Fars/Mehdi Marizad)

In the memorizing category, Mohammad-Javad Moradi from Iran won first prize and Abuli Toufeeq from Algeria was honored with second prize. Third prize went to Syrian memorizer Ahmed Badreddin Hamami.

In the women's section, Maryam Shafiei from Iran, Fatima Yunis from Lebanon and Samaneh Musavi from Afghanistan took first to third places respectively in the memorizing category.

Visually-impaired memorizers Al-Sayyid Hamdi al-Sayyid from Egypt, Saeid Ali-Akbari from Iran and Sayyid Nur ul-Haq from India were also honored.

Muhammad Haji from Kenya and Amir-Hossein Rahmati from Iran won the first prizes in the memorizing and reciting sections respectively at the 6th International Quran Competition for School Students, which was held on the sidelines of the event.

Sunrise: 6:30 (tomorrow) **APRIL 16, 2019**

ART&CULTURE

Fajr Intl. Film Festival unveils official lineup

TEHRAN — Fifteen feature films will be competing in Cinema Salvation, the official competition of the 37th Fajr International Film Festival, the organizers announced on Monday. "Sweet Agony 2" by Alireza Davudnejad, "Dance with Me!"

by Sorush Sehat and "The Charcoal" by Esmaeil Monsef, all

from Iran, will be competing in this section. "A Russian Youth" by Alexander Zolotukhin from Russia, "Before the Frost" by Michael Noer from Denmark, "Joel" by Carlos Sorin from Argentina, "Spring Sparrow" by Jingxiang Li from China and "Erased", a co-production from Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia by Slovenian director Miha Mazzini are also among the films.

"Bille", a co-production from Latvia, Lithuania and the Czech Republic by Latvian director Inara Kolmane, "Wackersdorf" by Oliver Haffner from Germany and "Werewolf", a co-production between Poland and Germany by Polish director Adrian Panek will also go on screen in this section.

The lineup also includes "Irina" by Nadejda Koseva from Bulgaria, "Widow of Silence" by Praveen Morchhale from India, "A Shelter among the Clouds" by Robert Budina from Albania and "Belonging", a co-production from Turkey, Canada and France by Turkish director Burak Cevik.

In addition, Cinema Salvation will also screen 15 shorts films, including "Disrupted" by Sun-yong Bak from South Korea, "Excess Will Save Us" by Morgane Dziurla-Petit from Sweden, "Good Intentions" by Anna Mantzaris from England, "Hurlevent" by Frederic Doazan from France and "The World Cup in a Square" by Vito Palmieri from Italy.

"Delirium" co-directed by Vahid and Navid Hosseini-Nami, "Each Other" by Sara Tabibzadeh and "Pause" by Pegah Ansari, all from Iran, will also compete in this section. The 37th Fajr International Film Festival will open in

Tehran on Thursday and will continue until April 26.



This combination photo shows posters for the films selected for Cinema Salvation at the 37th Fajr International Film Festival. (FIFF)

"The Arkansas Bear" to go on stage in Tehran



A poster "The Arkansas Bear".

A R T TEHRAN—Iranian d e s k director Mehdi Moqimi Esfandabadi will stage American playwright Aurand Harris' "The Arkansas Bear" at the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) in Tehran on Sunday, the IIDCYA announced on Monday.

Translated into Persian by Behzad Nejadqanbar, the play is about Tish, a little girl who is upset about her grandfather's approaching death.

One day in a world of fantasy provided by her wish on a star, she meets the world's greatest dancing bear, who is old and is running away from death.

Trying to help the bear, Tish understands that death does not have to be final and the stories that one generation passes on to the next can become a form of immortality.

A cast composed of Mohsen Safari, Maliheh Moqimi, Mohsen Qasri, Somayyeh Salmani and Danial Boluri will perform the play, which will be on stage until June 21.

Iranian reciter Hadi Movahed-Amin to

Drama Therapy Center of Iran sends experts to flood-stricken region



A team of experts from the Drama Therapy Center of Iran at the flood-stricken region of Khuzestan. (Iran Theater)

TEHRAN — A team d e s k of experts from the Drama Therapy Center of Iran (DTCI) has been dispatched to the flood-stricken region in the southern Iranian province of Khuzestan.

"A team of 12 drama therapists and physiologists of the center began their activities in the camps for children and their families in Khuzestan," DTCI secretary Majid Amrai told Iran Theater, a Persian website for theater news, on Monday.

"They gave consultations, speech therapy and training on how to encounter natural disasters," he said.

"The activities will continue for one month, while clinical medicine and training will also be offered at the camps," he added.

Fear, anxiety, depression and isolation are issues observed among the affected people in this region, he said.

Tehran foundation to review works by **Ennio Morricone**

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

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.

Iran denies plan to organize Azerbaijani female singers' concert in Tabriz

TEHRAN — Iran has denied that it has any d e s k plan to organize a concert by two Azerbaijani female singers' in Tabriz, East Azarbaijan Province.



East Azarbaijan Culture and Islamic Guidance Department deputy director Ali Moharrami in an undated photo.

There has been no application from any Azerbaijani female singer to perform in Tabriz, East Azarbaijan Culture and Islamic Guidance Department deputy director Ali Moharrami said in a press release on Monday.

Over the past few days, rumors have begun circulating on a number Persian social networks that Azerbaijani singers Damla and Sebnem plan to perform a joint concert for an audience of females in the northwestern Iranian city of Tabriz in the near future.

compete in Quran competition in Malaysia



Iranian reciter Hadi Movahed-Amin in an undated photo.

CULTURE TEHRAN — Iranian reciter Hadi Movahed-Amin will attend the 61st International Al-Quran Recital and Memorization Assembly, which will open in Kuala Lumpur today.

The contest will be held in two to an end on April 20.

categories of Quran recitation and memorization for men and women. Movahed-Amin will compete with Quran reciters from across the world on Thursday.

The Quran competition will come

Artist Ai Weiwei takes aim at state violence in Mexico with Legos

MEXICO CITY (Reuters) — Chinese artist Ai Weiwei unveiled a new installation in Mexico that tells the story of 43 students likely massacred five years ago in a case that exposed government stonewalling and complicity in abuses, a frequent theme for the dissident artist.

The installation features large portraits of the students made from a million multi-colored Legos that hover above a cavernous exhibit space, images that have become seared into the Mexican conscience by grieving family members who often hoist posters with the same images at protests demanding answers for their sons' disappearance.

Entitled "Reestablishing Memories," the work also features

a timeline of the 2014 abduction of the trainee-teachers from the all-boys Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers College in southern Mexico and the government's widely disparaged investigation into the case.

"Why do we have to do it? Because every crime creates a vacuum and it poisons society," Ai told reporters at a news conference on Thursday.

Known for his criticism of Communist-run China's stifling of free expression, Ai said his latest project was partially inspired by the Chinese government's refusal to explain its errors following a massive 2008 earthquake in Sichuan in which thousands of students died in government-built schools.

"It reminded me of the Mexicans who lost their children," he said, explaining how his own search for answers following the tragedy was stymied.

An initial Mexican government investigation found that the Ayotzinapa students were abducted by corrupt police who handed them over to a local drug gang. The gang then killed them for reasons that remain unclear and burnt their bodies in a trash dump, discarding the ashes into a nearby river, it concluded.

But the account was tainted by allegations of torture and the possible involvement of soldiers.

To date, the remains of just one student have been identified.



Ennio Morricone poses with his Oscar for Quentin Tarantino's "The Hateful Eight" on February 29, 2016.

R T TEHRAN – The e s k Niavaran Artistic Creations Foundation in Tehran plans to hold a session on Thursday to review works by Italian film composer Ennio Morricone. He is considered the world's greatest living film composer.Since 1946, Morricone has composed over 400 scores for cinema and television, as well as over 100 classical works. His filmography includes over 70 awardwinning films, including all Sergio Leone

films: "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly", "A Fistful of Dollars", "Once Upon a Time in the West" and "Once Upon a Time in America".