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Raheeno Tour & Travel Agency
Which incoming tour and travel agency do the biggest organisations work with? **See Page 9**

Zarif, Assad discuss new developments in the region

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Syrian President Bashar Assad (R) gestures in a meeting with Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in Damascus on Tuesday, April 16, 2019.

Iran takes part in Iraq Agrofood Trade Show

TEHRAN — The Islamic Republic of Iran is participating at Iraq Agrofood & Plastprintpack Exhibition 2019 with as many as 40 companies.

Speaking on the sidelines of the exhibition, Commercial Attaché of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Iraq Nasser Behzad said that Iraqi market is open to Iran's trade and production of plastic materials. While visiting the Iranian pavilion at

the Iraqi trade show, he said that plastic products and materials account for Iran's maximum exports share value, so the growing trend of demand in Iraq for production of this sector indicates high susceptibility of Iraqi market for these products.

Focusing on promoting petrochemical downstream products and boosting the level of target markets especially in neighboring Iraq should be prioritized, he stressed. **→4**

Knowledge-based companies export \$450m of products

TEHRAN — Knowledge-based companies exported \$450 million of products in the previous Iranian calendar year 1397, which ended on March 20, the vice president for science and technology announced, IRNA reported on Monday.

Sourena Sattari said that the knowledge-based companies sold 900 trillion rials (about \$21 billion) of products during the past year.

This is while the figure was 600 trillion

rials (about \$14 billion) during the Iranian calendar year 1396 (March 2017-March 2018), he said. There are over 4300 knowledge-based companies and 41 science and technology parks in different provinces.

The improvement of knowledge-based companies boost job creation, production and economic condition, he said.

He added that each province should improve the startups and knowledge-based companies according to the regional ecosystem.

Bahrain strips 138 of nationality

TEHRAN — A Bahraini court has sentenced 138 people to jail and revoked their citizenship on "terror-related" charges, the public prosecutor said. Their jail term varies between three years and life term.

The defendants were convicted of establishing a "terror" cell, Ahmad

al-Hammadi said in a statement on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Bahraini police have detained a journalist, who works for a pro-government daily newspaper, after he criticized the media's "misinformation campaign" surrounding the devastating Saudi-led war on Yemen. **→13**

The most important threats to brown bear populations in Iran

By Jamshid Parchizadeh

TEHRAN — Iran is a vast country with an area of 1,623,779 km² in which there are 164 mammal species including the Asiatic black bear and brown bear. Human-bear conflict is the main reason for the brown bear number reduction and range collapse in this country. In this short article, I summarize the most important threats to brown bear populations in Iran:

- 1) Based on a false traditional belief, bear meat has lots of medical uses, and therefore the bears are killed regularly by local people throughout the country.
- 2) Huge profits from trafficking luxury wild-

life goods have increased, and as a result the presence of illegal hunters within protected areas for the purpose of bear poaching has risen. The bear skins are sold for up to USD 2,000 illegally at the Iranian market.

3) Food scarcity makes bears get attracted to areas where livestock (cattle, goat, sheep, and horse), orchards and crop fields including maize, sunflowers, apricots, grapes, mulberries, walnuts, roots, seeds, buds, and beehives are available. In response, rural residents use both guns and poisonous lures to kill them in order to defend their crops and livestock.

Unfortunately, not many studies have been

conducted on the bears in Iran, and therefore little is known on their ecology, current distribution, population size, and trend. This has resulted in a lack of state-run monitoring of the bears in the Iranian protected areas. All these events can affect the decision-making process by the relevant wildlife authorities. Therefore, it is crucial to launch projects on the bears to count and determine their current population structure in Iran for prioritizing conservation going forward if their extinction is to be avoided. Iran's Department of the Environment (DoE; the governmental organization) is fully responsible for planning, funding, and conducting the projects.

Paris brands Yellow Vests anti-Semitic justifying atrocious violence: expert

TEHRAN (FNA) — Ramin Mazaheri, author and journalist, says the French mainstream politicians seek to discredit the anti-establishment Yellow Vest movement by any means including branding them anti-Semitic which, at the same time, serves to justify the use of excessive forces against protesters.

Speaking to FNA, Ramin Mazaheri strongly blasted French President Macron for his pro-Zionist policies, including his recently declared bid to seek to ban anti-Zionism under the false claim that it is a form of anti-Semitism.

"The accusations, the marches, the media coverage - it seems like all that was setting up this attempt to criminalize opposition to Zionism," he said.

Mazaheri further noted the records of anti-Semitic acts in France, saying the claimed rise in anti-Semitic acts last year "is not really

a rise, but a return to the historical average".

Ramin Mazaheri is an Iranian-American author and journalist based in Paris. He has authored several books on the western polities. His works has appeared in various journals, magazines and websites, as well as on radio and television.

Below is the full text of the interview:

■ What is the status of racism, more specifically anti-Semitism, in France?

A: It has been widely reported that anti-Semitic acts in France rose 74% in 2018. While I condemn these crimes very strongly, I also think that 2018 shouldn't be blown out of proportion because the number of such acts fluctuates wildly. For example, they dropped 58% in 2016. On average, France has about 500 such acts per year, and in 2018 there were 541 reported crimes - sadly typical. But 2017

saw far fewer anti-Semitic crimes (311), so in 2018 France regressed to the mean - there was not an "anti-Semitic explosion".

There are roughly the same number of yearly racist acts in France towards Muslims, a subject which gets far less media attention and certainly far less political attention. However, it is significant that there are roughly 10 times more Muslims than Jews in France, so individual Jews are definitely targeted more often than individual Muslims. About 90% of these racist crimes are against places of worship and not against people, thankfully.

On an institutional level, we cannot say that there is much anti-Semitism in France - Jews routinely hold top cabinet posts, for example. Muslims, suffer from far greater rates of socioeconomic poverty and political disempowerment. **→7**



PERSPECTIVE

Hanif Ghaffari
Political analyst

Merkel worried about European parliamentary elections

German Chancellor is worried about the failure of traditional European parties in the parliamentary elections. If parties such as the German Democratic Christian Party fail in the European parliamentary elections, there will be a good opportunity for nationalist parties!

In this way, nationalist parties can take the lead in the European Union and the Eurozone. This is the worst news possible for the Chancellor of Germany. It should not be forgotten that Merkel has long been the main leader of Europe.

However, many international affairs analysts have argued that Merkel was incapacitated in the face of the European economic crisis and other crises in the complex. Basically, one of the main reasons for the dissatisfaction of the European public opinion with the traditional parties has been the economic and security defeat of an infant like Angela Merkel.

Angela Merkel has many concerns these days! She knows well that the failure of the traditional European party in the parliamentary elections could mean the start of serious crises in the European Union.

Angela Merkel has announced that she will step down of power in 2021, but the polls conducted in Germany has intensively worried her. The results of these polls indicate that the total popularity of the two traditional German parties, the coalition of the Christian and Social Democrats, have fallen below 50%. This suggests the unpopularity of the coalition government among the German citizens. Merkel now has to run the weak coalition government until 2021!

Many analysts of Europe's affairs believe that Merkel's power is actually over. The Chancellor of Germany is no longer the symbol of power in the united Europe. She has lost the power of managing the power equations in her country. In other words, Merkel has become a "passive player" in Berlin, the European Union and the Eurozone. **→7**



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Ebrahim Hatamikia named Islamic Revolution Artist of the Year

TEHRAN — Ebrahim Hatamikia, director of the acclaimed movie "Damascus Time", was picked as the Islamic Revolution Artist of the Year on Monday.

He was honored for his "Damascus Time" about the atrocities of Daesh and received the award for the title from the director of the Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization (IIDO), Hojjatoleslam Mohammad Qomi, and Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Seyed Abbas Salehi, at the Sureh Hall of the Art Bureau.

"This is a precious moment of which I'm proud," Hatamikia said after accepting the award. **→16**

African Union sets deadline for Sudan power transfer

TEHRAN — The African Union has warned Sudan's military that the country has 15 days to install a civilian government or risk getting kicked out of the bloc, as a sit-in demanding the army hand over power entered its 11th day on Tuesday.

Sudan must aim to hold "free, fair and transparent elections" as soon as possible, the AU's Peace and Security Council said in a statement on Monday.

"A military-led transition would be completely contrary to the aspirations of the people of Sudan," it added.

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on Monday became the first foreign leader to meet with members of Sudan's ruling military council and pledged his support for the neighboring country, Al Jazeera reported.

"The Transitional Military Council has met many demands of the protesters, but some of the demands of the protesters need time to answer," said General Jalal Eldin Alshaikh, a member of the council, after the meeting.

He also vowed that the sit-in would not be dispersed from outside the army's headquarters and appeared to change the council's position on former president Omar al-Bashir's extradition to The Hague.

"The decision whether to extradite al-Bashir to the [International Criminal Court] will be made by a popularly elected government and not the transitional military council," he said at a press conference in Addis Ababa.

The council had previously said al-Bashir - who was arrested after Thursday's military coup - would not be extradited to face charges of war crimes in Darfur.

■ **Fears of old guard's return**

Fearing that the core of the old establishment is far from gone, the Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA) on Monday reiterated its call for the military council to be dissolved and substituted with a civilian one that would only include "limited" army representation.

The umbrella organization, which spearheaded the months of protests that precipitated al-Bashir's removal, also demanded the sacking of Sudan's prosecutor general and judiciary head, as well as the disbanding of the former president's National Congress Party (NCP).

"The objectives of the revolution cannot be achieved totally and completely in the face of the backstage manipulations by the remnants of the regime," SPA member Taha Osman told reporters in the capital, Khartoum. **→13**

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Jahangiri says Iran welcomes Turkish investors

POLITICS **TEHRAN** - Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri said on Tuesday that Iran and Turkey have capacities to expand economic cooperation and that Tehran welcomes Turkish investors.

During a meeting with Turkish Ambassador to Tehran Derya Ors, Jahangiri said that the two countries can increase the volume of their trade to \$30 billion.

Describing Iran and Turkey as two important countries in the region, he noted that expansion of relations can prove effective in solving the problems facing the world of Islam.

He also said that Iran and Turkey should expand relations regardless of the U.S. sanctions.

For his part, Ors said that the two countries can expand economic relations by removing banking impediments and using national currencies in their trade.



Instagram blocks pages of IRGC, General Soleimani after terror label

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Instagram has blocked pages that belonged to Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) and Qassem Soleimani, the commander of its Quds Force.

The Instagram account of General Soleimani had about 900,000 subscribers, according to Sputnik.

His Instagram page was frozen just a day after the IRGC was formally blacklisted by the U.S. as a foreign terrorist organization following a relevant announcement by U.S. President Donald Trump on 8 April. This marked the first time ever that the United States has named part of a foreign government a terrorist organization.



Zarif expresses regret at Notre Dame Cathedral fire

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Tuesday expressed deep regret over the fire that erupted in France's Notre Dame Cathedral.

"Saddened that Notre Dame—that iconic monument dedicated to the worship of our one God & that brought all of us closer through Hugo's literary masterpiece—is partially destroyed after standing through wars & revolution for 800 yrs," Zarif said in a tweet. "Our thoughts are w/ the French & all Catholics."

A massive fire consumed Notre-Dame Cathedral on Monday, gutting the roof of the Paris landmark and stunning France and the world.



Parliament passes generalities of pro-IRGC bill

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian legislators on Tuesday passed the generalities of a bill to support the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) against the United States.

The bill received unanimous support, with 204 MPs voting in favor of it and 2 against, Tasnim reported.

A few lawmakers who spoke against the bill were in fact arguing that it was not a "strong enough" move to counter U.S. measures.

On Monday, the United States officially designated the IRGC as a foreign terrorist organization, a week after U.S. President Donald Trump announced the decision.

Iran has condemned the move and warned of its consequences for peace and security in the Middle East.



100 MPs ask Rouhani to fire Privatization Organization chief

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — 100 lawmakers have issued a warning to President Hassan Rouhani over his administration's support for the head of Privatization Organization Ali-Ashraf Abdollah Pourihosseini.

The lawmakers urged President Rouhani to dismiss Pourihosseini so that his "great treason" would be unfolded, Mehr reported on Tuesday.

"Despite the criminal lawsuit against Mr. Pourihosseini, the head of Privatization Organization, and his exit ban, what is the reason for your and Mr. Jahangiri's refusal to dismiss him?" the MPs asked.

They added that Pourihosseini has been involved in the biggest economic corruption under the Rouhani administration.



Judicial Watch launches probe into Kerry's Iran talks

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Judicial Watch, an American conservative activist group, announced on Monday it is suing the U.S. State Department to obtain copies of documents relevant to former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry's "shadow diplomacy" to salvage the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

"In the months preceding the U.S. withdrawal (from the nuclear deal), Kerry reportedly had been on a 'stealthy yet aggressive mission' of shadow diplomacy in an attempt to preserve the Iran nuclear deal. Kerry reportedly held meetings and spoke with major players, foreign and domestic, involved in the Iran nuclear agreement who opposed the U.S. withdrawal," Judicial Watch explained, according to WorldNetDaily.

Tehran, Ankara resolved to cement mutual ties: ambassador

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Iranian ambassador to Ankara, underlining the importance of Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif's upcoming visit to neighboring Turkey, has said the two sides are resolved to cement relations in all areas.

"During a two-day trip to Ankara which would start today, Dr. Zarif would hold talks and consultations with the officials of the friendly country, Turkey about bilateral relations and ways to strengthen them, as well as sensitive regional and international issues," Mohammad Farazmand said on his Twitter account on Tuesday afternoon.

"The two important Islamic countries have strong wills to strengthen friendship bonds," he added in his tweet.

Heading a high-ranking diplomatic delegation, Zarif arrived in Damascus on Tuesday for meetings with top Syrian officials, including his counterpart



Walid Mualllem and also President Bashar al-Assad.

The two-day tour was scheduled to later take the Iranian foreign minister

to Turkey.

The meetings during the tour - part of the routine political negotiations and coordination with Syria and Turkey - focus on the major issues in bilateral relations, including the agreements agreed upon by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and his Syrian and Turkish counterparts.

The top Iranian diplomat's visit is also aimed at coordinating policies on regional and international developments to ensure peace and stability in the region.

Iran and Turkey, together with Russia, are the guarantors of a ceasefire in Syria which has been brokered after several rounds of peace talks, known as the Astana process.

Since March 2011, fighting in Syria has killed an estimated 465,000 people, injured more than one million, and forced about 12 million people - or half the country's pre-war population - from their homes.

Blacklisting IRGC rooted in U.S. 'chain of defeats': Jafari

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Chief Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari has said the terrorist designation against the forces under his command by the Trump administration is rooted in Washington's "chain of defeats" in the Middle East region.

The move is the result of hatred and anger from the defeats that this "Pharaonic" regime has suffered at the hands of the IRGC, he said in a message on Tuesday.

U.S. President Donald Trump labeled the IRGC as

terrorist organization on April 8.

Immediately after the announcement, the Iranian Supreme National Security Council named the United States Central Command (CENTCOM) a terrorist organization, and the U.S. government a sponsor of terror.

Jafari described Trump's action as "stupid" and "illegal". He also praised the people and officials for their support to the IRGC.

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.

Iranian lawmakers uniformly appeared on the Majlis floor on April 9, wearing outfits of the IRGC in a move to show contempt for the U.S. move.

All MPs, including Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani and presiding board members, participated in the collective move.

Jafari said the act showed national integrity and unity which is the key of success in countering challenges.

IRGC official: Terror designation serving Zionists' interests

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The United States' designation of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) as terrorist is to serve the interests of the Zionist regime of Israel, the IRGC representative for parliamentary affairs has said.

The move is yet another act by Washington to ensure the survival of Israel, Mohammad Saleh Jokar said, adding it followed

U.S. President Donald Trump's March 25 recognition of the Golan Heights under the authority of Israel.

Jokar added the terrorist designation was also meant to influence elections in Israel.

He went on to assert that "Today, many people around the world admit the fact that it is only the Guards which can stand up against terrorist groups such as Daesh, which

are supported by America, the Saudis, the Emirates and some others."

Earlier, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif had described Trump's move to blacklist the Guards as another "misguided" election gift to the Israeli prime minister on the eve of parliamentary elections.

"A(nother) misguided election-eve gift to Netanyahu. A(nother) dangerous US

misadventure in the region," Zarif tweeted.

Israelis headed to the polls on April 9 to elect the 120 members of the 21st Knesset (parliament). On the eve of the vote, Netanyahu took credit for Trump's decision to blacklist IRGC. "Thank you, my dear friend, President Donald Trump," Netanyahu tweeted in Hebrew, "for answering another one of my important requests."

Oman calls for expansion of ties with Iran

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Sheikh Khalid bin Hilal al-Maawali, chairman of the Consultative Assembly of Oman, has called for expansion of ties with Iran, especially in the area of legislation making.

The Omani official made the remarks during a meeting with an Iranian military team headed by Ghadir Nezami, Iran's Armed Forces deputy commander for international affairs, in Muscat.

Al-Maawali said Oman attaches great importance to the role of the Consultative Assembly.

Based on the constitution, many of the affairs related to legislation are under duty of the Consultative Assembly, he explained.



The 15th Iran-Oman joint military committee meeting started on Sunday and lasts until Thursday.

Interaction and expansion of military relations between the two countries are being discussed in the meeting.

The Iranian and Omani military delegations also made planning for military cooperation in 2019 and 2020.

Iran to display domestically-made fighter jets on Army Day parade

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh, the commander of the Islamic Republic of Iran Air Force (IRIAF), announced on Monday that the domestically-produced "Kowsar" and "Saeqeh" fighter jets will be displayed on Army Day parades on Thursday.

Nasirzadeh said that the Air Force is determined to increase production of arms,

especially fighter jets, in the current calendar year, which began on March 21.

Kowsar is an advanced fighter jet with a close air support (CAS) role that has made Iran one of the few countries with the know-how of designing and manufacturing such jets equipped with the 4th generation avionics and fire-control systems.

It was successfully test-flown on August 21, 2018 at the presence of President

Hassan Rouhani.

According to the Tasnim news agency, various units of the Army's Ground Force, Navy, Air Force and Air Defense Force are planned to stage nationwide parades on Thursday, displaying their missiles, tanks, armored vehicles, rifles, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), fighter jets, radar systems, and air defense missile systems.

In addition to Kowsar and Saeqeh, MiG-29, F-4 Phantom and F-14 Tomcat warplanes will take part in the upcoming parade. The maneuvers will also feature KC-747 and KC-707 aerial refueling tankers, which will be flown from bases situated in the cities of Tabriz, Tehran, Hamedan and Isfahan, Press TV reported.

Kowsar and Saeqeh fighter jets participated in a preparation drill on Tuesday.

Zarif, Assad discuss new developments in the region

Iranian FM says all Astana group members must respect their obligations

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif met on Tuesday with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad shortly after arriving in Damascus.

Zarif and Assad exchanged views on bilateral ties, the latest regional developments, the Astana peace process and ways to end the Syrian conflict, IRNA reported.

They also discussed the progress made in the bilateral deals signed during President Assad's trip to Iran in late February.

Accompanied by a delegation, Zarif arrived at the Damascus International Airport earlier in the day and was welcomed by Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad.

Upon his arrival, he told reporters that his trip was aimed to coordinate regional efforts to counter Washington's "hostile policies", namely its recognition of the occupied Golan Heights as Israel's territory, the recognition of al-Quds as Israel's capital and its illegal and

the unprecedented decision to blacklist Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organization.

Asked about the situation in Syria's Idlib, Zarif said, "We are very concerned about Idlib's situation, and certainly, Iran, Turkey and Syria must fulfil their obligations in this regard."

"One of these obligations is disarming terrorist groups in this region and pushing them out of Idlib," he said. "The Al Nusra terrorist group is a serious threat for people of Idlib and people of this region's surroundings."

"We, the member states of Astana [peace process] are obligated to fulfil our commit-

ments with this regard and I will follow up on this issue in my trip to Turkey," he added.

The foreign minister also met his Syrian counterpart Walid Mualllem.

"The Syrian people saved the region from a serious danger through their resistance against Takfiri and terrorist groups," Zarif said at the meeting.

He emphasized the need to push all terrorists out of Syria and called on the world to respect Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

"We are absolutely delighted that we were beside the people of Syria, Iraq and the region in the fight against such serious

danger against the people of the region and the world," Zarif noted.

For his part, Mualllem said it is necessary to continue and deepen such cooperation. "The gained victory is a common victory because the two countries are on the same front."

Zarif's visit to Syria comes almost two months after Assad's unannounced visit to Tehran, during which he met Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Hassan Rouhani, with Zarif absent at the meetings.

Shortly after Assad's meetings in Tehran, Zarif announced his resignation in an Instagram post. His not knowing about the visit was speculated as being the reason.

Two days later, however, President Rouhani rejected Zarif's resignation, saying it was contrary to the country's interests. On the same day, Assad officially invited the Iranian foreign minister to visit Syria. Zarif later announced that he will visit Syria "soon".

Zarif says, "We are very concerned about Idlib's situation, and certainly, Iran, Turkey and Syria must fulfil their obligations in this regard."

Bassil calls for Syria’s return to Arab League

TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil Tuesday called for Syria’s return to the Arab League, during a speech at the fifth Russian-Arab Cooperation Forum in Moscow.

“Every time we meet, there is a vacant chair. ... It is not permissible for Syria to remain outside the Arab fold,” Bassil said, according to a statement from his office, Daily Star reported.

Syria’s membership in the Arab League has been suspended since 2011, following the outbreak of the country’s civil war.

“Our Arab people are counting on us and are waiting for the Arab League to play an essential role in bringing together Arabs and solving our many problems,” Bassil added.

He described the region’s list of issues as “long and difficult,” but emphasized that addressing the Syrian crisis should take priority.

He added: “Libya and Yemen are waiting for us and we have to take the initiative. Palestine is on the verge of falling apart, for which we must take the initiative, and Sudan and Algeria are not in the best shape either.”

Algeria and Sudan have been rocked by protests in recent weeks. In Algeria, 82-year-old President Abdelaziz Bouteflika resigned earlier this month following public outrage



over his candidacy for a fifth term. Last week, Sudan’s military ousted longtime President Omar al-Bashir after four months of protests against his rule.

Bassil also urged increased cooperation between Lebanon and Russia, “not just on the political level but including the economy and all its sectors, from oil and gas in which

Russian companies lead the field, to industry, technology, advanced science, organic agriculture and tourism.”

He added that cooperating with Russia is “not directed against anyone and nobody should be concerned.” “The main objective of this meeting is coordination, cooperation and to find ways to improve life in our Arab region.

Arab cooperation with China, Russia, Japan, India, America or the European Union is in the interest of the Arab people. ... It is not a military or political alliance directed against anyone.”

After his speech, Bassil retweeted an OTV report saying that a section of the forum’s final statement had been changed from calling for the “voluntary return” of Syrian refugees to “ensuring the appropriate conditions for a safe and dignified return.” The latter does not necessarily entail returns that are voluntary.

Later in the day, Bassil said in an interview with Russia Today that he rejected the word “voluntary” when describing refugee returns, and called for the international community to direct its aid for refugees toward encouraging their return.

Bassil and President Michel Aoun have on several occasions called for the safe and dignified return for Syrian refugees to their home country, without waiting for a political solution to the conflict there.

The foreign minister also met Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Adel al-Jubeir on the sidelines of the forum.

On Monday, Bassil had met with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov in Moscow to discuss bilateral relations.

No sign of arson in Notre-Dame blaze as nation grieves for symbol

TEHRAN — The fire that tore through Notre-Dame cathedral was probably caused by accident, French prosecutors said on Tuesday after firefighters doused the last flames in the ruins overnight and the nation grieved for the destruction of one of its symbols.

More than 400 firemen were needed to tame the inferno that consumed the roof and collapsed the spire of the eight-centuries-old cathedral. They worked through the night to extinguish the fire some 14 hours after it began, Reuters reported.

Paris public prosecutor Remy Heitz said there was no obvious indication the fire was arson. Fifty people were working on what would be a long and complex investigation. One firefighter was injured but no one else was hurt in the blaze which began after the building was closed to the public for the evening.

From the outside, the imposing bell towers and outer walls, with their vast flying buttresses, still stood firm, but the insides and the upper structure were eviscerated by the blaze.

Firefighters examined the gothic facade and could be seen walking atop the belfries as police kept the area in lockdown.

Investigators will not be able to enter the cathedral’s blackened nave until experts are satisfied its stone walls withstood the heat and the building is structurally sound.

The fire swiftly ripped through the cathedral’s timbered roof supports, where workmen had been carrying out extensive renovations to the spire’s wooden frame.

The Paris prosecutor has opened an investigation into “involuntary destruction by fire”. Police on Tuesday began questioning the workers involved in the restoration, the prosecutor’s office said.

Hundreds of stunned onlookers had lined the banks of the Seine river late into the night as the fire raged, reciting prayers and singing liturgical music in harmony as they stood in vigil. “Yesterday we thought the whole cathedral would collapse. Yet this morning she is still standing, valiant,

despite everything. It is a sign of hope,” said Sister Marie Aimee, a nun who had hurried to a nearby church to pray as the fire spread. It was at Notre-Dame that Napoleon was made emperor in 1804, Pope Pius X beatified Joan of Arc in 1909 and former presidents Charles de Gaulle and Francois Mitterrand were mourned.

Messages of condolence flooded in from around the world.

Pope Francis, the leader of the Catholic Church, was praying for those affected, the Vatican said, adding: “Notre-Dame will always remain - and we have seen this in these hours - a place where believers and non-believers can come together in the most dramatic moments of French history.”

Britain’s Queen Elizabeth expressed deep sadness while her son and heir Prince Charles said he was “utterly heartbroken”.

■ Vow to rebuild

President Emmanuel Macron promised to rebuild Notre-Dame, considered among the finest examples of European Gothic architecture, visited by more than 13 million people a year.

Notre-Dame is owned by the state. It has been at the center of a years-long row between the nation and the Paris archdiocese over who should finance badly needed restoration work to collapsed balustrades, crumbling gargoyles and cracked facades.

It was too early to estimate the cost of the damage, said the heritage charity Fondation du Patrimoine, but it is likely to run into the hundreds of millions of dollars.

The rival billionaire owners of France’s two biggest luxury fashion empires, Francois-Henri Pinault of Kering and Bernard Arnault of LVMH, pledged 100 million euros and 200 million euros to the restoration respectively. Oil company Total pledged 100 million. The city of Paris said it would provide 50 million.

Paolo Violini, a restoration specialist for Vatican museums, said the pace at which the fire spread through the cathedral had been stunning.

“We are used to thinking about them as eternal simply



because they have been there for centuries, or a thousand years, but the reality is they are very fragile,” Violini said.

■ Human chain

The company carrying out the renovation works when the blaze broke out said it would cooperate fully with the investigation.

“All I can tell you is that at the moment the fire began none of my employees were on the site. We respected all procedures,” Julien Le Bras, a representative of family firm Le Bras Freres.

Officials breathed a sigh of relief that many relics and artworks had been saved. At one point, firefighters, policemen and municipal workers formed a human chain to remove the treasures, including a centuries-old crown of thorns made from reeds and gold, and the tunic believed to have been worn by Saint Louis, a 13th century king of France.

“Notre-Dame was our sister, it is so sad, we are all mourning,” said Parisian Olivier Lebib. “I have lived with her for 40 years. Thank God that the stone structure has withstood the fire.”

UN’s Libya envoy: Haftar’s actions looked like coup

TEHRAN — The United Nations (UN)’s envoy to Libya says self-styled commander Khalifa Haftar attempted a “coup” by issuing an arrest warrant against Prime Minister Fayez al-Serraj and other officials in the country’s internationally-recognized government.

General Haftar’s eastern-based Libyan National Army (LNA) attacked the capital, Tripoli — where Serraj’s Government of National Accord (GNA) is seated — early this month in an offensive that he has claimed is meant to eradicate “terrorism.”

According to Press TV, UN Envoy for Libya Ghassan Salame told BBC radio on Monday that Haftar’s issuance of arrest warrants during that offensive “sounded more like a coup than counter-terrorism.”

The attack on the capital has prompted intense fighting between Haftar’s forces and those loyal to the GNA.

Salame said neither side could achieve military superiority over the other. “We are in fact in a military stalemate since eight days, or nine days [ago],” he said.

The UN envoy said both sides had carried out airstrikes that also hit civilian infrastructure and residential buildings, especially in the south of Tripoli.

The fighting has killed at least 147 people and left 614 others wounded, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). The UN agency urged “all parties to exercise restraint and avoid causing collateral damage to hospitals, ambulances, and health workers.”

The fighting prompted WHO to deploy medical teams “to support Tripoli-area hospitals as they cope with the influx of trauma cases.”

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) warned about an “escalation” in the fighting, which “could create even further displacement.”

“The situation on the ground continues deteriorating and number of casualties soaring,” the UNHCR said in a tweet.

The conflict has also raised concerns about a potential rise in terrorism by such groups as Daesh.

■ Germany, Italy voice concerns

German Chancellor Angela Merkel met the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi on Monday over the Libyan situation, which she described as “very worrying.”

“It is about fighting, the causes, that lead to fleeing and displacement. [If we address that], then we will have reduced the problem. Unfortunately, we have to say the challenges remain tremendous,” she told reporters.

Merkel also said that she had had a conversation with Egyptian President Abdel Fatah el-Sisi, who has expressed his support for Haftar along with France, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Saudi Arabia.

According to a report published by The Wall Street Journal this weekend, Saudi Arabia has “promised tens of millions of dollars to help pay for the operation” by Haftar’s forces in Libya.

“The offer came during a visit to Saudi Arabia that was just one of several meetings Mr. Haftar had with foreign dignitaries in the weeks and days before he began the military campaign on April 4,” wrote the Journal.

Separately, Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte met with the supporters of Serraj’s government in Rome, where he highlighted the need for averring “a humanitarian crisis that could be devastating, not only for the repercussions on Italy and the EU but in the interests of the Libyan people themselves.”

In recent years, Italy has been the biggest gateway for refugees trying to reach Europe through the Mediterranean and often from conflict zones in the Middle East and North Africa. It received more than 6,000 refugees per month up until 2017, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which also warned that the recent conflict in Libya would be sending a great number of refugees to Europe.

■ Qatar says Haftar’s forces must withdraw

Additionally, Qatar’s foreign minister also talked to Italian daily La Repubblica about the Libya conflict on Tuesday, calling for an effective arms embargo against Haftar and his troops to withdraw from areas they have recently seized.

Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani also said that he was recently told by his French counterpart that Paris was working to ensure a planned national reconciliation conference on the conflict.

■ ‘Haftar’s aggression to spread cancer to Europe’

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Serraj also warned that hundreds of thousands of refugees could flee the fighting due to what he described as a war of aggression and a betrayal of the people of Libya.

Speaking to the Italian newspaper Corriere della Sera, the Libyan prime minister said on Monday, “We are facing a war of aggression that will spread its cancer throughout the Mediterranean, Italy, and Europe.”

“We need to be united and firm in blocking the war of aggression of Haftar, a man who has betrayed Libya and the international community,” he said.

U.S., Brazil and Colombia preparing for military intervention in Venezuela: vice president

TEHRAN —The Venezuelan authorities have accused the United States, Brazil and Colombia of preparing for a military intervention into the Bolivarian Republic.

“The international community and its institutions for protecting legitimacy around the world should know that a criminal plan is in the works to stage a military attack on Venezuela,” Vice President Delcy Rodriguez said, TASS reported.

“U.S., Brazilian and Colombian officials intend to ignore the will of the Venezuelan people and launch a military intervention,” Rodriguez added.

If they decide to proceed with their plans, these countries “will commit crimes against humanity and will have to bear responsibility on the international level,” she noted.

On January 23 Venezuelan National Assembly Speaker Juan Guaido proclaimed himself as the country’s acting president. Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro has described it as a coup attempt and announced severing diplomatic relations with the United States. On January 28 the U.S. imposed sanctions on Venezuela’s state-owned PDVSA oil company.

UN: Parties to Yemen war agree on Hudaydah pullout

TEHRAN — Yemen’s Houthi Ansarullah fighters and Saudi Arabia’s mercenaries loyal to the former government in Sana’s have agreed to a detailed plan for the initial withdrawal of forces from the strategic Red Sea port city of Hudaydah, the UN special envoy for Yemen says.

Martin Griffiths told the UN Security Council that agreement for the first phase of withdrawals was reached after negotiations between the warring parties and Danish General Michael Lollesgaard, who heads the UN operation monitoring the ceasefire and a redeployment agreement reached in Sweden in December 2018.

“Both parties have now accepted a detailed redeployment plan,” Griffiths said via video conference from the Jordanian capital, Amman, Press TV eported.

He said he had received assurances from the leader of Ansarullah, Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, when they met in Sana’a last week that Houthi forces would support the deal.

“Let us be clear that when, and I hope it is when and not if, these redeployments happen, they will be the first voluntary withdrawal



of forces in this long conflict,” Griffiths said.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the UN official said he was laying the groundwork for broader negotiations on ending the deadly campaign led by the regime in Riyadh against Yemen. “We all need to see tangible progress in Hudaydah before moving to focus on the political solution.”

The UN announced a deal on a two-stage pullback from Hudaydah and its ports on February 17, but the redeployment failed to materialize on the ground.

The redeployment of forces is a critical part of a truce reached during UN-mediated peace talks in Sweden.

The Houthis have repeatedly complained

that the Saudi-led coalition has been violating the ceasefire. UN diplomats earlier said the Houthis refused to pull away from Hudaydah ports as part of the first stage, citing fears that forces linked to the Saudis will move in to take over facilities there.

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates launched the Hudaydah offensive in June 2018 but have been facing strong resistance from Yemeni armed forces, led by the Houthis, as well as the city’s residents.

Hudaydah, a lifeline for millions of Yemenis, has seen some of the heaviest fighting in the Saudi-led war, which Riyadh began in March 2015.

The imposed war initially consisted of an aerial campaign but was later compounded by a naval blockade and the deployment of mercenaries to Yemen.

Yemen is going through the worst humanitarian crisis since 2015.

Efforts to crush Houthis and reinstate Riyadh ally and former President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi have so far failed, forcing Saudi Arabia to push for peace with the Yemeni resistance movement and its allies in the army.

Algeria’s constitutional council chairman resigns amid protests

TEHRAN — The head of the Algerian Constitutional Council has stepped down after weeks facing the ire of protesters, state media reported.

Tayeb Belaiz on Tuesday informed the council, which will play a key role in upcoming presidential elections, that “he presented his resignation... to the head of state”, Al Jazeera reported. Algerians have called for Belaiz and other top figures to quit in mass demonstrations which prompted the departure of veteran president Abdelaziz Bouteflika earlier

this month. Protesters have targeted the “3B” - Belaiz, Prime Minister Nouredine Bedoui, and Abdelkader Bensalah who served as upper house speaker until being appointed interim president after Bouteflika’s resignation.

Bensalah has defended his appointment under constitutional rules and has pledged a transparent vote, to be held on July 4.

The constitutional council is tasked with vetting election candidates, as well as ensuring the regularity of the polls.

Belaiz has served as a minister almost without interruption for 16 years and was appointed head of the constitutional council for the second time on February 2.

Later that month Algerians took to the streets to rally against Bouteflika’s bid for a fifth term in polls initially schedule for April.

The demonstrations swelled and spread nationwide, with protesters calling for a broad overhaul of the political system following the president’s departure.

STOCK MARKET	
TEDPIX	201890.8
IFX	2457.96

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES	
USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,474 rials
GBP	54,989 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES	
Brent	\$71.14/b
WTI	\$63.44/b
OPEC Basket	\$70.44/b
Gold	\$1,284.60/oz
Silver	\$14.99/oz
Platinum	\$890.60/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



Water resources management discussed between Iran, EU

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** — In a meeting between the officials of Iranian Energy Ministry and a delegation of Water Sector of European Commission, the two sides discussed the ways for cooperation in water management resources.

In the meeting, which was held at the place of Iranian Energy Ministry on Sunday, the methods for the European Union's aids to Iran's water projects were examined, the news portal of Energy Ministry published.

Farhad Yazandoust, the advisor to Iranian energy minister, said the European delegates got informed of Iran's water sector challenges in the meeting and it was decided that they will dispatch a delegations of experts to Iran within the next two months in order to run more detailed negotiations for finding the ways for operating the agreed issues.

Iran takes part in Iraq Agrofood Trade Show 2019

I → Setting up plastic injection workshops, reviving production lines, branding management, etc. along with making target market dependent on Iranian plastic production can help enhance trade and business with Iraq, he noted.



Elsewhere in his remarks, Behzad pointed to the serious competition of other countries especially China in Iraqi lucrative market and said, "applying light and easy technology, designing sophisticated packaging lines, supplying semi-industrial and industrial machinery in tandem with organizing joint training courses with Iraq should be taken consideration by Iranian companies which are willing to get the lion's share of products in Iraqi market.

Iraq Agrofood & Plastprintpack Exhibition 2019 kicked off on April 15 with the participation of 40 Iranian firms. The event will wrap up on April 17.

(Source: Mehr News Agency)

Iranian industrialists demonstrate capabilities in Oman

An Iranian economic delegation comprising of managers of industrial townships met with Iran's Ambassador to Muscat Nouri Shahmoradi on Monday to brief him on their export capabilities.

The Iranian delegation fully outlined their capabilities for exports of goods and products in various fields to Oman.

In the meeting, the ambassador welcomed the Iranian delegation and voiced his support to the private sector and vowed to help them to expand commercial and economic cooperation with Oman.



The Iranian delegation also attended an international expertise fair on mines in Oman.

Some 62 big companies from across the world such as Iran, Oman, Germany, England, Italy, Austria, Russia, France, India, Ukraine and the United Arab Emirates demonstrated their products and services in the international exhibition.

It is expected that some 15,000 people would visit the three-day international exhibition in Oman.

(Source: IRNA)

Annual copper concentrate output beats forecast

E C O N O M Y **TEHRAN** — Production of copper concentrate in Iran during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2019), was five percent more than the planned figure, IRIB reported citing the data released by Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO).

IMIDRO data put the country's copper concentrate output at 1.18 million tons in the past year, which is 1.123 million tons

more than the planned amount.

Also as reported, National Iranian Copper Company earned over 100 trillion rials (about \$2.38 billion) from the copper sales in the previous year, which was seven percent higher than the planned figure.

As announced by the directors of the company, achieving 150 trillion rials (about \$3.57 billion) from sales has been targeted for the current year.

Meanwhile, IMIDRO announced last week



that production of copper cathode and anode in the country exceeded the planned amount in the past Iranian year.

Iran National Copper Company produced

247,300 tons of copper cathode and 313,700 tons of copper anode in the previous year, showing 15 percent and 21 percent rise, respectively, from the projected figures.

Can European banks be saved by a fresh round of deal making?

The comparisons with U.S. peers just got a lot harder for European banks after a strong showing from J.P. Morgan to kick off earnings season, but could there be fresh revenue on the way for European investment banks, even if it is of their own making?

There's a mooted capital raising for Deutsche Bank before any possible consolidation with Commerzbank. Meanwhile, Italian lender UniCredit is waiting in the wings let alone any other rival jumping on the bandwagon.

European banks have found themselves wedged into the same category as basic resources back in 2015: uninvestable.

The European Central Bank (ECB) folded and conceded its current hand of cards meant no chance of hiking its benchmark interest rate for the foreseeable future, delivering a dose of realism.

The loser wasn't the ultra-dovish ECB President Mario Draghi, but bank investors stuck in a much dreaded value trap. Hope vanished for a long-awaited expansion in net interest margins (NIMs) for banks in 2019, which is essentially the profits that these banks make and is usually much better if rates are higher.

One banking commentator told CNBC this month that investors should forget about European banks' NIMs expanding for a few years now.

To be fair bank bosses are trying everything. UBS resorted to verbal kitchen sinking recently, telling investors it had been saddled with the worst start to the year in many years.

Others are keeping a brave face, Santander is steadfast it can deliver lofty ROTE (return on tangible equity) targets of 13 percent to 15 percent in the medium term, up from 11.7 percent last year — because it has done it before in the face of headwinds.

Then there is all the noise of consolidation driven by the German lenders Deutsche Bank and Commerzbank. Typically, this news flow would mean "game on" for buying on mere consolidation hopes. Just not in European banks where merger and acquisitions have been slim. Any sector action — and that's being kind using the word action — can be viewed as recovery after freefall last year.

There is a long laundry list of fears around the banks which can be best summarized as a lack of growth. But can deal-making actually save the day? Perhaps. Without growing capital, banks could be forced to sell assets or raise more capital. Activists have called for smaller investment banks at Deutsche Bank, Credit Suisse and Barclays so any extra business even from ill-fated mergers would be welcome.

(Source: CNBC)

Korea to launch 'open banking' system at year-end

South Korea's financial regulator plans to launch at the year's end an "open banking" system that grants financial technology firms access to the payment networks of commercial banks, moving forward the government's ongoing effort to spur fintech innovation.

The open banking network, scheduled to go live in December, will make way for the operation of all-in-one banking apps that allow users to access the money transfer and payment functions of various banks on a single platform.

The network's launch date was announced by the Financial Services Commission during an open banking seminar in Seoul on Monday. The regulator had first disclosed its open interbank network scheme in February and has since been preparing for its launch.

As of now, only banks have access to the financial payment network needed to facilitate money payments and transfers. Moreover, each bank is allowed to handle only its own services.

But the envisioned "open banking" network would allow fintech players to directly access these banks' networks, removing the cumbersome process of having to negotiate one-on-one network access arrangements with individual banks.

Lowering network usage fees is another main part of the FSC's open banking scheme. Banks currently charge around 400-500 won (35 to 45 cents) for each case handled. But with the new interbank network, this fee will be brought down to one-tenth of the current level, and even lower for smaller startups, according to market projections.

In doing so, the FSC aims to help Korea foster more successful fintech firms pursuing mobile money transfer and simplified payment services such as the likes of Toss, Naver Pay and Kakao Pay.

Despite a consensus that the open banking initiative will support Korea's fintech drive, concerns have been raised over issues such as data security and network stability maintenance.

One worry is that fintech firms, due to their smaller size and inexperience, may be more prone to security compromises when facilitating transactions under the open banking scheme.

The regulator has explained that the fintech players involved would be accessing the open network through the banks' systems, thereby lowering the associated risks. The FSC has also pledged to put in place independent security safeguards to ensure full customer protection.

Financial Services Commission Chairman Choi Jong-ku speaks during an open banking seminar held in Seoul, Monday.

The open banking scheme comes as the Korean government has designated fintech innovation as part of its key economic agenda going forward.

(Source: Korea Herald)

First Announcement

IN THE NAME OF GOD

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING

INTERNATIONAL TENDER NO. 97/122-61/03

Tender Holder:
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING (IRIB)

Subject of Tender:
Broadcasting the TV Network of Alkawthar in DVB-S/MPEG2 Format with Constant Bit Rate of 3.5 Mbps on Eutelsat 7WA @ 7.3° West, 11392, V, 27500 5/6, MENA Beam /KU Band for three years in accordance with the technical specifications and other terms and conditions mentioned in the tender documents.

Deadline and How to Receive the Tender Documents:
From **Wednesday 17 April 2019 (1398/01/28)** by **04:00 p.m.** on **Saturday 27 April 2019 (1398/02/07)** with presentation of introductory letter by company or its representative and the receipt of paying the documents fee.

Place of Receiving the Tender Documents:
Interested participants may refer to purchasing (KALA) Dept., 4th Floor of IRIB Administration Complex, Hotel Esteghlal St., Vali-e Asr Ave., Tehran Iran.

The Fee of the Tender Documents and How to Deposit it:
Submission of payment receipt for the amount of 1,000,000 Rials to account No. 4101029171204273 with BIC No. IR310100004101029171204273 IRAN Central Bank in the name of IRIB.

Type and Amount of Guarantee for Participation to Tender:
The amount of deposit for participant in tender is **USD 32,400** fixed or its equivalent in 4,500,000,000 Rials which should be in the form of Bank Guarantee.

Time and Place of Delivering Bidding Envelopes:
The sealed packages/envelopes should be submitted no later than **4 p.m.** on **Saturday 1st of June 2019 (1398/03/11)** and at the address mentioned in the 4th clause.

Time and Place of Opening Envelopes:
The date of opening the envelopes is on **Sunday 02 June 2019** at **03:00 p.m. (1398/03/12)** in the office of Financial Vice President. In case of complete content in the envelopes A, the envelope B including contract draft, Technical specifications and qualitative assessment analysis will be considered and opened. The Envelop C will be opened by only those eligible participants who meets the qualification criterion and approval of Technical and Commercial committee at the same time and place.

For more information, please see:
www.iriboffice.ir/tenders and http://iets.mporg.ir/ **Tel: 00982122167053**

Purchasing (Kala) Dept. of IRIB

Iran to award 5 oil projects to domestic firms in near future

By Ebrahim Fallahi

TEHRAN – National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) is planning to award five oil exploration and development projects to domestic companies, ISNA reported quoting an official with NIOC.

“Within a year, three or four exploration blocks will be developed by local firms,” ISNA quoted Saleh Hendi, the exploration director of NIOC as saying on Monday.

According to Hendi, one of these contracts will be with Negin Afagh Kish Energy Development Company (TENCO) which will be signed within two months for the Toudej oil block.

Earlier in February, for the first time, NIOC signed a memorandum of understanding with TENCO for geological and geophysical studies at Toudej, located in southern Fars province.

As reported by Shana, the MOU was signed between Saleh Hendi and Omid Asakereh, the managing director of TENCO Company, one of the 17 qualified exploration and production (E&P) companies.

Exploration Department of NIOC had previously announced that it was planning to transfer some exploration projects to the private companies and that MOU was the first signed in this due.

In a press conference in December, Hendi said: “Plans are underway to award exploration projects to domestic companies now that the U.S. is putting pressure on foreign companies to operate in Iran”.

Also, speaking in the 3rd Iran International Exploration and Production Congress and Exhibition (Iran E&P 2019)

held in Tehran on February 23, Hendi noted that like the mining sector in which mines are being developed by the private sector, NIOC should also award oil and gas fields development projects to capable private companies.

“Iran has huge resources of shale oil, shale gas and gas hydrates which have not yet been developed; exploration and development of these resources should be awarded to the private sector,” the official said.

“The private sector can well handle a significant part of the government’s responsibilities in the oil industry,” he said, adding that this could be initiated with small projects and small fields, and then move to bigger projects.

The budget bill for the current Iranian calendar year 1398, which began on March 21, 2019, indicates that the budget allocated to the development projects is not expected to see a noticeable rise in this year, and it is while there are over 80,000 semi-finished development projects in the country; so the government has invited the private sector to contribute to finishing them.

In this due, oil and gas sector as the main source of income for the country welcomes private sector’s presence in its projects, both in exploration and in development.

In development sector, as there are many exploration blocks waiting for implementation of projects, NIOC is seriously following up the plans to lay the ground for the private sector’s contribution.

As Hendi has announced, some 250 oil fields have been recently discovered throughout the country, while 120 fields have been developed, and there are 130 discovered gas fields, of them 100 fields have been developed.



Oil slips to \$71, hit by talk of higher OPEC+ production

Brent oil slipped to around \$71 a barrel on Tuesday, pressured by expectations of higher U.S. inventories and concern about Russia’s willingness to stick with OPEC-led supply cuts.

Analysts on average expect U.S. crude stockpiles to have risen by 1.9 million barrels last week, the fourth straight increase. The first of this week’s stockpile reports is due at 2030 GMT from the American Petroleum Institute.

“We have already seen these inventories going higher in the last week’s print,” said Naeem Aslam, chief market analyst at TF Global Markets in London.

“The rising inventory data has raised many questions for investors - no one wants to see the oil glut again.”

Brent crude, the global benchmark, was down 12 cents at \$71.06 a barrel at 0801 GMT. U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude gained 6 cents to \$63.46.

While OPEC-led supply cuts have boosted Brent by more than 30 percent this year, gains have been limited by worries that slowing economic growth could weaken demand for fuel.

Oil also fell on Monday after



comments from Russia raised concern the OPEC-led supply-cutting pact may not be renewed. Russia and the producer group may decide to boost output to fight for market share with the United States, TASS news agency ?ited Finance Minister Anton Siluanov as saying.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and other producers including Russia, an alliance known as OPEC+, have been cutting output since Jan. 1. They decide in June whether to continue the arrangement.

“There is a growing concern that Russia will not agree on extending production cuts and we could see them officially abandon it in the coming months,” said Edward Moya, senior market analyst at OANDA.

(Source: Reuters)

EU refiners turn to Russian crude as U.S. slaps more sanctions on Caracas

Although sanctions against Venezuelan crude are yet to come into effect, the country’s oil has essentially already been taken off the mainstream international market after the U.S. State Department piled direct pressure on foreign companies to scrap all oil-related deals.

European refiners have scrambled to switch to expensive Russian sour crude after U.S. sanctions hit Venezuela’s similar-grade exports, Reuters cited trading sources as saying.

The sources said that even though U.S. crude output is increasing and exports are due to soar later this year, it is not an alternative because American crude is overwhelmingly light and sweet, and European refineries are equipped to process heavier grades to make refined products.

As a result, the refineries are already competing to secure as much sour Russian Urals crude as they can, in a complete reversal of the traditional differential between light and heavy oil to the levels which have not been in place since 2013.

“Urals is anchored in a positive zone versus. dated Brent [light crude] and there is no indication it will fall to a discount any time soon,” a trading source at a European oil major noted.



It was echoed by another source underscoring that “all refiners are looking for Urals or an Urals replacement” and that “we see that it won’t be enough for everyone”.

The developments come after Washington slapped sanctions on Venezuela’s PDVSA state oil company, blocking \$7 billion of the company’s assets and pressuring businesses to cut ties with the firm by the 11 March deadline. The deadline, however, was then extended until 10 May.

Due to U.S.-imposed sanctions, Venezuela’s overall exports of crude oil reportedly dropped to 920,000 barrels per day (bpd) in the first month of sanctions, roughly 30 per cent less than the 1.5 million bpd traded in the prior three months.

(Source: Sputnik)

Oil's rally faces odds of demand worsening before getting better

Oil’s march back toward a four-year high is now facing some roadblocks in the form of demand in Asia, though the path may clear to allow further gains later this year.

While the current rally in global benchmark prices to over \$71 a barrel will put pressure on government finances in Asia’s import-dependent nations, the level of fiscal stress typically doesn’t determine their crude purchases. Instead, the volume of shipments is influenced by the state of demand for fuel from industries and consumers in the world’s biggest oil-consuming region.

In a discouraging sign for oil bulls, some indicators of consumption such as diesel profit margins have shown signs of weakness recently. That may hamper crude’s rally, which has so far been driven by OPEC’s output cuts and concerns over tight supplies. Still, market watchers see the effect as temporary, and predict fuel demand will rebound later in 2019.

“Demand for crude in Asia and other regions is directly dependent upon downstream fuel margins,” said Tushar Tarun Bansal, trading and downstream expert at McKinsey & Co. “In the near term, what we’re observing are weak margins and higher-than-usual planned refinery maintenance in Asia,” said Singapore-based Bansal.

The following charts show the state of fuel markets in Asia and the outlook for the coming months.

Crude influence


The effect of fuel margins on purchasing patterns was illustrated in China last year. Asia’s biggest crude importer received record foreign supplies near the end of 2018, a result of purchase decisions made about 60 days earlier when Asian refining profits were near their highest level for the year.

The nation’s largest-ever oil haul came shortly after Brent futures topped \$86 a barrel. In the following months, the country’s imports fell, even as crude slipped into a bear market, coinciding with a drop in returns from making fuel.

The profit from turning crude into fuels in Asia slumped to \$2.75 a barrel, the lowest in over two years, in January after averaging almost \$6 in the second half of 2018, according to data compiled from Oil Analytics Ltd., a firm that tracks hundreds of refining margins worldwide. While this so-called crack spread has since recovered to nearly \$5, it’s still well below November levels.

(Source: Bloomberg)

In the Name of God



شهرت تونگوویان پتروشیمی

Shahid Tondgooyan Petrochemical Company

Call for Identify Resources

Shahid Tondgooyan Petrochemical Company (STPC) intends to identify the following chemical suppliers which are qualified.

Subject:

ROW	CHEMICAL NAME	CONSUMPTION RATE (TON/YEAR)
1	ISOPHETALIC ACID	5000
2	TITANUM DIOXIDE	600
3	ANTIMONY (III) OXIDE	110
4	ANTIMONY (III) ACETATE	150
5	HYDROBROMIC ACID	250
6	Cobalt Acetate	60
7	CMB	600
8	Terminol 66	Up to process condition
9	SHELL OIL	Up to process condition

General Conditions of Suppliers & Specialized Degree Necessary:

1. Have at least 2 years relevant experience to chemical
2. License agency or distribution agency
3. Business cards

Submit the bid bond for tenders

Place & Deadline of Receive Evaluation Forms:

Legal & Contracts Affairs, Phase # 1, (STPC), Site # 4, Petrochemical Economic Special Zone (PESZ), Bandar Imam Khomeini, Khuzestan Province, Iran, **06152172045**

It shall be given latest by 16:00 pm on **27/April/19**.

Place & Deadline of Submission Evaluation Forms Document:

Legal & Contracts Affairs, Phase # 1, (STPC), Site # 4, Petrochemical Economic Special Zone (PESZ), Bandar Imam Khomeini, Khuzestan Province, Iran.


It should be submitted latest by 16:00 pm on **08/May/19**.

Contacts: You can contact any of the addresses below:

Email: Moradpour.a@stpc.ir

Tel: 061 521 – 72045 Fax: 061 521 – 72043

Second Announcement



Call for public tender (First/Second publish)

One -Stages (semi compressed) tender

N.I.O.C Subject of Tender: AIR MOTOR FOR VARCO PNEUMATIC SAFETY **National Iranian**

1398.176 **SPINNING MODEL SS-W10** **Drilling Company**

Tender descriptions:

The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. /Indent No.	Estimated value (Rial/Euro)
National Iranian Drilling Company	363/197/3	Tender No.: FP/04-98/008 Indent No.: 08-22-9785003	18,000,000,000

Qualitative evaluation of tenders

Method	
	R Based on minimum scoring (60 Points) made in award criterion reflected in the tenders pre-qualification forms.
	1- Applicants which have more than 4 in process contacts with NIDC are not allowed to participate in this tender. 2- Applicants which have more than 2 in process contacts with NIDC in similar subject (exclusively same subject) are not allowed to participate in another tender

Purchasing & Submitting

Tender Document Distribution by Company	Distribution Place	Submitting Method
	Hall No.:113, 1 st floor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN 061-34148652	Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of \$10,000 Iranian Rials under account number 4001114006376636 (Shaba No. IR 350100004001114006376636) in name of "NIDC Income Centralized Fund", issued by I.R. of Iran Central Bank Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents
Documents Receiving Method	Closing date	Address
	Days after the last time of Purchasing 14	Hall No. 107, 1 st floor, Tender Committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel: +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569

Tender Guarantee

Value of guarantee	Rial/ Euro
Type of guarantee	✓Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran. ✓Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 4001114006376636 (Shaba No. IR 350100004001114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.
Duration of credit & quotation	Tender Guarantee & quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration.

(Foreign Procurement Dept.)
More of this & other tenders are accessible by click on:
www.nidc.ir http://sapp.ir/nidc_pr

تهران تایمز نویت اول ۹/۱/۱۳۹۸ نویت دوم ۹/۱/۱۳۹۸

In World War II Lend-Lease saved countless lives — but probably didn't win the Eastern Front

Around 80 percent of the more than five million German military deaths in World War II occurred on the Eastern Front. This terrible conflict with the Red Army consumed great quantities of men and material until the Soviets decisively ended the war by capturing Berlin in May 1945.

During that time, the Red Army underwent a radical transformation, having been decimated by Joseph Stalin's purges before Hitler's armies invaded on June 22, 1941, inflicting horrendous losses.

But as the war progressed, the two sides effectively traded places, with the Red Army honing a mechanized "deep battle" doctrine that more closely resembled earlier German tactics — just as the German army fell into disarray as war-time casualties took their toll.

All the while, the Western Allies provided enormous quantities of supplies and other aid under the Lend-Lease policy. The United States and the United Kingdom supplied more than 21 million tons of aid to the Soviet Union during the war, including thousands of tanks and warplanes.

But the question of how much this aid affected the outcome of the war would become important not only for historians, but as a matter of national pride, as the Soviet Union went on to diminish Lend-Lease's role in helping turn the tide of battle. Western historians would, perhaps for similar reasons, overstate the role of the aid in Soviet success.

■ Lend-Lease shortened the war

The reality was a bit more complicated — and perhaps inconclusive. Most likely, the Soviets would have won regardless, as the Eastern Front for the Germans was unwinnable after the Battle of Stalingrad, before most of the aid to the USSR arrived. But Lend-Lease also certainly helped shorten the war and saved lives.

The Allies supplied more than 12,000 tanks to the Soviet Union. More than 5,000 came from the United Kingdom and Canada and included Valentine, Churchill and Matilda tanks. The United States, for its part, supplied nearly 1,400 M3 Lee tanks and more than 4,000 M4 Shermans.

While a substantial amount, these numbers were small in comparison to the tens of thousands of T-34s — the Red Army's mainstay — produced during the conflict. The T-34 boasted superior armor, maneuverability and firepower.

The British tanks, having been supplied earlier in the war, were particularly handy in 1941 and 1942, the most decisive period in the war. But Soviet tankers were not fond of the British machines, especially the early-generation Valentines and Matildas, which had small turrets and underpowered cannons.

To be sure, the tanks were better than nothing, but out-matched in direct tank-on-tank combat with the latest German Panzers then rolling out of the Third Reich's factories. David Glantz, a historian and author of *When Titans Clashed: How the Red Army Stopped Hitler*, noted that Soviet tankers preferred the American tanks to the British ones, but preferred Soviet ones most of all.

The "Sherman's" narrow treads made it much less mobile on mud than its German and Soviet counterparts, and it consumed great quantities of fuel," Glantz wrote. "In fact, U.S. Army Ordnance planners had standardized this width early in the war to ensure that Shermans would fit onto ocean transports and across existing U.S. bridging equipment, two considerations that meant nothing to the Soviets."

Which is something of an irony. The Sherman's standardized tread width, which the Soviets didn't like, helped get the tanks from the United States to the Soviet Union in the first place.

The Soviet Union and the Western Allies took different approaches to air power during the Second World War. In the West, advocates of strategic bombing and interceptors won out, and resulted in air arms which were well-equipped at striking deep into Germany.

The Soviet Union had different priorities, and preferred aircraft suited toward striking targets on the battlefield. The armored Ilyushin Il-2 ground-attack plane embodied this different concept — and the Soviets produced more than 36,000 during the war, more than any other military aircraft in history.

The Soviets were thus disappointed in the 4,700 U.S. P-39 Aircobras — although they were effective — and 3,000 British Hawker Hurricanes supplied under Lend-Lease. Far more consequential were the thousands of Western transport aircraft which bolstered the Red Army's logistical backbone, and A-20 Havoc light bombers which contributed to Soviet offensive maneuvers.

The most significant chunk of Lend-Lease was less obvious. Trucks by the hundreds of thousands enabled the Red Army to mechanize itself, thereby allowing it to deepen and capitalize on armored breakthroughs through German lines, worsening Axis losses and speeding up the pace of the war.

This was the "deep battle" doctrine's circulatory system and was key to the eventual Soviet victory. Without trucks, thousands if not millions more Soviet soldiers could have lost their lives in attacks on prepared German positions, as the Germans would have had more time to fall back and prepare.

With the trucks, the Soviets could continue pressing the Axis armies, keeping them off balance, all the way back to the Berlin.

■ Vast quantities of fuel

The Allies also supplied vast quantities of fuel, clothing, machine guns, ammunition, metals, radios and industrial equipment — all of which softened the war's blow to the USSR's agricultural and industrial base.

"Without Lend-Lease ... the Soviet economy would have been even more heavily burdened by the war effort," Glantz noted.

But it's unlikely the aid turned the war entirely in the Soviet Union's favor, as the German military was overstretched even during the 1941 invasion. That vulnerability was exposed terribly during the Red Army's 1941–1942 Moscow counter-offensive — and it's unlikely Germany would have won the war even if it had captured Moscow. And that was when Lend-Lease was just beginning.

But Lend-Lease certainly helped in many ways. "If the Western Allies had not provided equipment and invaded northwest Europe (our emphasis)], Stalin and his commanders might have taken twelve to eighteen months longer to finish off the Wehrmacht," Glantz noted.

The "result would probably have been the same, except that Soviet soldiers would have waded at France's Atlantic beaches rather than meeting the Allies at the Elbe."

(Source: *nationalinterest.org*)

The art of revolution: What went right in Sudan and Algeria

By Marwan Bishara

Sudan and Algeria can easily evoke memories of the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions of 2010 and 2011. Like their neighbors, Sudanese and Algerian protesters managed to overthrow their autocratic leaders after decades of rule, in a matter of months, and without a single shot fired.

Marching, chanting, resisting and daring, the people of Sudan and Algeria pressed on with their calls for freedom and democracy until they were able to disarm the old guard - politicians and generals alike - and force them to acquiesce to their initial demands.

It may still be too early to judge, but so far it looks like these latecomers have learned important lessons from Arab as well as other revolutions. In fact, Sudan and Algeria may well be able to deter the counter-revolution and avert the dangers of civil war.

So far, revolutionaries in Sudan and Algeria are still firmly on the path of non-violence, a la Tunisia and Egypt.

Peaceful protest has proven the least costly and the most constructive among all possible strategies and scenarios, not only to confront repression, but also to pave the way for democracy. Indeed, non-violent revolutions are most capable of splitting the regime's rank and file and straining its legitimacy.

If history is any guide, violent revolts tend to coalesce and galvanize a dictatorship's base, making it harder to bring down. They also produce alternative leadership that is no less violent than the repressive regimes they aim to overthrow.

Those who fight and kill their opponents with enthusiasm and determination are likely to turn against their allies and people with equal vengeance.

■ Non-violent strategies

But for civil disobedience, boycott, demonstrations and other forms of non-violent strategies to work, they require popular mobilization. In Algeria and Sudan, people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds, young and old, women and men, secular and religious came together in their demand for freedom and better living.

Sudan's leading popular voice, the Sudanese Professionals Association, reflected this embrace of inclusiveness rather brilliantly in its recent call to put "Christ at the heart of the revolution", asking Christians and people of all other confessions to participate in a day of civil disobedience and worship for peace.

Such inclusion of different elements of society prevents the regime from taking advantage of any potential splits or feelings of alienation, as has happened in both Syria and Egypt, in order to discredit the revolution and justify repression against its supporters.

Inclusion also means readiness to incorporate segments of the old order into the movement for change. Not only does this broaden the popular base of the revolution, but it also diminishes the regime's authority and hastens its demise.

Autocrats depend on a system of political and financial patronage that involves the participation of certain segments of society mostly out of economic necessity, not political loyalty.

Condemning or alienating those middle-



A greater popular mobilization behind the revolution ensures greater participation in the ensuing democratic process, which guarantees its long-term consolidation.

and low-ranking bureaucrats or government employees, including teachers and policemen, is counterproductive and harmful; attracting and incorporating them in the revolution can contribute to its potential success.

A greater popular mobilization behind the revolution ensures greater participation in the ensuing democratic process, which guarantees its long-term consolidation.

A revolution is a thrilling, liberating rush of social and political adrenaline, but even with broad support, its long-term success depends on consistency and perseverance. The pressure can't ease just because the despot is gone. What must come next is a slow, tedious, and deliberate process of organization, negotiation and reconciliation.

Without it, any revolution ends in the dustbins of history.

For, if people return home to business-as-usual after the fall of an autocrat, they allow the old regime to reconstitute itself in one form or another.

Unlike totalitarian revolutions, where change is swift, brutal and decisive, democratic revolutions require time, discipline and endurance.

Historically, democracy comes after big disruptions, and in long phases and stages; it almost never evolves in a linear fashion. The French Revolution, which took decades to realize its potential, is a good example.

Changing an autocrat might be hard; changing the system behind him is even harder. The important question for all revolutions is not who but what comes after.

The Algerian and Sudanese people seem well aware of that. They celebrated the bloodless ouster of Bouteflika and al-Bashir, but they did so knowing well that this was only the beginning of a very long and fraught process.

The swift introduction of substitute leaders from within the old system in both countries underlined the need for more comprehensive

thinking about the way forward.

In both Algeria and Sudan, the protesters know they need to get the military on their side and on their terms, like in Tunisia, in order to avoid an Egypt-like scenario.

■ Tunisia's experience

Tunisia's experience also teaches that protests must go on until a new transparent system of accountability is in place. This means knowing not only whom you oppose, but also what you want both in the short and long term. It's rather easy to be against corrupt repressive leaders, but much harder to articulate and implement a vision for a better future.

This brings us to the old chicken-and-egg riddle: What comes first, democracy or democrats? For how is it possible to nurture democracy without democrats, or democrats without democracy?

The simple answer is: They come in tandem. It takes experience and courage to foster them.

Democracy is no panacea. It is a lot of work and results can be mixed, sometimes undemocratic, even after decades and centuries of democratic rule. Just look at the rise of fascist anti-democratic right-wing parties in a number of leading democracies.

And in the Arab world, liberal democracy, the truest form of democracy, may indeed be seen as a controversial idea or a foreign import by traditional and conservative portions of society.

All of this means that there is a need for open debate, for trial and error, which takes time - lots of time. And that is why priority needs to be given to a gradual transition over immediate elections - something the revolutionaries of both Sudan and Algeria seem to insist on.

They demand a transition into civilian, not military rule - one that prepares the political and legal frameworks to hold free and fair elections.

Rushing to the polls immediately is certain to privilege older, more organized parties and fracture the newly formed groups driving the revolution, as they compete for power. Egypt is a good example of how the ancien regime can exploit post-election tensions between liberal secularist and conservative Islamists to mount a coup against an elected president.

This does not mean open-ended transition that drags on endlessly.

As the new Sudanese Freedom and Change alliance, a public committee representing the demands of the protesters, proposes, a four-year period may be suitable to stabilize the country politically and economically and chart a new way forward.

Algeria seems to follow suit, as it has rejected the announcement of presidential elections in July under the same old rules. Now that Algerian judges have decided to boycott supervising such premature elections, the pressure is building up for their postponement until the country is ready.

Meanwhile, another crucial process that has to take place is managing expectations. Like their neighbors before them, Algerians and Sudanese who have risked a lot in the struggle for regime change, will come to expect a lot.

The Sudanese who revolted against al-Bashir for the lack of bread and fuel, will expect - indeed, demand - solutions not slogans from the transitional government.

No doubt, many confuse democracy with prosperity in the West. Democracy may facilitate creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship, but it does not guarantee a higher standard of living, at least not in the short term.

And in a heavily indebted, underdeveloped nation with few national sources of income, freedom and democracy may generate more anger than wealth.

■ Developments in Sudan and Algeria

So far developments in Sudan and Algeria have gone in the right direction, but there is also a lot that can still go wrong, considering the road to democracy is full of traps and pitfalls.

If recent "Arab Spring" experiences are anything to go by, the worst is yet to come, especially, as the generals continue to vie for control.

But the long silenced Sudanese and Algerians majorities and their invisible elites have defied all the scare campaigns that warned of a descent into chaos.

They have rejected all forms of domestic and foreign intervention, especially military intervention, to avoid the destruction seen in Libya, Syria and Yemen.

In short, they prefer to be self-reliant, buoyantly industrious and innovative revolutionaries.

And it sure takes innovation to confront violence with non-violence, to protest loudly and negotiate calmly, to raise the stakes and reduce the risks, to elevate the aspirations and limit the expectations. It will also take more creativity to continue to use accessible means to realize inaccessible ends.

The art of revolution entails deep societal transformation to ensure the sustainability and durability of political transformation.

(Source: *aljazeera.com*)

Is America becoming an oligarchy? Growing inequality threatens our most basic democratic principles.

By Michael Tomasky

Pete Buttigieg, who's shown an impressive knack for putting matters well in these early days of the 2020 presidential race, nailed it recently when Chuck Todd of NBC asked him about capitalism. Of course I'm a capitalist, he said; America "is a capitalist society."

But, he continued: "It's got to be democratic capitalism." Mr. Buttigieg said that when capitalism becomes unrestrained by democratic checks and impulses, that's no longer the kind of capitalism that once produced broad prosperity in this country.

"If you want to see what happens when you have capitalism without democracy, you can see it very clearly in Russia," he said. "It turns into crony capitalism, and that turns into oligarchy."

Aside from enabling Mr. Buttigieg, the South Bend, Ind., mayor, to swat away a question that has bedeviled some others, his rhetoric reminds us of a crucial point: There is, or should be, a democratic element to capitalism — and an economic element to how we define democracy.

After all, oligarchy does have an economic element to it; in fact, it is explicitly economic. Oligarchy is the rule of the few, and these few have been understood since Aristotle's time to be men of wealth, property, nobility, what have you.

But somehow, as the definition of democracy has been handed down to us over the years, the word has come to mean the existence and exercise of a few basic rights and principles. The people — the "demos" — are imbued with no particular economic characteristic. This is wrong. Our definition of democracy needs to change.

■ Democracy can't flourish

Democracy can't flourish in a context of grotesque concentration of wealth. This idea is neither new nor radical nor alien. It is old, mainstream and as American as Thomas Jefferson.



I invoke Jefferson for a reason. Everyone knows how he was occupying his time in the summer of 1776; he was writing the Declaration of Independence.

But what was he up to that fall? He was a member of the Virginia House of Delegates, and he was taking the lead in writing and sponsoring legislation to abolish the commonwealth's laws upholding "entail" (which kept large estates within families across generations) and primogeniture.

Mere coincidence that he moved so quickly from writing the founding document of democracy to writing a bill abolishing inheritance laws brought over from England? Hardly. He believed, as the founders did generally, that excess inherited wealth was fundamentally incompatible with democracy.

■ Oppressive economic problem

They were most concerned with inherited wealth, as was the Scottish economist Adam Smith, whom conservatives invoke constantly today but who would in fact be appalled by the propagandistic phrase "death tax" — in their time, inherited wealth was the oppressive economic problem.

But their economic concerns weren't limited to that. They

saw clearly the link between democratic health and general economic prosperity. Here is John Adams, not exactly Jefferson's best friend: All elements of society, he once wrote, must "cooperate in this one democratical principle, that the end of

all government is the happiness of the People: and in this other, that the greatest happiness of the greatest Number is the point to be obtained." "Happiness" to the founders meant economic well-being, and note that Adams called it "democratical."

So, yes, democracy and the kind of economic inequality we've seen in this country in recent decades don't mix. Some will rejoice that many nations even more unequal than ours are still democracies — South Africa, Brazil, India. But are those the models to which the United States of America should aspire?

A number of scholars have made these arguments in recent years, notably Ganesh Sitaraman in his book "The Crisis of the Middle-Class Constitution." All that work has been vitally important. But now that some politicians are saying it, we can finally have the broad national conversation we've desperately needed for years.

Bernie Sanders has proposed an inheritance tax that the founders would love, and Elizabeth Warren has proposed a wealth tax of which they'd surely approve. But you don't have to be a supporter of either of those candidates or their plans to get behind the general idea that great concentration of wealth is undemocratic.

Policies built around this idea will not turn America into the Soviet Union or, in the au courant formulation, Venezuela. They will make it the nation the founders intended. And this, as Mr. Buttigieg's words suggest, is how Democratic candidates should answer the socialism question (with the apparent exception of the socialist Mr. Sanders). No, I'm a capitalist. And that's why I want capitalism to change.

(Source: *The NYT*)

Lost Malaysian hopes and the Pakatan catch 22

By Murray Hunter

ASIA SENTINEL — It took the Malaysian opposition more than a generation to topple the Barisan Nasional government, led by the now-discredited United Malays National Organization. Throughout mosques, coffee shops and markets in Malaysia, there has been an atmosphere of hope and anticipation by many for change that goes all the way back to when Mahathir Mohamed dismissed Anwar Ibrahim as deputy prime minister back in 1998 and jailed him in a trial regarded universally as trumped up.

From that day on Anwar Ibrahim became synonymous for reform in Malaysia. The charismatic opposition leader, from jail and out, managed to unite a wide diversity of NGOs and most of the opposition parties against the Barisan. But it took 20 years and reports by the Sarawak Report, the Wall Street Journal, Asia Sentinel and others to expose what is now known as the 1Malaysia Development Bud scandal which tainted Prime Minister Najib Razak as a complete crook and his wife as a grasping harriidan. Najib shut down critical parts of the local media and sacked the Attorney General before charges could be laid against him.

Mahathir, in quasi-private life through two administrations, once again mobilized forces to remove Najib, creating Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM) with the help of defectors from UMNO and joining the Pakatan Harapan coalition led from prison by his nemesis Anwar.

The 2018 election became a Mahathir-vs-Najib contest, where Najib was almost universally expected to hold onto power. There seemed to be an air of disillusionment with the electoral process and apathy during the campaign. However, voter turnout was more than 82 percent. The Pakatan Harapan coalition defeated Najib, who was prevented from fleeing the country in a private aircraft for Indonesia. The surprised public instantaneously became euphoric, celebrating in the streets. Many Malaysians believed they would now get the reform and change they had long hoped for.

■ The Pakatan Catch 22

However, the defeat of the Barisan exposed a very complex electorate. Different groups of voters made their decisions for different reasons. Non-Malays saw the removal of the Barisan as the end of a dark apartheid era in which every citizen would be regarded as equal, as was promised by sections of the Harapan manifesto. In contrast, many urban, professional and middle-class Malays hoped that Mahathir would clean up the mess the country was in. Voters in rural Malaysia, particularly in Kelantan and Terengganu, didn't switch at all. They went to the rural Islamist Parti Islam se-Malaysia, or PAS. The small northern state of Perlis remained staunchly Barisan.

There is now a deep polarization in the Malaysian electorate between those who want



a Malaysian Malaysia and those who want a Malay Malaysia. This is a massive dilemma for the reform government.

A major part of the electorate sees reform as a threat to special privileges that they have received since the advent of the New Economic Policy, an affirmative action policy for the Malay majority, in 1971. Three generations of education and political narrative have created this sense of privilege, which is deeply engrained in rural Malays. These sentiments are being played upon politically to the point where the government has had to stall decisions about child marriage and reverse its decision to ratify the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD).

In addition, the Pakatan government is being subjected to pressure from sections of the Malaysian royalty, which led to the reversal in ratifying the Rome Statute, a prelude to joining the International Criminal Court, and the resignation of Johor Chief Minister Osman Sapien.

The government now faces a situation in which any future policy decisions and reforms must be framed from a Bumiputera perspective and agreed in royal circles. This is particularly the case as the government is extremely slow with any electoral reform, which would effectively weaken opposition to policy reform, through adopting the principle of "one vote, one value." Without electoral reform, any policy reversals will favor the newly formed UNMO-PAS alliance with its narrative pandering to the rural Malay electorate.

The Pakatan government needs to very quickly undertake electoral reform to counter the strength of the conservative electorate. Currently a rural vote can be worth anything up to four times an urban one. It is this imbalance that is providing UMNO-PAS with a powerful base from which to prevent the government pushing through any reform agenda.

However the latest news on electoral reform is that the Election Commission and

UNDP will only make a joint study about the electoral system in the coming months, far too long for something that is threatening the very long-term livelihood of the government.

■ More of the same

With this inaction on electoral reform, it could be argued that the May 9 general election was not about vital reform needed in the country, but rather replacing one leadership group with another. In many respects the Pakatan government is acting just like its predecessor. The reform report handed down by the Council of Eminent Persons (CEP) has been suppressed by the Official Secrets Act, indicating the new government doesn't place a high priority on transparency.

The Sedition Act has not been repealed and is in fact being used to prosecute political opponents. The Anti-Corruption Agency (MACC) still cannot decide who to prosecute independently. Cabinet ministers have had corruption charges quickly dismissed against them. Political appointees are still being appointed to government-linked companies and statutory bodies.

Mahathir's Parti Bersatu and Parti Keadilan Rakyat, the two Malay parties in the Pakatan Harapan coalition, both strongly resemble UMNO right down to the internal politics and squabbles. With defectors from UMNO freely running across to Parti Bersatu, the parties are looking more like a new UMNO.

In defense of the Pakatan Government, Mahathir has worked hard to form an operational government from a broad group of parties. However many within the cabinet are very inexperienced, and there is a strong sense of inertia and apathy coming from the largely ethnic Malay civil service, with stories of sabotage against the new government.

Even with Mahathir back in power, changing institutions that have been inefficiently built and harboring wasteful cronies of the previous government is very difficult. However what is sad to see is that many of these cronies are still being reappointed to positions of power.

The old guard still are very clearly in charge of the new government, which has a "back to the future" quality about it. Old rivalries continue. The Anwar-Mahathir power struggle continues from the 1990s. Gamesmanship seems to be a trademark of the new government. There are many disappointed with not being given plumb jobs and important positions within the new administration.

Consequently, the Pakatan ministry is more a transition than reform one. The country must mark time until Anwar takes over from Mahathir to become prime minister. The country is waiting for someone who currently has no position in government. The country is waiting for someone they don't really know very well.

Anwar Ibrahim was the education minister who introduced Malay medium at schools, which many claimed was a major setback to the country's education system. Anwar advocated IMF intervention in the 1997 Asian financial crisis. Anwar is well known for saying different things to different audiences.

From Anwar's actions and stands taken over the years, he seems to be more a pragmatist rather than a visionary leader. Most of the policies he has advocated are populist, even though they may not be in Malaysia's best interests such as the abolition of the goods and services tax that Najib put in place, denying the government a critical source of revenue, and maintenance of fuel subsidies. Anwar's politics have been high in gamesmanship at a time the country really needs to get down and focus on the social, economic, financial, and institutional problems facing it.

As a sideshow, Najib, still active despite charges against him for looting IMDB, is looking for a political solution to his problems rather than a legal one. Current electoral demographics favor him. The UMNO-Pas alliance will enable Najib to skillfully exploit the insular side of the electorate. The Pakatan government's mistakes have shown up electorally in the last two by-election results. Najib also knows, if he can say out of jail, that he will not be facing Mahathir in the next election. Most probably he will be facing Anwar, who has made many strategic blunders over the years in election campaigns.

Malaysians are very quickly losing hope in their new government, especially with the Malay-Malaysian narratives that are creeping into the arena. With the Pakatan government waiting for its new leader and its current leader going back to his old policies of the 1980s and 90s with flying cars, the Singapore aggravation, looking East, privatization and a secretive executive government, real economic and market reforms are not on the agenda, even though some of these reforms are very doable.

Institutionalized discrimination appears to be strengthening rather than being eliminated. The new narratives Pakatan members talked about during the election have all disappeared. The national mindset is going back to an insular view of the world.

Time to ditch U.S. Dollar

TEHRAN (FNA) — The United States government has been using the dollar as a convenient weapon of choice to preserve its global economic and geopolitical position for many decades. This has been evident through illegal sanctions for Iran, Russia and Venezuela, as well as members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

For instance, in the last week, and in a response to a potential passage of the bipartisan No Oil Producing and Exporting Cartels Act, known as NOPEC, in Congress that would enable the U.S. Justice Department to sue OPEC for coordinating production, Saudi Arabia threatened to sell its oil in currencies other than the dollar. It said the plan had been discussed with OPEC members and that Riyadh had communicated the threat to senior U.S. energy officials. Then later, Riyadh denied the report that it was threatening to sell its oil in currencies other than the dollar for passing NOPEC.

The implications of this new development are immense. The chances of the U.S. bill coming into force might be slim and Saudi Arabia might not follow through. But that Saudi Arabia now claims it never considered such a drastic step is a telltale sign of the kingdom's growing concern about Washington's potential use of that convenient weapon to exert pressure, freeze assets, and challenge OPEC members.

During this process of reflection, Washington has weaponized the dollar anyhow, and this has prompted many countries to consider abandoning it as a medium of world trade. Russia, Iran and China have been trading in national currencies to weaken Washington's ability to enforce illegal sanctions on nation states.

The idea to ditch the dollar has also gained momentum in Europe since U.S. President Donald Trump came to office. Trump has waged tariff wars against Canada, Mexico, the European Union and China. His assault on the global trading system has backfired and these countries have decided to move and diversify their trade away from the dollar in order to minimize the negative impacts of U.S. tariffs.

Russia, which is subject to illegal sanctions, is selling oil in euros and China's Yuan, and the proportion of its sales in those currencies has become significant in recent years. Venezuela and Iran, which are also under U.S. sanctions, sell most of their oil in other currencies and have switched to non-dollar trading systems, even barter.

Likewise, several commodity-producing countries want to follow through and join the club of non-dollar traders — from lending to exchange clearing, and through Yuan, euro and ruble pricing. This could include trading in derivatives such as oil futures and options, which is still dollar denominated. When this happens, and it will happen, as many nations are opposed to the U.S. dollar as the world's reserve currency, the rest of the world market will follow suit to operate in a non-dollar environment.

The moment, therefore, is ripe for the world market to move trade out of the U.S. currency and into other currencies in settlements. In today's multilateral world, it has become increasingly irritable for nations to purchase securities, goods and services in the U.S. dollar.

They want to opt for national currencies and ditch the greenback as a currency in their trade. This has become the new policy for countries like Iran which has no access to dollar-dominated SWIFT transactions because of the U.S. sanctions.

Removing the U.S. dollar as an export and import payment currency has made life easier for Iran, for those who want to buy the Iranian oil, and for those who are under Western sanctions. They have largely quit the dollar as a transaction currency and replaced it with national currencies.

Other commodity-producing countries could and should stop using the U.S. dollar in global trade as well. They could use national currencies to reduce dependence on the greenback. This way, they can curb their exposure to dollar movement risks and the effects of illegal U.S. sanctions and trade wars which typically feature cutting off their access to international trade and dollar-dominated transactions.

Paris brands Yellow Vests anti-semitic justifying atrocious violence: expert

➔ ■ Why do French mainstream politicians and media claim that a rise in anti-Semitic acts is due to the Yellow Vests demonstrations?

A: The Yellow Vests are an anti-government and anti-establishment movement, so we should not be surprised that from their very first march mainstream politicians and the mainstream media sought to slander and discredit them. The charge that the rise in anti-Semitic acts (which is not really a rise, but a return to the historical average) is due to the Yellow Vests is simply the latest attempt to slur and weaken the movement. Such charges serve to discourage people from publicly sympathizing with or marching alongside the Yellow Vests. It also provides a justification - for some - for the atrocious violence the French state wages weekend after weekend.

The obvious reality is that the Yellow Vests' demands are not at all ethnic or racial, but are political, social and fiscal. Yellow Vests openly marched in the recent nationwide protests against anti-Semitism.

I think the accusation that the Yel-



low Vests are anti-Semitic was greatly weakened after Macron announced, shockingly, that he would seek to ban anti-Zionism, falsely claiming it is a form of anti-Semitism. The accusations, the marches, the media coverage - it seems like all that was setting up this attempt to criminalize

opposition to Zionism.

■ In your opinion, can Yellow Vests movement be hijacked by any groups?

A: No, I am rather certain that this is impossible because the Yellow Vests are a mass movement which is open to all, regardless of any identity

such as ethnicity, religion, gender, etc. Polls show that 70% of France supports the Yellow Vests, which is a huge majority in politics but an unheard of score for a protest movement. So, because it is a mass movement which is so very popular, that means almost every part of society is represented - that makes it impossible to hijack.

Of course, because every part of the political spectrum is represented, this means that some far-right, racist members of society are part of the Yellow Vests. But to focus on them is totally disingenuous, because the ant-establishment nature of the movement obviously gives them a leftist tone, overall.

The Yellow Vests are a class-based movement: they are against France's upper-class. They are also against mainstream politicians, which is why the far-left and the far-right are the most sympathetic. However, much like Italy's Five-Star movement, neither are able to dominate the Yellow Vests, and I think that both will also eventually unite due to their rejection of France's establishment.

Merkel worries about European parliamentary elections


➔ As "Telegraph" reported, Angela Merkel has upset the new leader of her Christian Democratic party (CDU) party by cancelling a key hustings for the European elections, leading to speculation that the two leading figures in German politics have fallen out over the party's new identity.

Merkel has informed Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer at the eleventh hour that she will not travel to Munster to jointly open the CDU campaign

for May's European elections, Welt am Sonntag reported on Sunday. The last minute snub is a major embarrassment to Ms Kramp-Karrenbauer, who had already informed party colleagues that the Chancellor was to appear and ordered corresponding security measures to be taken.

As can be seen, Merkel has a lot of concerns ahead of the European Parliamentary elections. Concerns that will certainly increase in the event of the failure of traditional German and European parties.


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National Iranian Drilling Company

Tender descriptions:

The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. /Indent No.	Estimated value (Rial/Euro)
National Iranian Drilling Company	3.197.301	Tender No.: FP/04-97/051 Indent No.: 08-22-974809	57.600.000.000

Qualitative evaluation of tenders

Method	R Based on minimum scoring (60 Points) made in award criterion reflected in the tenderers pre-qualification forms.
	1- Applicants which have more than 4 in process contacts with NIDC are not allowed to participate in this tender . 2- Applicants which have more than 2 in process contacts with NIDC in similar subject (exclusively same subject) are not allowed to participate in another tender.

Purchasing & Submitting

Tender Document Distribution by Company	The distribution of the documents will be started one day after the publishing of second advertisement and ended on the following tenth day thereof.
Distribution Place	Hall No. 113, 1 st floor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN 061-34148652
Submitting Method	Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 510,000 Iranian Rials under account number 400114006376636 (Shaba No. IR 52010000400114006376636) in name of "NIDC Incomes Centralized Fund" issued by I.R. of Iran Central Bank Submitting formal Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents
Closing date	Days after the last time of Purchasing 14
Documents Receiving Method	Hall No. 107, 1 st floor, Tender Committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel: +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569

Tender Guarantee

Value of guarantee	2,652,000,000 Rial/ 55,128 Euro
Type of guarantee	✓Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran ✓Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 400114006376636 (Shaba No. IR 35010000400114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.
Duration of credit & quotation	Tender Guarantee & quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration

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renovated, parking
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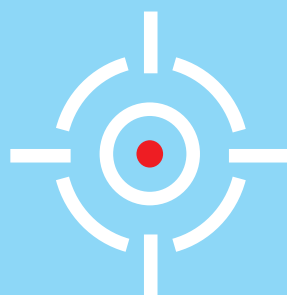
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Iran to host World Health Summit regional meeting

HEALTH DESK TEHRAN — Iran will host The World Health Summit (WHS), one of the world's most prominent forums for addressing global health issues, announced the Iranian deputy health minister for research and technology.

The World Health Summit Regional Meeting 2019 is organized by Tehran University of Medical Sciences and will be held in Kish Island on April 29–30, IRIB quoted Reza Malekzadeh as saying. According to World Health Organization (WHO), the event will bring global health experts from different sectors to Iran's Kish Island, where they'll work together to strengthen cooperation and improve health worldwide.

Health in uncertain situations, global health in a transitional world, sustainable health development, noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and mental health, planetary health and medical education are among the main topics of the event.

According to Malekzadeh, WHS will also address other innovative topics, such as Silk Road and different religions' view toward health. "A scientific report about Iran's progress in health issues, published by The Lancet medical journal will be unveiled over the event as well," he said.

"The event will majorly focus on strategies for removing obstacles in providing minimum healthcare for all the people around the



According to World Health Organization (WHO), the event will bring global health experts from different sectors to Iran's Kish Island, where they'll work together to strengthen cooperation and improve health worldwide.

world, despite political, social and religious differences, that is among the WHO's most important goals," added Malekzadeh.

Student pre-event to address academic cooperation

For the first time in the history of WHS, the upcoming regional meeting will be preceded by a student pre-event. This pre-event is a full-day program which is going to be held on April 28th. The student pre-event will provide a platform for discussion of M8 Alliance of Academic Health Centers, Universities and National Academies, said Pouria Rouzrokh, the head of the Student Organizing Committee.

The M8 Alliance of Academic Health Centers, Universities and National Academies is a unique network of 25 leading international academic health centers, universities and research institutions, and includes the InterAcademy Partnership, which represents all National Academies of Medicine and Science. The M8 Alliance acts as an academic think-tank for the World Health Summit.

The main WHS event will also include a new program, that is a two-hour scientific panel for students, said Rouzrokh.

According to Rouzrokh, 900 Iranian and foreign students have applied for attending the WHS, and 150 students will be accepted based on their scientific and academic background.

WHO suggests Iran to document disease control experience in flood-hit areas

HEALTH DESK TEHRAN — World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean suggested Iran to document its successful experience in controlling diseases over the flash flood that recently hit the country.

Dr Ahmed Salim Saif Al Mandhari made the suggestion over a phone conversation with Iranian Health Minister, Saeed Namaki, IRIB reported on Sunday.

Following heavy rainfalls in the country particularly in provinces of Golestan, Mazandaran, Lorestan, and Khuzestan as well as other provinces in western, south-

western, and northeastern Iran severe flood struck many cities and villages.

According to Dr Al Mandhari, examining and analyzing these records could provide other countries with useful information as well. He also suggested that Iran shares its successful experience with other countries over the 66th Session of the WHO Regional Committee for Eastern Mediterranean that will be held in Tehran in October 2019.

Al Mandhari also voiced his sympathy for the victims of the flood, saying WHO is ready to help Iran's ministry of health in coping with the aftermath of the floods.

Dietary supplement imports cut in half

HEALTH DESK TEHRAN — Imports of dietary supplements decreased by 50% in the last Iranian [calendar] year (ended on March 20) compared to its previous year, announced the head of the natural products and food supplementary department at Food and Drug Administration (FDA). According to Mahnaz Khanavi, last year was a good year for producers of food and dietary supplements in the country as the production improved significantly, IRIB reported on Monday.

A dietary supplement is a manufactured product intended to supplement the diet when taken by mouth as a pill, capsule,

tablet, or liquid. A supplement can provide nutrients either extracted from food sources or synthetic, individually or in combination, in order to increase the quantity of their consumption. The dietary supplements' sale in the country last year amounted to \$190m, showing that this business could be a profitable industry, Khanavi noted.

"Over the last year, the imports of raw materials was also estimated at \$35.7m," she added.

"As the production of dietary supplements in the country has increased, we need to pay more attention to the products' quality," she remarked.

Measles cases up 300% worldwide in 2019, says WHO

Measles cases worldwide rose by 300% during the first three months of 2019 compared with the same period last year, the World Health Organization (WHO) has said, amid growing concerns over the impact of anti-vaccination campaigns, particularly spread through social media.

Measles, which is highly contagious, can be entirely prevented with a two-dose vaccine, but for some time the WHO has been warning about declining global vaccination rates.

"Preliminary global data shows that reported cases rose by 300% in the first three months of 2019, compared to the same period in 2018. This follows consecutive increases over the past two years," it said in a statement. "While this data is provisional and not yet complete, it indicates a clear trend. Many countries are in the midst of sizeable measles outbreaks, with all regions of the world experiencing sustained rises in cases," the WHO added.

The agency noted that only about one in 10 actual measles cases were reported, meaning the early trends for 2019 were likely to underestimate the severity of the outbreaks.

So far this year, 170 countries have reported 112,163 measles cases to the WHO. At this time last year, 163 countries had reported 28,124 cases.

"Spikes in case numbers have also occurred in countries with high overall vaccination coverage, including the United States," the WHO said. "The disease has spread fast among clusters of unvaccinated people."

The New York mayor, Bill de Blasio, declared a public health emergency in parts of Brooklyn last week after a measles outbreak in an ultra-Orthodox Jewish community, where some distrust modern science and technology, leaving them vulnerable to anti-vaccine scaremongering. More than 300 cases of measles were reported. The state of emergency required families to have their children vaccinated or pay a fine. Some members of the ultra-Orthodox community have filed a lawsuit, claiming the declaration is unjustified.

Thailand and Tunisia have also experienced alarming outbreaks among unvaccinated groups, despite generally high levels of vaccination coverage, said the WHO. Last month, Unicef warned about the surging numbers of measles cases worldwide and the disastrous consequences for children.

While there are many reasons for the fall in vaccination rates, including supply problems and conflicts in some parts of the world, there is serious concern about the spread of anti-vaccine misinformation, leading to what public health experts call "vaccine hesitancy".

The internet has spread conspiracy theories and anti-pharmaceutical industry stories across Europe, where there has been major declines in immunisation rates.

Unicef said 98 countries reported rising numbers of measles cases in 2018 compared with 2017, including some that had eradicated the disease. Ukraine, the Philippines and Brazil had the biggest increase in numbers.

(Source: The Guardian)



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Call for public tender (First/Second publish) One -Stages (compressed) tender

Subject of Tender: P/F: AKER MARITIME COILED TUBING UNITS

**National Iranian
Drilling Company**

Tender descriptions:

The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. /Indent No.	Estimated value (Rial/Euro)
National Iranian Drilling Company	472/197/3	Tender No.: FP04/98009 Indent No.: 98-22-9745841	2,756,000,000

* Qualitative evaluation of tenders

Method	Qualification process will be done in plain mode in offers opening session according to presentation of valid practice certificate / legal documents (certificate of corporation/ supply announcement up to latest changes) which should be related to tender subject.
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants which have more than 4 in process contacts with NIDC are not allowed to participate in this tender. Applicants which have more than 2 in process contacts with NIDC in similar subject (exclusively same subject) are not allowed to participate in another tender

* Purchasing & Submitting

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	Submitting Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 510,000 Iranian Rials under account number 4001114004020491 (Shaba No. IR 520100004601114004020491) in name of "NIDC Incomes Centralized Fund" issued by I.R. of Iran Central Bank. Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents.
Documents Receiving Method	Closing date	Days after the last time of Purchasing.....
	Address	Hall No. 107, 1 st floor, Tender Committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel: +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569

* Tender Guarantee

Value of guarantee	13,800,000 Rial/ 2,872 Euro
Type of guarantee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 4001114006376636 (Shaba No. IR 350100004001114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.
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(Foreign Procurement Dept.)
More of this & other tenders are accessible by click on:
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تهران تایمز نویت اول ۹۸/۱/۲۷ نویت دوم ۹۸/۱/۲۸

Physicists improve understanding of heat and particle flow in the edge of a fusion device

Physicists at the Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory (PPPL) have discovered valuable information about how electrically charged gas known as “plasma” flows at the edge inside doughnut-shaped fusion devices called “tokamaks.” The findings mark an encouraging sign for the development of machines to produce fusion energy for generating electricity without creating long-term hazardous waste.

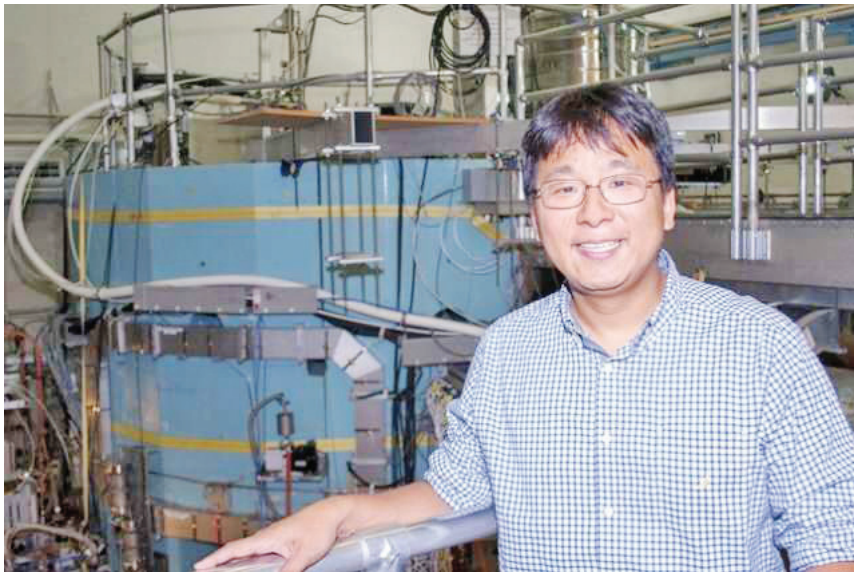
The result partially corroborates past PPPL findings that the width of the heat exhaust produced by fusion reactions could be six times wider, and therefore less narrow, concentrated, and damaging, than had been thought.

“These findings are good news for ITER,” said PPPL physicist C.S. Chang, lead author of a description of the research in *Physics of Plasmas*, referring to the international fusion experiment under construction in France. The “findings show that the heat exhaust in ITER will have a smaller chance of harming the machine,” Chang said.

Free electrons

Fusion, the power that drives the sun and stars, is the fusing of light elements in the form of plasma — the hot, charged state of matter composed of free electrons and atomic nuclei — that produces energy. Scientists around the world are seeking to replicate fusion on Earth for a virtually inexhaustible supply of power to generate electricity.

The superhot plasma within tokamaks, which can reach hundreds of millions of degrees, is confined by magnetic fields that keep the plasma from the walls of the machines.



However, particles and heat can escape from the confinement fields at the “magnetic separatrix” — the boundary between the magnetically confined and unconfined plasmas. At this boundary, the field lines cross at the so-called X-point, the spot where the waste

heat and particles escape and strike a target called the “divertor plate.”

The new findings reveal the surprising effect of the X-point on the exhaust by showing that a hill-like bump of electric charge occurs at the X-point. This electrical hill makes

the plasma circulate around it, preventing plasma particles from traveling between the upstream and downstream areas of the field lines in a straight path. Instead, like cars maneuvering around a construction site, the charged plasma particles take a detour around the hill.

The researchers produced these findings with XGC, an advanced computer code developed with external collaborators at PPPL that models the plasma as a collection of individual particles rather than as a single fluid.

Upstream plasma

The model, which showed that the connection between the upstream plasma located above the X-point and the downstream plasma below the X-point formed in a way not predicted by simpler codes, could lead to more accurate predictions about the exhaust and make future large-scale facilities less vulnerable to internal damage.

“This result shows that the previous model of the field lines involving flux tubes is incomplete,” said Chang — referring to the tubular areas surrounding regions of magnetic flux — “and that the current understanding of the interaction between the upstream and downstream plasmas is not correct.”

Our next step is to figure out a more accurate relationship between the upstream and downstream plasmas using a code like ours. That knowledge will help us develop more accurate equations and improved reduced models, which in fact are already in progress.”

(Source: phys.org)

Scientists around the world are seeking to replicate fusion on Earth for a virtually inexhaustible supply of power to generate electricity.

In a breakthrough research CRISPR uses “hairpin lock” for more precise genetic engineering

The CRISPR gene-editing system is incredibly accurate, but when there are billions of base pairs of DNA to scroll through, it’s not unusual for it to be a little bit off target sometimes. Now, biomedical engineers at Duke University have created an RNA “lock” that can apparently make the system far more precise, and it works with all kinds of CRISPR variations.

In nature, the clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats (CRISPR) is a type of DNA sequence that bacteria use to defend themselves from viruses. After a bug survives an attack, it uses an enzyme to snip out a section of the invader’s DNA and store it so it can recognize the same attacker next time.

Scientists realized that the mechanism can be co-opted to make precise genetic edits in living organisms, and CRISPR gene-editing was born.

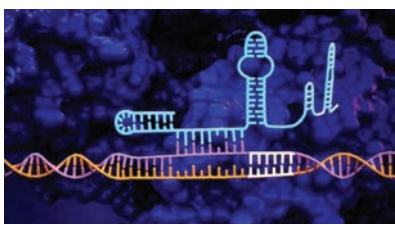
While the technique has proven itself valuable as a potential treatment for a whole host of genetic diseases, it isn’t perfect.

Billions of base pairs

CRISPR systems use RNA molecules as guides to find the target DNA sequence, but when these guides are scanning through billions of base pairs, they sometimes miss the goal by one or two base pairs. That might not sound like much, but these unintended edits could have some bad side effects.

“CRISPR is generally incredibly accurate, but there are examples that have shown off-target activity, so there’s been broad interest across the field in increasing specificity,” says Charles Gersbach, corresponding author of the study. “But the solutions proposed thus far cannot be easily translated between different CRISPR systems.”

The Duke-developed hairpin lock aims to solve both problems. The common factor to all CRISPR systems is the guide RNA, so the team added an extra 20 nucleotides



to the end of it.

This new tail is designed to loop back on itself, forming a lock that’s hard to break. In fact, the only thing that can open it is the target sequence of DNA, which the RNA tail prefers to bind to. That makes the CRISPR system precise down to a single base pair.

Meeting its correct match

“We’re able to fine-tune the strength of the lock just enough so that the guide RNA still works when it meets its correct match,” says Dewran Kocak, lead researcher on the study.

The team tested the technique with five different CRISPR variations, and found that the RNA lock boosted the accuracy of edits in cultured human cells by an average of 50 fold. And in one test in particular the method was found to be over 200 times more precise than usual.

The fact that this hairpin lock works on multiple CRISPR systems is crucial, since new versions turn up pretty regularly. Along with the classic Cas9 enzyme, there’s Cas12a and Cas12b, which are meant to be safer and more precise; CasX which is smaller so can get into cells easier; and Cas3, which works less like molecular scissors and more like a DNA shredder.

“We’re focused on a solution that doesn’t add more parts and is general to any kind of CRISPR system,” says Kocak. “What’s common to all CRISPR systems is the guide RNA, and these short RNAs are much easier to engineer.”

(Source: newatlas.com)

Scientists discover comet fragment inside a meteorite from a primordial asteroid

A fragment of a cometary building block has been found inside a meteorite that broke away from an asteroid. The rare discovery provides a critical insight into the formation of the Solar System over 4.5 billion years ago, and how it evolved into what we see today.

When the sun first formed, it is believed to have had a cloud of gas and dust. Gravitational forces clumped much of this together to form the planets. The rest made up the moons, dwarf planets, asteroids and comets.

The difference between the latter two relates to composition — asteroids tend to be made of metal and rock while comets are made up of ice, dust and rocky material.

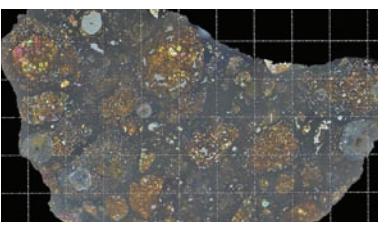
Meteorites are bits of asteroid that have broken apart from their parent body during collisions in space, which then survive the journey through the Earth’s atmosphere and smash into the planet’s surface. Because meteorites are largely unchanged since their formation, studying them allows scientists to understand what these early conditions were like when the Solar System was created.

Analyzing meteorites

In a study published in *Nature Astronomy*, scientists were analyzing a meteorite called LaPaz Icefield 02342, which was found in Antarctica in 2002. It is a type of primitive “carbonaceous chondrite” meteorite that formed about 3.5 million years ago, just beyond Jupiter.

The team, led by Larry Nittler from the Carnegie Institution for Science in Washington D.C., was examining the meteorite when it found a tiny section that appeared to be a comet’s building block. This would mean a bit of space dust that originated from comets forming at the edges of the Solar System somehow got captured and encased by an asteroid.

“I knew we were looking at something very rare. It was one of those exciting



moments you live for as a scientist,” said study co-author Gemma Davidson of Arizona State University in a statement.

Nittler said: “Because this sample of cometary building block material was swallowed by an asteroid and preserved inside this meteorite, it was protected from the ravages of entering Earth’s atmosphere. It gave us a peek at material that would not have survived to reach our planet’s surface on its own, helping us to understand the early Solar System’s chemistry.”

Primitive cometary material

The team believes its findings suggest that primitive cometary material at the Solar System’s edge migrated inward, providing new insight into how material was moving around the solar system before the Earth had fully formed.

Romain Tartèse of the UK’s University of Manchester, who studies meteorites but who was not involved in the latest research, said the discovery was exciting because it provides evidence that material was being transported inward for millions of years after the Solar System first formed.

The “researchers very convincingly suggest that this is indeed a remnant of an icy cometary body accreted in the outer solar system where Kuiper Belt objects formed,” he told *Newsweek*. “These findings have crucial implications regarding transport of material in the Solar System.”

(Source: Newsweek)

To protect stem cells, plants have diverse genetic backup plans, researchers find

Despite evolution driving a wide variety of differences, many plants function the same way. Now a new study has revealed the different genetic strategies various flowering plant species use to achieve the same status quo.

In flowering plants, stem cells are critical for survival. Influenced by environmental factors, stem cells direct how and when a plant will grow. Whether a plant needs deep-reaching roots, taller stems, or more leaves and flowers, it is the stem cells that produce new cells for the job.

That’s also why having too many or too few stem cells can disrupt a plant’s growth.

Responsible for all this is a “core genetic circuitry” found in all flowering plants,” says CSHL Professor and HHMI Investigator Zach Lippman.

Genetic mechanisms

In a paper published in *Nature Genetics*, Lippman and CSHL Professor David Jackson describe the genetic mechanisms that ensure “a deeply conserved stem cell circuit” maintains some function, even if defects occur in a signaling protein called CLV3, and the receptor with which it interacts, CLV1.

“Those players are critical for ensuring



a plant has the right number of stem cells throughout life, and we discovered there are backup systems that kick in when these players are compromised through chance mutations,” explains Lippman.

The researchers determined that although the stem cell circuits are essential for flowering

plants, the genetic backup systems can vary drastically from plant to plant.

If the gene producing CLV3 is disrupted by a mutation in a tomato, for instance, a related gene will stand in for it. However, Jackson’s team discovered that in the case of maize, two genes are working in parallel

to produce the essential signaling protein.

With equal efforts

“I like to compare it to a rowboat,” Lippman adds. “In tomato there are two people who can row, but only one is rowing. But if the main rower injures his arm, the second person can take up the oars. In maize, both are rowing all the time, though not necessarily with equal effort. And in *Arabidopsis* (rockcress) you have one main rower supported by seven, eight, or nine other rowers in the boat; and it looks like only one has a full-size oar. The rest are just using very small paddles.”

“We were surprised to see such big differences,” says Jackson, “but in retrospect it reveals the power of evolution in finding novel ways to protect critical developmental circuits.”

According to Jackson, Lippman and their colleagues, understanding these species-specific strategies for protecting key genetic interactions will be essential for achieving “intelligent crop design” and using genome editing to improve agricultural productivity and sustainability.

(Source: eurekaalert.org)

Saturn’s moon Titan may have ‘phantom lakes’ and caves: study

Picture a world where rain falls, gathers in lakes and ponds, seeps into the surrounding rock, and evaporates away, only to fall again. There’s just one catch: The world is Saturn’s moon, Titan, where the rain isn’t water; it’s liquid methane.

Two new papers explore how this eerily familiar, waterless “water cycle” manifests on Titan’s surface. To do so, two separate research teams turned to data from the Cassini mission, which ended its stay at the Saturn system in September 2017. The spacecraft flew past the massive moon more than 100 times, gathering crucial observations of this strange world as it did so.

Some of those observations showed scientists something truly extraordinary: their first glimpse of liquid currently on the landscape, rather than mere ghosts of such liquid features. “Titan is the only world outside the Earth where we see bodies of liquid on the surface,” Rosaly Lopes, a planetary scientist at NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory who worked on the Cassini mission but wasn’t involved in either of the new papers.

“Titan is the most interesting moon in the solar system. I think that gets me some enemies, but I think it’s actually true,” Shannon MacKenzie, lead author on one of the new studies and a planetary scientist at Johns Hopkins University’s Applied Physics Laboratory, told *Space.com*. But that doesn’t mean the moon is straightforward. “Titan throws us a lot of curveballs,” she said.

MacKenzie’s study analyzes one potential curveball: three small features that appeared to be liquid-filled lakes when Cassini first spotted them, but seem to have dried up by the time the spacecraft returned to the area. The observations suggest that the liquid either evaporated or seeped into the surrounding planetary surface.

But the situation may not be quite that simple, since the two sets of observations were taken by different instruments. Cassini was built to gather data with either its radar instrument or its visual and infrared light cameras, but not both simultaneously. And during the spacecraft’s first pass, the region was too dark to use the cameras.

(Source: space.com)

New evidence suggests volcanoes caused biggest mass extinction ever

Researchers say mercury buried in ancient rock provides the strongest evidence yet that volcanoes caused the biggest mass extinction in the history of the Earth. The extinction 252 million years ago was so dramatic and widespread that scientists call it ‘the Great Dying.’ The catastrophe killed off more than 95 percent of life on Earth over the course of hundreds of thousands of years.

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Paleontologists with the University of Cincinnati and the China University of Geosciences said they found a spike in mercury in the geologic record at nearly a dozen sites around the world, which provides persuasive evidence that volcanic eruptions were to blame for this global cataclysm.

The eruptions ignited vast deposits of coal, releasing mercury vapor high into the atmosphere. Eventually, it rained down into the marine sediment around the planet, creating an elemental signature of a catastrophe that would herald the age of dinosaurs.

“Volcanic activities, including emissions of volcanic gases and combustion of organic matter, released abundant mercury to the surface of the Earth,” said lead author Jun Shen, an associate professor at the China University of Geosciences.

The mass extinction occurred at what scientists call the Permian-Triassic Boundary. The mass extinction killed off much of the terrestrial and marine life before the rise of dinosaurs. Some were prehistoric monsters in their own right, such as the ferocious gorgonopsids that looked like a cross between a saber-toothed tiger and a Komodo dragon.

(Source: sciencedaily.com)



Alarming study finds that wind can actually carry microplastics to remote places

There’s more to the wind than meets the eye. As it whips around the world, this invisible force can carry dangerous passengers to some of the most untouched regions, including dust particles, microbes, and maybe even plastic.

A small pilot study now suggests that tiny fragments of this synthetic material are raining down in some of the most remote regions of the world.

Buried in the soil of the French Pyrenees mountain range, researchers have turned up an abundance of microplastics, each day picking up an average of 249 fragments, 73 films, and 44 fibers per square meter.

Using atmospheric simulations as well as air mass trajectories, the authors have now traced this pollution to a few small towns nearby. And while the data cannot exactly prove long-range transport, the findings certainly suggest that microplastics can travel up to 100 kilometers (62 miles) in the atmosphere, maybe even farther.

Tucked in one of the most untouched areas of Europe, these samples show a similar level of atmospheric plastic pollution to megacities like Paris - at times, even more so.

“We’d kind of expected it in a city getting blown around,” one of the team, Steve Allen from the University of Strathclyde in the UK, told NPR. “But way up there? The number is astounding.”


It’s another discouraging reminder that human pollution knows no boundaries. Yet even though plastic litter is a key environmental challenge for this generation - detected in soil, rivers, oceans, and lakes - shockingly few studies have looked at whether it can be found floating in the air itself.

If they’re right, it could mean microplastics really are everywhere, even in the air we breathe.

“These plastic particles are much bigger than the dust particles we find, although we find these giant dust particles as well,” marine geologist Michéle van der Does told *The Huffington Post*.

“But their density is much lower, so they’re also more easily transported over great distances.”

(Source: sciencealert.com)




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Second Announcement

Call for Public Tender

Two – Stages (Compressed) Tender

Subject of Tender: (Provision of 3 Cargo Vessels for support Drilling Projects Located in Persian Gulf)



National Iranian Drilling Company

• **Tender Descriptions :**

The Tender Holder	Registration No. Through National Electronic Tendering System (http://iets.mporg.ir)	Tender No.	Estimated Value (AED)
National Iranian Drilling Company	3,197,214	98/33/06-5316	27,000,000

• **Qualitative evaluation of tenders**

method	<input type="checkbox"/> based on minimum scoring (minimum quality score is 60) made in award criterion reflected in the tenderers pre-qualification forms.
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• **Purchasing & submitting of Tender documents**

Distribution of tender documents by NIDC	Distribution Starting Date	Starting date for receiving (The distribution of the documents will be started one day after the publishing of second advertisement). Last time for receiving (ended on the following Tenth day thereof)
	Distribution place	Contracts Department- Part A – First Floor – Operational Building – NIDC – Higher than Airport Square – Pasdaran Blvd. – Ahvaz- Iran- 061-34146525
	Submitting method	Submitting one original bank fund receipt in the amount of 990,000 Iranian rials under account number 4001114004020491 in name of "NIDC incomes centralized fund" issued by Central Bank of Islamic Republic of Iran. (Shaba No.: IR 52010004001114004020491) Submitting formal request for the purpose of receiving of tender documents.
Tender Envelopes Delivery Date	Closing date	14 Days after the last time of purchasing of tender documents. (Proposal pockets including A. Guarantee B. Tender documents which is signed and stamped C. Financial proposal with pre-qualification papers and documents including (full versions of working resume based on pre-qualification forms with related CD) should be delivered at the same time)
	Delivery address	Hall no. 107,1st floor, tender committee, operation building, national Iranian drilling company, airport square, Ahvaz, Iran. Tel : +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569

• **Tender guarantee**

Value of guarantee	Five billion and Seventy sixty four million (5,764,000,000) Rials or Five hundred three thousand and Nine hundred Seventy Six (503,976) AED.
Acceptable	✓-Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtained activity license from the central bank of the Islamic republic of Iran.
Type of guarantee	✓-Submitting one original bank fund receipt under account number 4001114006376636 in name of "NIDC saving centralized account" by the central bank of Islamic republic of Iran. (Shaba No.: IR 350100004001114006376636)
Duration of credit for quotation / Tender Guarantee	Tender guarantee should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one more time in ceiling of initial validity duration.

(Contracts Department)

Guarantee and More of this & other tenders are accessible by click on: www.nidc.ir http://sapp.ir/nidc_pr

تهران تایمز نویت اول ۹۸/۱/۲۷ نویت دوم ۹۸/۱/۲۸

Bahrain strips 138 of nationality

Bahrain detains state journalist over criticizing media ‘misinformation’ on Yemen war

➡ Ibrahim al-Shaikh, a writer with Akhbar al-Khaleej, was arrested on Monday after he authored an article which said journalists and analysts had been peddling lies about advances by Saudi-led coalition forces in war-torn Yemen, Arabic-language Lua Lua TV reported.

The journalist has been previously known for his support of the bloody campaign and often favorable coverage for parties to the coalition, including Bahrain.

The public prosecutor's office in the capital Manama accused Shaikh of “spreading false news and rumors in time of war.” It alleged that his actions could have “damaged [Bahrain's] national security and public order.”

Shaikh is not the first person imprisoned for criticizing Manama's participation in the brutal war, which has left tens of thousands of Yemenis dead and caused “the world's worst humanitarian crisis” in the already poorest Arabian Peninsula state.

According to Press TV, In December of last year, Manama's top court upheld a five-year jail term against distinguished human rights defender Nabeel Rajab over mere tweets criticizing Manama's role in the campaign against Yemen.

Leading a coalition of vassal states, Saudi



Arabia invaded Yemen in March 2015 in an attempt to reinstall former president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, who had resigned amid popular discontent and fled to Riyadh.

The regime in Manama has been relying on the Saudi military's support in its campaign of suppression against opposition

and political activists since 2011, when a popular uprising began against the ruling Al Khalifah dynasty.

■ **Citizenship revocations rise in 2018**

In a separate development on Monday, the Bahrain Mirror news website reported

that 298 Bahraini citizens had been stripped of their nationality in 2018, as part of the crackdown campaign against Bahraini activists, making it a record year for citizenship revocations.

Citing statistics presented by organizations and news reports, the news website said authorities had revoked the citizenship of about 804 Bahrainis since 2011.

The year 2018 also witnessed a rare incident, in which 115 people were stripped of their citizenship in a single trial.

Amnesty International condemned the “ridiculous” trial as “one of the most severe rulings yet, and is further proof that the Bahrain authorities have no regard whatsoever for international fair trial standards.”

Monday's report further said Bahraini authorities had not only withdrawn the citizenship of political defendants in trials, but had deprived all children, whose fathers were imprisoned, of birth certificates and passports.

In 2018, Manama revoked the citizenship of Bahrain's most prominent Shia cleric Ayatollah Sheikh Isa Qassim, who was under house arrest before leaving for London to receive emergency treatment.

Libya conflict stirs divisions in Persian Gulf and Europe

TEHRAN — Qatar called on Tuesday for a blocking of foreign arms supplies to eastern Libyan forces commander Khalifa Haftar, whose push to seize the capital Tripoli is causing rifts around the Persian Gulf and Europe.

Nearly two weeks into its assault, the veteran general's eastern-based Libyan National Army (LNA) is stuck in the city's southern outskirts battling armed groups loyal to the internationally-recognized Tripoli government Reuters reported.

Yet Tripoli's roughly 2.5 million people were maintaining a semblance of normality - even as the occasional artillery boom echoed across the city.

“We are still carrying on, thank God. What else can we do?” said Mohamed Taha, 23, in a street where students still packed a nearby school. Cafes and shops also remained open and busy.

Foreign powers are worried but unable to present a united front over the latest flare-up in the cycle of anarchy and warfare that has gripped Libya since dictator Muammar Gaddafi was toppled in 2011.

The conflict has brought a growing humanitarian toll - 174 people, 756 injured and 18,250 displaced according to latest United Nations tallies - and sunk for now an international peace plan.

It threatens to disrupt oil flows, foment migration across the Mediterranean Sea to Europe, and allow jihadists to exploit the chaos.

Qatar said an existing UN arms embargo on Libya should be strictly enforced, to prevent Haftar, 75, from receiving arms.

The Benghazi-based Haftar enjoys the backing of Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, who view him as an anchor to restore stability and combat militants. Those three nations cut ties with Qatar in 2017, accusing it of

support for militants and Iran.

Qatar's Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani told Italian daily La Repubblica that a postponed UN peace conference should be rescheduled and Haftar's troops forced to withdraw.

The arms embargo must be implemented “to prevent those countries that have been providing ammunitions and state-of-the-art weapons from continuing to do so,” he said.

Past UN reports say the UAE and Egypt have both supplied Haftar with arms and aircraft, giving him air superiority among Libya's multiple factions. East Libyan authorities say Qatar and Turkey back rival, extremist-leaning factions in western Libya.

■ **France, Italy diverge over Haftar**

The Persian Gulf diplomatic divisions echo those in Europe, where former colonial ruler Italy and France have sparred over Libya.

Paris has given Haftar support in the past, viewing him as the best bet to end the chaos since a NATO-backed rebellion to end Gaddafi's murderous four-decade rule.

Italy, with considerable oil interests in the OPEC member, supports the Tripoli government of Prime Minister Fayez al-Serraj and was furious with French reluctance to back a recent European Union resolution urging Haftar to halt his advance.

Nevertheless, Serraj has managed to keep the LNA at bay, thanks largely to armed groups who have rushed to aid them from other western Libyan factions.

Though Haftar presents himself as a champion against what he calls terrorism, opponents cast him as a would-be dictator in the mould of Gaddafi. About 70 people protested against him at the central Algiers Square in Tripoli on Tuesday.

“We are against Haftar and military rule,” said demon-



strator Assam Dirbiq.

Haftar was among officers who helped Gaddafi rise to power in 1969, but fell out with him during a war with Chad in the 1980s. He was taken prisoner by the Chadians, rescued by the CIA, and lived for about 20 years in Virginia before returning in 2011 to join other rebels in the uprising against Gaddafi.

The UN migration agency said on Tuesday that 6,900 migrants were still trapped in government detention centers in Tripoli despite efforts to move some to safer places.

The migrants, mainly from Africa and Syria, have been apprehended arriving through the Sahara with the intention of crossing the Mediterranean to Italy and elsewhere.

Some in one detention center close to clashes have refused relocation, saying they want permanent solutions to their plight, International Organization for Migration spokesman Joel Millman said in Geneva on Tuesday.

Ilhan Omar says death threats increased after Trump tweet

TEHRAN — Ilhan Omar, one of the first Muslim women elected to the United States Congress, said that she has faced increased death threats since President Donald Trump tweeted an edited video that purports to show her being dismissive of the September 11, 2001 attacks.

“This is endangering lives,” she said. “It has to stop.”

According to al Jazeera, her statement late on Sunday followed an announcement by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi that she has taken steps to ensure the safety of the Minnesota Democrat and the speaker's call for Trump to take down the video.

Soon after Pelosi's statement, the video disappeared as a pinned tweet at the top of Trump's Twitter feed, but it was not deleted.

Pelosi was among the Democrats who had criticized Trump over the tweet, with some accusing him of trying to incite violence against the Muslim politician. An up-

state New York man was recently charged with making death threats against her.

Speaking to U.S. media earlier on Sunday, White House press secretary Sarah Sanders defended Trump, saying the president has a duty to highlight Omar's history of making comments that others deem anti-Semitic or otherwise offensive and that he wished no “ill will” upon the first-term politician.

Trump on Monday tweeted that Omar is “out of control” and criticized Pelosi for defending the Minnesota Democrat.

■ **Trump ‘encourages’ hate**

Omar said that since Trump retweeted the video on Friday night, she has received many threats that referred or replied to the posted video.

“Violent crimes and other acts of hate by right-wing extremists and white nationalists are on the rise in this country and around the world,” she said. “We can no longer ignore that they are being en-

couraged by the occupant of the highest office in the land.” She said: “We are all Americans.”

Earlier, Pelosi issued a statement while travelling in London, saying she had spoken with congressional authorities “to ensure that Capitol Police are conducting a security assessment to safeguard Congresswoman Omar, her family and her staff”.

Pelosi said officials will continue to monitor and assess threats against Omar and called on Trump to discourage such behavior.

“The president's words weigh a tonne, and his hateful and inflammatory rhetoric creates real danger,” Pelosi said. “President Trump must take down his disrespectful and dangerous video.”

The video in Trump's tweet included a snippet from a recent speech Omar gave to the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) last month, in which she described the September 11, 2001, attack

on the World Trade Center as “some people did something”, along with news footage of the hijacked aeroplanes hitting the Twin Towers. Trump captioned his tweet with, “WE WILL NEVER FORGET!”

Critics accuse Omar of being flippant in describing the perpetrators of the attacks that killed nearly 3,000 people. She later sought to defend herself by tweeting a quote from President George W Bush, in which the Republican president referred to the attackers as “people” just days after 9/11.

Neither Trump's tweet nor the video included Omar's full quote or the context of her comments, which were about Muslims feeling that their civil liberties had eroded after the attacks. The tweet was posted atop Trump's Twitter feed for much of Sunday, with more than nine million views. It remained lower in the feed after Pelosi requested that the video be pulled.

UK deploys choppers, troops to deal with Russia’s “credible threat”

TEHRAN — Britain has reinforced its controversial military presence near Russia's border as part of a NATO military alliance mission as government authorities claim the threat from Moscow has become more credible.

British media said that five Apache attack helicopters, each worth nearly \$54 million, had been deployed to Estonia to reinforce NATO's presence in the Baltic nation.

Defense Secretary Gavin Williamson said the deployment was necessary to deter a “credible” threat from Russia.

“It's a very credible threat that we see from Russia and part of the reason that we're deploying five Apache attack helicopters is making sure that we're constantly adapting to a changing situation, but this is about deterrents,” he said, adding “The enhancement of that deployment with the Apache attack helicopters is really vital and very, very important and it's been very warmly welcomed by so many nations.”

The deployment came as some 110 UK military personnel was also dispatched to Baltic countries to reinforce British troops deployed to NATO missions in the area. The personnel deployment, which comes as part of Operation CABRIT, will take the total number of UK troops in the region to around 1,000.

According to Press TV, Williamson said that Britain was now “playing the largest role in enhanced forward presence with the largest number of service personnel deployed” in the Baltics.

The new UK military deployment could further anger Russia which has seen an expanded NATO presence along its western borders as a major threat. Moscow and NATO have been at odds since a political crisis erupted in Ukraine in 2014.

Britain has been a major contributor to NATO's eastward expansion despite Russia's threats that the policy could backfire.

Relations between Britain and Russia have further deteriorated over a poisoning attack in March last year on a former Russian spy in southern England.

U.S. ‘most warlike nation in history’: Jimmy Carter

TEHRAN — Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter says President Donald Trump has spoken with him about China because the current U.S. leader was worried that Beijing overtaking the U.S. economically, saying America's endless wars may lead to China superseding the U.S.



Carter, 94, said Trump called him on Saturday as he spoke during his regular Sunday School lesson at Maranatha Baptist Church in his hometown of Plains, Georgia, Press TV reported. He told the congregation that Trump feared China's growing economic strength and suggested the president was right to be concerned.

Some experts say China could overtake the U.S. as the world's largest economy by 2030 if current growth trends continue.

The former Democratic president said China was getting ahead of the U.S. because Washington has been at war with other countries for most of its history.

Carter—who normalized diplomatic relations between Washington and Beijing in 1979—suggested that China's rapid growth had been facilitated by government investment and helped by peace.

“Since 1979, do you know how many times China has been at war with anybody?” Carter asked. “None. And we have stayed at war.”

He said the U.S. has only enjoyed 16 years of peace in its 242-year history, making the country “the most warlike nation in the history of the world,” Carter said. This is, he said, because of Washington's tendency to force other nations to “adopt our American principles.”

Carter said that China, in contrast to the U.S., had made massive economic progress for maintaining peace. “How many miles of high-speed railroad do we have in this country?” he asked.

The U.S. has “wasted, I think, \$3 trillion” on military spending. “It's more than you can imagine. China has not wasted a single penny on war, and that's why they're ahead of us. In almost every way.”

“And I think the difference is if you take \$3 trillion and put it in American infrastructure you'd probably have \$2 trillion leftover. We'd have high-speed railroad. We'd have bridges that aren't collapsing, we'd have roads that are maintained properly. Our education system would be as good as that of say South Korea or Hong Kong,” Carter told the congregation.

Carter served as the 39th U.S. president from 1977 to 1981. The former president has been particularly critical of the nation's direction under Trump's leadership.

■ **Carter was also a tool of the imperialists: Scholar**

Commenting on Carter's remarks, Professor Dennis Etlar said, “Although Jimmy Carter is considered one of the more reasonable U.S. presidents he was still a tool of the imperialists running the show.”

“He supported the Shah and alienated whole Iranian nation in doing so, still to this day. And talk about wars, he got the U.S. involved in Afghanistan supporting the Mujahedeen and laid the groundwork for all the wars that followed, so it's a bit much for him to decry the trillions of dollars wasted as a result, not to mention the millions of those killed, maimed, traumatized and sent into exile,” added Etlar, an American political analyst who has a decades-long interest in international affairs.

“No, Carter cannot absolve himself of the guilt he deserves,” Etlar told Press TV.

“At least when it comes to China he speaks the truth, if not the whole truth. He knows that China poses no threat to the U.S. that is not of America's own making,” the analyst noted.

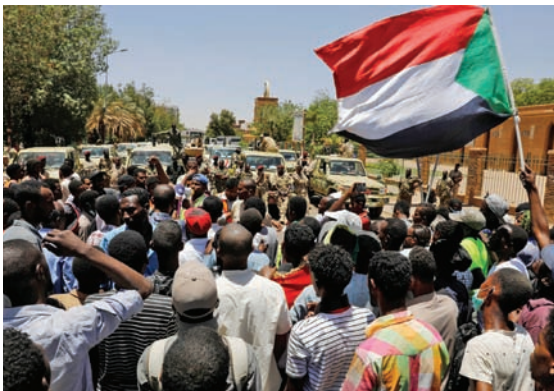
African Union sets deadline for Sudan power transfer

➡ “The key demand is the formation of a civil council to guarantee that the revolution is safeguarded and all the goals are achieved.”

On April 11, after nearly four months of the popular uprising, a military takeover ended al-Bashir's 30-year authoritarian rule. In a televised address to the nation, Sudan's then-Defense Minister, Lieutenant General Ahmed Awad Ibn Auf, announced that al-Bashir - who had seized power himself in a 1989 coup - had been arrested and taken to a “safe” location.

But the protesters' elation quickly turned to anger as Ibn Auf, a long-time al-Bashir loyalist, announced the establishment of a two-year transitional military council and later was sworn in as its head.

Defying a newly imposed curfew, the demonstrators continued taking to the streets, denouncing Ibn Auf's statement as a “farce”. Barely 24 hours later, the military council was forced to appoint its second leader in two days, with Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan replacing Ibn Auf.



■ **Transfer of power**

Since then, negotiations have taken place between the council and protest organisers, who on Saturday submitted a list of demands to Sudan's military rulers.

Bayern won't exceed 100 mn euro mark for a player: Hoeness

Bayern Munich president Uli Hoeness ruled out breaking the 100 million euros (\$113 million) mark this summer and said he would buy French striker Kylian Mbappe "immediately" if he had the money.

Bayern are planning a major squad overhaul this summer, and have already confirmed the signings of French World Cup winners Benjamin Pavard and Lucas Hernandez.

In an interview with German news agency DPA on Tuesday, Hoeness admitted that, in an ideal world, he would love to sign another French World Cup winner, Paris Saint-Germain's 20-year-old star.

"I would sign Mbappe straight away, he is a top player. But we don't have the money for him," said Hoeness.

The Bayern president ruled out spending 100 million euros on a single player in the summer transfer window, but suggested that Bayern may break that figure in the future.

"There definitely won't be a 100 million euro transfer this year, but I have to admit that ten years ago, I couldn't have imagined spending 80 million," he said.

The sum of 80 million euros was what Bayern paid to sign Hernandez from Atletico Madrid, a figure nearly double that of their previous record transfer -- fellow Frenchman Corentin Tolisso.

In 22-year-old Kingsley Coman, Bayern have yet another Gallic talent in their emerging generation.

On Tuesday, club legend Lothar Matthaeus backed Coman and Serge Gnabry, 23, to follow in the footsteps of departing veterans Arjen Robben and Franck Ribery, who are both out of contract at the end of June.

(Source: AFP)

Former Liverpool defender Enrique given all-clear from cancer

Former Liverpool and Newcastle defender Jose Enrique has been given the all-clear by doctors after he was diagnosed with a brain tumour last year.

Enrique said in June 2018 that he had undergone an operation to remove the tumour and he has since been going through a series of radiotherapy sessions.

"Hello guys, I just have some wonderful news today," Enrique said on Tuesday, in a video message posted on Instagram. "I just got back the report from the MRI I had just a week and a half ago.

"I just wanted to let you know, because the support from all of you has been amazing, that it's all clear, all perfect."

He added: "I can look forward now, not back anymore and just keep fighting. So it's all clear and perfect. Thank you, guys."

The 33-year-old, who spent nine years in England playing for Liverpool and Newcastle, was told he could lose his sight as a result of the tumour.

Enrique retired in 2017 after an injury-hit season with Real Zaragoza and had begun working as a football agent.

(Source: Mirror)

It's crunch time for City, admits Guardiola



Pep Guardiola admits Manchester City's bid for an unprecedented quadruple will be defined by Wednesday's Champions League showdown with Tottenham and their following two Premier League games.

Guardiola's side are in contention to win all four major trophies after lifting the League Cup, reaching the FA Cup final and staying in touch with Premier League leaders Liverpool.

City's next obstacle on the road to football immortality comes in the Champions League quarter-final second leg against Tottenham as they bid to overturn a 1-0 deficit at the Etihad Stadium.

Even if they beat Tottenham to make the semi-finals, there will be no time for City to rest on their laurels as they face Spurs again in the Premier League on Saturday before heading to Manchester United the following Wednesday.

With Liverpool two points clear of City, who have a game in hand, Guardiola acknowledged the next seven days will decide whether his team take their quadruple chase into the final days of the season.

"Definitely. If we don't win these games we will be out of two competitions. I've had this feeling for weeks," Guardiola told reporters on Tuesday.

"Last season in this period we were already champions. This season we had an incredible opponent in the Premier League with Liverpool. Both teams deserve to be champions, but just one is going to get it.

"After what we did last season, I'm surprised that we have 83 points right now. The target is 98, without that we will not be champions.

"Tottenham are incredible and we don't have rest. We played nine, 10 or 11 games more than Liverpool. Even with that, I like this challenge."

(Source: Guardian)

Sports world mourns Notre Dame Cathedral destruction after horrific fire

Athletes, sports figures and professional clubs have joined an unrelenting chorus of support and mourning to express condolences to the French people after the world renowned Notre Dame Cathedral was engulfed by fire.

Paris became the center of the world's grief and sorrow after one of its historic symbols was partly destroyed by a devastating fire.

France's iconic landmark went up in flames Monday night with the roaring blaze rampaging across the building for several hours destroying numerous treasures kept inside.

Messages of support have poured in from around the world with athletes being among those who shed tears over the grievous loss of the world's cultural heritage.

2018 World Cup winner and one of the world's most talented players Kylian Mbappé shared a picture of the burning cathedral along with a crying emoji put together with the French flag.

French football stars Franck Ribéry and Paul Pogba also shared Notre Dame-dedicated posts on social media expressing sorrow and regret over the horrific fire that shocked the entire nation.

French football teams Paris Saint-Germain,



Paris FC and FC Girondins de Bordeaux posted tearful messages on Twitter saying that people have become united and mobilized

by the terrible tragedy.

Brazilian football star Neymar asked his followers to pray for France and added a

picture of Victor Hugo's famous character Quasimodo to his Twitter post.

Prominent US alpine skier Mikaela Shiffrin also sent her prayers to France adding that it was "heartbreaking" to know that the world famous cathedral was on fire.

"This is unbelievable. Heartbreaking news from Paris," the two-time Olympic champion wrote.

"Going to sleep still under shock with the images we see in Paris. All my support to all Parisians and French people and authorities," wrote Spain's tennis ace and multiple Grand Slam winner Rafael Nadal, who was shattered by the terrible news from France.

French Olympic champion figure skater of Russian origin Marina Anisina dedicated an Instagram post to Notre Dame saying that the fire reminded her of a horror story.

"It looks like a horror story. But unfortunately this is a sad reality. There are so many things connecting me with Notre Dame de Paris," she wrote.

French world champion ice dancer Gabriella Papadakis also said through Instagram that the news had left her heartbroken.

(Source: RT)

Barnsley issue formal complaint against Barton over alleged assault



Third tier English side Barnsley issued a formal complaint to the Football League and the Football Association on Tuesday over Fleetwood Town manager Joey Barton's alleged assault on his counterpart Daniel Stendel. Barton is reported to have confronted Stendel in the tunnel following Barnsley's 4-2 victory last Saturday that all but ended Fleetwood's hopes of reaching the play-offs in what is Barton's first season in charge.

Barnsley player Cauley Woodrow tweeted in the immediate aftermath that Barnsley's German manager had been "physically assaulted" and left with "blood pouring from his face".

Woodrow later deleted the tweet. Barton was captured on TV being prevented by a police officer from leaving the stadium car park. Barnsley said they were helping police but had also decided to go to the football authorities.

"Barnsley Football Club can confirm that it has lodged a formal complaint to both the English Football League and the Football Association," said a club statement.

"This is following an alleged incident at the conclusion of the match on Saturday 13th April, between Joey Barton and

Daniel Stendel.

"The club is also currently working with the police and assisting with all enquiries regarding the incident. No further comment will be issued whilst police investigations are ongoing." Barton was a surprise choice when Fleetwood appointed him last year in what was his first foray into management.

Barton, 36, was a talented but volatile player who was embroiled in a few scraps, on and off the pitch, during his playing days.

He won one England cap during a career that saw him play for a host of clubs including Manchester City and Marseille. His playing career ended at Burnley.

Barton's chequered career has seen him banned for 18 months after he was investigated for placing 1,260 bets on football matches between 2006 and 2016.

In May 2008, he was jailed for six months over a late-night attack on a man and a teenage boy in the centre of his home city of Liverpool.

In July that year he was given a four-month suspended jail term for attacking his Manchester City team-mate, Ousmane Dabo, in training.

(Source: AFP)

Athlete body says NOCs should lead on sponsorship freedom



National Olympic Committees should take the lead in helping athletes win more freedom to promote their personal sponsors during Games, the head of the Global Athlete movement said on Monday.

Rule 40 of the Olympic charter states that participants in the Olympic Games cannot allow their "person, name, picture or sports performances to be used for advertising purposes during the Olympic Games."

The German Cartel Office ruled in February, however, that the IOC and German Olympic Sports Confederation (DOSB) were subject to competition laws and must grant more rights for promotional activities ahead of and during the Games.

The ruling only applies in Germany and IOC President Thomas Bach was quoted as saying at the weekend that other athletes should talk directly to their National Olympic Committee (NOC) or federation.

"We welcome the fact that the IOC is now starting to raise this issue, which has long been on the minds of the overwhelming majority of Olympic athletes," said Global Athlete director general Rob Koehler.

"This is a first step to recognizing the growing mood among the athlete community

to have their marketing and commercial rights liberated at an Olympic Games."

Koehler told Reuters that he would have preferred the IOC to put the onus on NOCs rather than leaving it up to athletes who lacked the staff and time.

"I would have liked to see it flipped around a little bit saying 'responsibility on the NOCs to see what we can do to help you athletes'," he said.

The insidethegames.biz website quoted Bach on Sunday as telling the International Athletes' Forum in Lausanne that there was no one-size-fits-all solution.

"What we are doing now is actively contacting NOCs and starting talks advising them of what we agreed after the DOSB negotiated this with the Cartel Office in Germany. We will find out what it means for them," he said.

"My recommendation to you as athlete representatives is that you approach your NOCs or federations and enter into a binding agreement of what are the rights and responsibilities of an athlete."

Rule 40 is aimed at protecting the rights of the IOC's own Olympic sponsors.

(Source: Reuters)

Clippers pull off biggest comeback in playoff history

The Los Angeles Clippers delivered the biggest comeback in NBA playoff history Monday, rallying from a 31-point deficit for a shocking 135-131 win over the two-time defending champion Golden State Warriors.

Lou Williams scored 36 points and Montrezl Harrell nailed a couple of clutch late free throws as the Clippers surprised even themselves to square the first round playoff series at 1-1.

Clippers coach Doc Rivers said he told his players at halftime, when they were down by 23 points, to not give up.

"I said 'We are going to win this game.' I was honest with them. I said, 'I don't know how. Just hang in there with each other,'" Rivers said.

"This is who we are. We hung in there long enough. We found a way to win the game."

Williams also had 11 assists, going 13-of-22 from the field and eight-of-10 from the free throw line.

Game three is Thursday in Los Angeles.

The stretch drive featured the Clippers' consistent mid-range game against the Warriors' inconsistent three-point shooting. But fouls and injuries also worked against the Warriors in game two of the first round series.

Warriors coach Steve Kerr described it as an epic meltdown.

"Once you lose momentum in a game, it is hard to get it back," said Kerr. "We lost this game in the middle of the third quarter when we stopped playing."

"We got up by 31 and we shut down. We got exactly what we deserved."

The Clippers topped the Los Angeles Lakers' rally from a 29-point deficit to beat the Seattle Supersonics in 1989.

The Clippers also came back from being 27 points down



in a playoff win over the Memphis Grizzlies in 2012.

"We changed a couple things offensively and defensively on the fly in the third," Rivers said. "And it worked out for us."

The Warriors got more bad news after the game when they learned centre DeMarcus Cousins suffered a serious injury. Cousins injured his left quad in the first quarter and is expected to have an MRI scan done on it on Tuesday.

"It is a significant quad injury," said Kerr without going

into detail. "We will get an MRI done tomorrow. He is going to be out a while. It is significant."

Williams drained a key jump shot over Klay Thompson with 46 seconds remaining after Curry had put the Warriors ahead 131-128 on a three-pointer 12 seconds earlier.

After Klay Thompson missed a shot from beyond the arc, Clippers Landry Shamet hit a three pointer with 16 seconds left for the game winner. Harrell sank two free throws with five seconds left to cap the scoring.

- 'We need everybody' -

Elsewhere, Ben Simmons heard cheers instead of jeers Monday as the Philadelphia 76ers set a franchise record with 51 points in the third quarter en route to a 145-123 playoff win over the Brooklyn Nets.

Australia's Simmons, who had criticized the Philadelphia fans' booing in game one of the series, delivered a triple-double of 18 points, 12 assists and 10 rebounds.

He joined Wilt Chamberlain and Charles Barkley as the only Sixers to get multiple triple-doubles in the post-season, and this time he left to a standing ovation from the home fans.

Philadelphia grabbed command of the contest with a 51-point third quarter, a team record for most points in a quarter.

The Sixers also set a club record for most points in a playoff game, squaring their best-of-seven opening round series 1-1.

Game three is on Thursday in New York.

Ailing Joel Embiid finished with 23 points and 10 rebounds to lead Philadelphia, who shot 56 percent from the field. Embiid was a game-time decision due to a sore left knee.

(Source: Guardian)

Iran faces coaching dilemma



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — With less than five months until the 2022 FIFA World Cup qualification, the Football Federation of Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) faces a real dilemma over selecting the next Team Melli coach.

Iran are looking for a new coach after they did not renew Carlos Queiroz's contract at the end of the 2019 AFC Asian Cup, where the Portuguese failed to end Iran's 43-year title drought in the continent's competition.

Soon after, big names including Zinedine Zidane, Jose Mourinho, Laurent Blanc and Zlatko Dalic were mentioned as a replacement for the ex-Real Madrid coach in the vacant Iran job, however it was like a soothing balm on the wound.

Now, the Iranian media reports suggest that Jurgen

Klinsmann and Herve Renard are candidates to take charge of Team Melli and none of them have refused to rule themselves out of Iran job so far.

Klinsmann is in Beijing to promote PP Sports' "German Football Culture Month". The former U.S. coach is also a candidate to replace Italian Marcello Lippi, who departed in January after China's exit from the Asia Cup.

Renard also leads the Moroccan football team and Atlas Lions are preparing for the 2019 Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) in Egypt, scheduled for June 21-July 19. The Frenchman will continue his job if Morocco win the title.

The football federation is under pressure since football-mad Iranians fear that Team Melli are at risk due to missing the friendlies. FFIRI President Mehdi Taj has said the new coach will be introduced before the

friendly match against South Korea, slated for June 7.

The federation has said no Iranian coach is a nominee to replace Queiroz and the people should feel at ease because it has negotiated with a big name but Team Melli face lack of time for preparation.

The Iranian league will be finished at mid-May and the national team will become the 'center of attention' afterward. The Federation should select the best choice; however it faces financial difficulties to sign a well-known coach after the United States imposed fresh sanctions on Iran.

Queiroz spent eight years with Iran and helped Team Melli qualify for back-to-back FIFA World Cups and the Iranian fans want to see their team advance to the world Cup for the third time in a row.

Hossein Tavakkoli named Iran's Para Powerlifting coach



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Olympic gold medalist Hossein Tavakkoli has been named as new coach of Iran's Para Powerlifting team.

"Tavakkoli will help our powerlifters for the 2020 Tokyo. He has worked in several countries and had been Iran weightlifting coach and can help our para athletes in the international events,"

Babak Mohammadi, head of Iran's Para Powerlifting Association, said.

Iran's Para Powerlifting has a chance of winning medals in the Paralympics.

Iran won four gold medals, one silver and one bronze at the London 2012 Paralympic Games and claimed two gold medals and one bronze in the Rio 2016.

Iran's women's weightlifting team named for Asian championships



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iranian women's weightlifters will take part at the 2019 Asian Weightlifting Championships in China.

The competition will also serve as a qualifying event for the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo.

The 2019 Asian Weightlifting Championships will be held from 18th to 28th April

2019 at Ningbo, Zhejiang Province, China.

The Iranian weightlifters are as follows: 55kg: Pupak Basami, 59kg: Maryam Zare, 64kg: Abrisham Arjmandkhah and Elnaz Bajelani, 71kg: Elham Hosseini, 76kg: Marzieh Ghanbari, 87kg: Parisa Jahanfekrian

The team will be headed by Maryam Amrollah in the competition.

Tokyo 2020 celebrates 500 days to go

The Tokyo 2020 Organizing Committee and the Tokyo Metropolitan Government jointly hosted a "Paralympic sport experience" event to celebrate 500 days to go until the Paralympic Games.

Japan's Paralympic wheelchair rugby bronze medalist Daisuke Ikezaki, triathlete Jumpei Kimura and badminton player Sarina Satomi shared their passion by showcasing Para sports to kids and families who attended the scenic waterfront deck venue in Toyosu, overlooking Tokyo Bay.

Visitors also had the opportunity to take a photo of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Torch, unveiled in March. The Tokyo 2020 promotional bus, which recently toured the Paralympic competition venues, was also exhibited in the back of the stage.

Japanese actor Akiyoshi Nakao and actress Riisa Naka also participated in the stage program, making their first public appearance together since getting married.

They tried out wheelchair rugby and were "tackled" by Ikezawa.



"I was honored and enjoyed very much talking with the athletes. Paralympic sport is something which can be enjoyed together as a family, so I'll continue to promote it," Nakao said.

Road to Qatar 2022: Asian teams set to discover opponents

The first step along the Road to Qatar 2022 takes place on Wednesday when the draw for the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar and AFC Asian Cup 2023 Qualifiers - Preliminary Joint Qualification Round 1 takes place at the AFC House in the Malaysian capital.

Malaysia, Cambodia, Macau, Laos, Bhutan and Mongolia have been seeded as the draw's top six sides who have the challenging task of facing possible opponents - Bangladesh, Guam, Brunei Darussalam, Timor-Leste, Pakistan and Sri Lanka for a place in the next qualifying round.

AFC President Shaikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa said: "For only the

second time in history, the world's biggest footballing stage returns to Asia in Qatar 2022. As we have seen in the last year, Qatar is leaving nothing to chance in staging a truly magnificent spectacle.

"And what better way to kick-start this exciting journey, than right here in our great Continent. On behalf of the Asian football family, I wish all our teams the very best of luck and I am confident we will witness another thrilling qualifying campaign."

The Preliminary Joint Qualification Round 1 draw could revive the exciting contests between familiar foes four years ago when Bhutan defeated Sri Lanka



3-1 on aggregate and Mongolia edged past Timor Leste.

The last edition was also the launch pad for the incredible rise of Asia's emerging sides with India and Yemen beginning exciting qualifying campaigns

from the first round which saw them eventually seal their spots among Asia's elite in the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019.

The first leg of the Preliminary Joint Qualification Round 1 will take place on June 6 with the return leg scheduled to kick-off on June 11. The six winners will join Asia's top 34 teams in the Preliminary Joint Qualification Round 2, which will commence in September.

With the anticipation building up, the AFC is also introducing a new pre-view program, featuring some of Asia's most familiar faces who will share their insights on all the teams, final results and post reactions of the draw.

(Source: the-afc)

Iran to part company with Zlatko Kranjcar

TASNIM — The Football Federation of Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) will reportedly part company with Iran U-23 football coach Zlatko Kranjcar.

Under guidance of the Croat, the Iranian team earned a spot in the AFC U23 Championship Thailand 2020 Finals as one of the best second placed teams.

Now, the Iranian federation will reportedly part ways with the coach following poor result in the competition held in Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

Iraq qualified as the first team after playing out a goalless draw with Iran.

An Iranian coach will be named as new head coach of the U-23 football team

Retired Nowitzki could see himself as coach in a few years

BERLIN (Reuters) — Retired NBA champion Dirk Nowitzki, who spent 21 seasons at the Dallas Mavericks, could see himself returning to basketball as coach or manager in a few years time, the German said.

The 40-year-old future Hall of Famer ended his sparkling career last week after more than two decades at the Mavericks with whom he was crowned NBA champion in 2011 and was a 14-time All Star.

"After one or two years I can see myself being happy... as a coach or a manager," Nowitzki told Germany's Die Zeit newspaper in an interview to be published on Wednesday.

"I would like to be a mentor for a young player and... accompany them through their career in my very own way."

For now, Nowitzki is content to put his feet up and enjoy a glass of wine and a slice of cake, something he could not do for years as a professional player.

"In the past week I had some cake and I also had my first glass of wine after 10 years of abstinence," he said. "I was really warm inside after only a few sips. That felt good."

Nowitzki holds the record for having played the most seasons for the same club and is sixth in the all-time scorers list of the NBA.

Nagging injuries, however, took their toll on his body and continuing his career past the current season was impossible.

"What I did not want to happen under any circumstance was to say goodbye and be sitting at home, thinking 'damn, you would really like to play now. Why did you do this'," he said.

"But my body was not good. To be honest my foot where I had surgery last year was not well throughout the year. I knew it would not be getting any better."



Senegal goalkeeper suffers double leg break

Senegal international goalkeeper Khadim Ndiaye has suffered a double leg break after colliding with his teammate during a Champions League clash for club side Horoya AC against Wydad Casablanca and will miss this summer's the African Nations Cup.

Ndiaye, 34, who started all three of Senegal's matches at the 2018 World Cup, suffered the horrific injury during the second leg of the quarterfinal, where his side were beaten 5-0 to crash out of the competition following a 0-0 draw in the first leg.

"The results [of the surgery] concerning our goalkeeper are reassuring," a post on the club's Instagram page read. "No open fracture."

"He was operated on successfully at the Cheick Zaidi University clinic in Rabat, where he will continue to be cared for. Thank you for all your messages of support."

Ndiaye is set to miss six to nine months of action as he begins his rehabilitation, but Horoya said they have offered their goalkeeper a three-year contract extension.

"Khadim Ndiaye was due to be out of contract in 2019," a statement on the club's website read. "But as a thank you for his services, we wanted to ensure his immediate future by extending his contract for three years from today."

"We had to show him that we are with him."

The club added, after the World Cup in Russia, Ndiaye had declared his loyalty to Horoya when he said he would not leave the club "even if Barcelona offered him a contract." Senegal begin their African Nations Cup tournament on June 23 with a clash against Tanzania, before facing Algeria and Kenya in Group C.

(source: ESPN)

Daniel Romanchuk races into history books

Daniel Romanchuk won the men's wheelchair division at Boston in 1:21:36, finishing nearly three minutes ahead of Masazumi Soejima from Japan.

"At the start of the race I wasn't sure what to expect going in," he said after the race. "On the bus [I was] seeing lots of rain and lightning, but by the time the race rolled around, it calmed down."

Since he "doesn't go down hills well," Romanchuk started the race far down in the pack.

"I just knew that I needed to calm down, not to lose too much ground, that Newton is coming," he said. "Around the sprint points, I decided to throw in a surge and broke up the pack."

He ended up dominating the race, finishing nearly three minutes in front of Soejima—who won two Bostons in the past—and over five minutes before third-place winner Marcel Hug of Switzerland.

Earlier in 2018, he placed third in Boston and London. He also set records on the track last summer, in the 800 meters and 5,000 meters. Even with wet conditions at the start, Romanchuk finished within three minutes of the course record. He will earn \$25,000 for his victory.

In the women's race, Manuela Schär of Switzerland won Boston for the second time with a time of 1:34:19. She broke the tape in 2017, setting the current world best time and course record of 1:28:17.

(Source: Runnersworld.com)

INTERNATIONAL DAILY

www.tehrantimes.com

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» Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603

» www.eshterak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co. Tel: 88911433

» Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com

» Printed at: Hamshahri No. 3 - ISSN: 1017-94

Tehrantimes79

Tehrantimesdaily

No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran

P.O. Box: 14155-4843

Zip Code: 1599814713

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

The wroth of a person is equal to his aspiration, his integrity to his chivalry, his courage to his self-respect, and his chastity to his sense of honor.

Imam Ali (AS)

“Damascus Time” director Ebrahim Hatamikia named Islamic Revolution Artist of the Year

➔ “My career in filmmaking spanning four decades is as long as the life of the revolution, and as much as I remember I had my ups and downs as a filmmaker,” he added.

He asked the new generation of the revolutionary filmmakers not to get discouraged by criticisms and said, “We must remain steadfast, because the revolution is still at the beginning of its way at its fortieth anniversary.”



Filmmaker Ebrahim Hatamikia speaks after being honored as the Islamic Revolution Artist of the Year at Sureh Hall in Tehran on April 15, 2019. (Mehrdad Vakili)

Writers Reza Amirkhani and Hedayatollah Behbudi, documentarian Mehdi Naqavian and graphic designer Masud Nejabati were other nominees for the title.

The Islamic Revolution Artist of the Year is selected every year by IIDO Art Bureau on the closing day of the Islamic Revolution Art Week, which was established to commemorate the martyrdom anniversary of Avini who was killed by a landmine in 1993 during his last trip to the former Iran-Iraq war zone in southwestern Iran while making a documentary about soldiers who were still listed as missing in action.

Italian pianist Olaf John Laneri to perform in Tehran

A R T TEHRAN — Italian pianist Olaf John Laneri will give performances at Tehran’s Rudaki Hall on April 24 and 26, Iran’s Rudaki Foundation announced on Tuesday.

Laneri is scheduled to perform works by Beethoven, Rachmaninoff, Brahms and Iranian composers Mehran Rohani and Morteza Shirkuhi.

A graduate of the Imola Academy of Music in Italy, Laneri has won several awards at various international events, including the Ferruccio Busoni International Piano Competition and the World Music Piano Master of Monte-Carlo.

Laneri gave two concerts in Tehran in 2018.

Persian Gulf scholar Ahmad Eqtedari dies at 94

CULTURE TEHRAN — Iranian scholar Ahmad Eqtedari who is considered as the father of Persian Gulf studies died from complications of pelvis surgery at Tehran’s Asia Hospital on Tuesday. He was 94.

Eqtedari published over 100 articles and 40 books, including “Pearl Farming in the Persian Gulf”, “History of Navigation in the Persian Gulf”, “Bandar Abbas and the Persian Gulf” and “Historical Review of Persian Gulf”.

His articles have been published in numerous magazines and newspapers in the country.

Divan of Hafez published in Arabic

CULTURE TEHRAN — A versified Arabic translation of the Divan of Hafez has been recently published in Tehran.

Published by Avaye Khavar Publications, the book has been translated into Arabic by Nader Nezam-Tehrani, an Iranian expert on the Arabic language.

Shamsoddin Mohammad, known as Hafez, was born in Shiraz. His divan contains more than 500 poems, commonly known as ghazals, a poetic form which he brought to perfection.

Hafez is greatly admired not only in Iran but also throughout the world.

37th Fajr Intl. Film Festival to open with 1990 war drama “The Scout”

By Manijeh Rezapoor

TEHRAN — The 37th Fajr International Film Festival will open tonight at Tehran’s Felestin Cinema with Ebrahim Hatamikia’s 1990 war drama, “The Scout”.

The film tells the story of a scout who must go through a path in the warfront that is being fired upon and bombarded by the Iraqi forces during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

Speaking at a press conference on Tuesday, the director of the festival, Reza Mirkarimi, said that a lineup of fifteen feature films will be competing in Cinema Salvation, the official competition section.

Among the films are “Sweet Agony 2” by Alireza Davudnejad, from Iran, “A Russian Youth” by Alexander Zolotukhin from Russia, “Before the Frost” by Michael Noer from Denmark and “Joel” by Carlos Sorin from Argentina.

Movies from China, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and Germany will also be screened in this section.

Chinese filmmaker Wang Xiaoshuai, Dutch film director Mike van Diem, Turkish actor and director Muzaffer Özdemir, Macedonian actress Labina Mitevska, German film director Peter Fleischmann, as well as filmmaker Narges Abyar and actor Navid Mohammadzadeh, both from Iran, are the members of the Cinema Salvation jury.

In Eastern Vista, a competitive section dedicated to Asian filmmakers, a lineup of three films from Iran and 12 films from different countries will be screened.

“The 23” (“23 Individuals”) by Mehdi Jafari from Iran, “Amina” by Ayman Zeidan from Syria, “Coming Home” by Darya Shumakova from Armenia and “Crossing the Border” by Huo Meng from China are the highlights of the lineup.

Filmmaker Rusudan Glurjidze from Georgia, producer Rehab Ayoub from Lebanon and filmmaker Khosro Masumi from Iran will judge the movies in this section.

The 37th Fajr International Film Festival will run at Tehran’s Charsu Cineplex until April 26.



The director of the 37th Fajr International Film Festival, Reza Mirkarimi, attends a press conference at Tehran’s Charsu Cineplex on April 16, 2019 to brief the media about the event.

Kheimeh shab-bazi master Morteza Khamsei dies at 82



Morteza Khamsei performs kheimeh shab-bazi in an undated photo.

A R T TEHRAN — The d e s k kheimeh shab-bazi master Morteza Khamsei died of a heart disease on Tuesday. He was 82.

Morteza was the son of Ahmad, a veteran master of Iranian traditional puppet making and kheimeh shab-bazi performances.

Kheimeh shab-bazi is performed in a small chamber by a musical performer and a person called a morshed (mentor). The dialogue takes place between the morshed and the puppets, specifically the traditional Iranian puppet Mobarak.

Morteza began to learn the art from his father when he was only 4, and continued his father’s art with his brother Reza for years.

After the death of Reza in 2013, Morteza was the last survivor of the family. He was suffering from different illnesses over the past few years. His last performance was held at the Mehrab Hall in December 2017.

He was also honored for his lifetime achievements at the opening ceremony of the Kheimeh Shab-Bazi Museum in Tehran in March.

Tehran City Council approves to rename streets after veteran artists



Combination photo shows Ezzatollah Entezami (top L), Ali Nasirian (top C), Gholamhossein Amirkhani (top R), Davud Rashidi (bottom L), Mohammadreza Shajarian (bottom C) and Mohammad-Ali Keshavarz (bottom R).

A R T TEHRAN — The d e s k Tehran City Council approved on Tuesday to rename several streets after contemporary Iranian artists.

Based on a report published by the council, Falamak Boulevard in the Shahrak-e Gharb neighborhood will soon be called Mohammadreza Shajarian Boulevard after the legendary vocalist, while Sepand Street in the Aqdasieh neighborhood will become Ezzatollah Entezami Street after the late legendary actor.

24-Meter Street in the Saadatabad district

will be retitled after actor Mohammad-Ali Keshavarz and the name of Kokab Street in the Shahrara neighborhood will be changed to Gholamhossein Amirkhani, calligrapher.

In addition, Nilufar Street will be renamed in honor of actor Ali Nasirian.

Most of the streets that have been selected to be given new names are in the locations of the artists’ houses.

Earlier this month, the council gave its approval to rename Jeem Street in the Velenjak neighborhood after the actor Jamshid Mashayekhi, who passed away on April 1.

Record 17.4 million watch “Game of Thrones” kickoff for final season

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Some 17.4 million Americans watched the first episode of the final season of television’s “Game of Thrones” - a record audience for the medieval fantasy series, cable channel HBO said on Monday.

HBO said Sunday’s live U.S. television audience and viewers on its HBO GO and HBO NOW apps exceeded the previous series high of 16.9 million viewers for the Season 7 finale two years ago.

On social media, Sunday’s premiere was also the most-tweeted-about episode of the show ever, with more than 5 million Tweets, and 11 million mentions throughout the course of the weekend, HBO said in a statement.

All of the top 10 global Twitter trends late Sunday evening were about the episode.

The series set among warring families in the fictional kingdom of Westeros, which began in 2007, has become HBO’s biggest hit.

Season 7 averaged 32.8 million U.S. viewers per episode when delayed viewing was counted and HBO said it



Kit Harington arrives for the premiere of the final season of “Game of Thrones” at Radio City Music Hall in New York, U.S., April 3, 2019. (Reuters/Caitlin Ochs/File Photo)

expected the Season 8 average to “grow considerably”.

“Game of Thrones” is available in over 150 countries worldwide, but HBO said viewing data is not easily retrieved in many of those markets, making a global figure impossible to calculate.

Details of the final season have been kept a closely guarded secret, boosting anticipation.

The most-tweeted moment from Sunday’s show came when popular “Thrones” character Jon Snow (played by Kit Harington) learned the truth about his parents, and the fact that his love interest, Daenerys Targaryen (Emilia Clarke), is in fact his aunt.

Despite its avid fan base, “Game of Thrones” is far from the biggest television event in the United States. The annual NFL Super Bowl attracts about 100 million viewers and the 2019 Oscars ceremony in February was watched on television by 29.6 million Americans.

The final episode of “Game of Thrones” will air on May 19.

“Mary Tyler Moore Show” actress Georgia Engel dies at 70

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Georgia Engel, who played the charmingly innocent, small-

voiced Georgette on “The Mary Tyler Moore Show” and amassed a string of other TV and stage credits, has died. She was 70.

Engel died Friday in Princeton, New Jersey, said her friend and executor, John Quilty. The cause of death was unknown because she was a Christian Scientist and didn’t see doctors, Quilty said Monday.

“I know the world will be sad and sorry. She touched so many people,” said her agent, Jacqueline Stander.

Engel was best known for her role as Georgette on “The Mary Tyler Moore Show,” the character who was improbably destined to marry pompous anchorman Ted Baxter,

played by Ted Knight.

Engel also had recurring roles on “Everybody Loves Raymond” and “Hot in Cleveland.” She was a five-time Emmy nominee, receiving two nods for the late Moore’s show and three for “Everybody Loves Raymond.”

She was “the sweetest, kindest, dearest woman. And crazy talented. I will miss her,” Valerie Bertinelli, who starred in “Hot in Cleveland,” said in a Twitter post.

Georgia Bright Engel was born in July 1948 in Washington, D.C., to parents Benjamin, a Coast Guard officer, and Ruth Engel. She studied theater at the University of Hawaii.

Her prolific career included guest appearances on a variety of series, including “The Love Boat,” “Fantasy Island,” “Coach” and

“Two and a Half Men.” Her “Hot in Cleveland” role reunited her with Betty White, her co-star in “The Mary Tyler Moore Show” (1972-77) and “The Betty White Show” (1977-78).

Engel appeared on Broadway in plays and musicals including “Hello, Dolly!”, “The Boys from Syracuse” and, most recently, “The Drowsy Chaperone” in 2006-07. She starred in an off-Broadway production of “Uncle Vanya” in 2012.

Engel could be as upbeat as the fictional Georgette, as was demonstrated during a panel discussion last year promoting the 2018 PBS special, “Betty White: First Lady of Television.”

She recalled that a possible “Everybody Loves Raymond” spinoff set to include her and Fred Willard never came to fruition,

which she called a great disappointment.

“But if that hadn’t happened,” she said, “I wouldn’t have been able to star” in writer-actor Bob Martin’s “Drowsy Chaperone,” which led to her custom-tailored role in Martin’s “Half Time.” The musical, about older adults who school themselves in hip hop to perform in half-time shows, was staged in New Jersey last year.

“It’s given me such joy,” said Engel, who had hoped to see it move to Broadway.

Her real-life voice was as sweet as the one familiar from her screen roles. “What you see is what you get. That’s not a character voice — that’s our girl,” a smiling White said in a 2012 interview with Engel, calling her a “pure gold” friend and colleague.