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Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Abbas Salehi speaks at the opening ceremony of the 32nd Tehran International Book Fair on April 23, 2019.

Majlis declares CENTCOM as terrorist

TEHRAN — The Iranian Parliament (Majlis) on Tuesday voted to put the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) in West Asia on the list of terrorist groups.

According to the parliamentary ratification, the forces and organizations under the authority of the CENTCOM are also considered terrorist.

Accordingly, any aid to these forces is tantamount to cooperation with terrorism.

The bill was approved with 173 votes in favor, four against, and 11 abstentions.

The branding of CENTCOM as a terrorist organization followed after the United States designated the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) as a "foreign terrorist organization". **→2**

Iran, Pakistan stress expansion of trade ties

TEHRAN — During an Iran-Pakistan business forum held at Tehran on Monday the two sides emphasized the necessity of using all available opportunities to expand bilateral trade relations.

The business forum, which was held by Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture

(TCCIMA) in cooperating with the Embassy of Pakistan in Tehran, was attended by a number of Iranian and Pakistani officials including Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, Iranian Transport Minister Mohammad Eslami, TCCIMA Head Masoud Khansari, and some businessmen from the both sides, TCCIMA website published. **→4**

Houthi warn Saudi Arabia, UAE: Strategic spots within reach

TEHRAN— Yemen's popular Houthi Ansarullah movement, which defends the country against a Saudi-led invasion, says it can hit "strategic targets" in the kingdom and its closest regional ally, unless the invaders observe a UN-brokered ceasefire.

"Our missiles are capable of reaching [the Saudi capital] Riyadh," Abdul Malik al-Houthi, the group's leader, told Yemen's al-Masirah television

network on Monday.

According to Press TV, the invasion, led by Saudi Arabia and participated by many of its allies, including the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, has been seeking to restore Yemen's former Riyadh-backed officials since 2015.

Al-Houthi said the group's missiles can possibly even be flown "beyond Riyadh, to Dubai and [the Emirati capital] Abu Dhabi." **→3**

The dialectic of secularism and religionism: prof. Elizabeth Shakman Hurd

By Rooholamin Saeidi

TEHRAN — Elizabeth Shakman Hurd teaches and writes on religion and politics, the politics of human rights and the right to religious freedom, the legal governance of religious diversity, U.S. foreign relations, and the international politics of the Middle East. Her work pursues an integrative approach to the study of politics and religion that offers insight into dilemmas of national and international governance involving difference, governance, power, law, and pluralism.

Hurd is the author of The Politics of Secularism in International Relations (2008) and Beyond

Religious Freedom: The New Global Politics of Religion (2015), both published by Princeton, and co-editor of Politics of Religious Freedom and Comparative Secularisms in a Global Age. She is co-PI, with Winnifred Sullivan, on a Luce-supported collaborative research project "Politics of Religion at Home and Abroad" (2016-2019) and co-organized the "Politics of Religious Freedom" project (2011-2014).

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

■ What made you focus on religion studies in a discipline (International Relations) which considers religion and re-

ligious beliefs to be completely irrelevant and unimportant?

A: I am interested in the history and politics of the categories of secularism and religion. This requires a dual focus on the study of politics and the study of religion, as well as their complex mutual interrelations. My intention is to move beyond the extremes of both an uncritical secular separationism and a naïve religious accommodationism. This "third way," which to my mind better reflects the complexities and contingencies of the world we actually live in, offers a path for thinking and practicing difference differently. **→7**

Reflection of the French game against Iran

By Saeed Sobhani

TEHRAN — Recently, the French ambassador to the United States has made a ludicrous claim to stop Iran's nuclear activities (even after the end date of the nuclear deal). Although the French government has retreated from the position of its ambassador, this should not have the effect of disregarding Paris' direct play in the White House puzzle!

The reality is that France, as one of the main enemies of the Iranian nation and the acting affiliated with Washington and Tel Aviv, intends to deprive Iran of its real rights in the field of peaceful nuclear energy forever.

An overview of the anti-Iranian actions of France and the two German and British countries in opposition to the nuclear deal remains in the memory of Iranians. Donald Trump stepped

at the White House in 2017. Theresa May, the British Prime Minister, was the first European official to travel to Washington to meet with the new president of the United States.

During this visit, Trump informed Theresa May mind of his decision on "changing the nuclear deal". He emphasized that if the nuclear deal is not reviewed and redefined, the United States will no more remain as a part of it. **→6**

Syrian army finds Israeli, U.S.-made weapons

TEHRAN — Syrian government forces have discovered Israeli and U.S.-made weapons and munitions from former positions of foreign-sponsored Takfiri militants in the country's southern province of Quneitra.

An informed source, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Syria's official news agency SANA that army troops had carried out clean-up operations in the southern countryside of the province, which is close to the Israeli-occupied

Golan Heights, on Tuesday, and found a weapons depot left behind by Takfiri terrorists.

The source added that the ammunition included 37mm and 23mm auto-cannons as well as man-portable anti-armor rocket launchers.

A Western-made mine and an improvised explosive device (IED) detection system, binoculars, Thuraya satellite phones, a portable satellite internet system in addition to Jordanian, Saudi and Kuwaiti medicine were recovered from the

militant redoubt as well.

Meanwhile, Russian warplanes have conducted 12 airstrikes against militant positions in Syria's northwestern province of Idlib.

The so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that the aerial attacks targeted areas in close proximity to Idlib's central prison besides the towns of Falioun, Korin, and Bakflon on the western outskirts of Idlib early on Tuesday. **→3**



PERSPECTIVE

M.A. Saki
Deputy editor-in-chief

Increasing gasoline price is a viable source to fix flood damage

It may not still be clear to fully assess the damage caused by devastating floods that have hit about 235 cities and 4,304 villages across Iran over one month.

However, one thing is clear: the extent of damage is in very large.

Now the question is how to provide money to fix the damage. Parliamentarians who have approved the budget for the current fiscal year (March 2019-March 2020) have acknowledged that there is not enough resources to pay compensation to those whose houses or farms have been demolished or rebuild roads and bridges that have been washed away by the floods.

So what should be done? The easiest way is to withdraw money from the National Development Fund (NDF) to repair the damage. But to the extent that it is possible it is not advisable.

Withdrawing money from the fund will increase liquidity which is already very high and is considered as the main culprit for high inflation rate.

There is a second way: To increase fuel prices, especially the heavily subsidized gasoline, to provide money for the purpose.

Surely, if such a proposal is raised it will face a backlash by the public as well as some pseudo-economic experts. They say it will cause inflation and will add to the economic pains of the poor classes.

There is no doubt that increasing gasoline prices will lead to higher inflation but not as much as the astonishing figures given by some people and pseudo-experts.

The Iranian people should notice that at a time that about 2 million people are facing a humanitarian crisis due to relentless rains and flooding, just on Monday the Trump administration announced that it will end all sanctions waivers for buyers of the Iranian oil and that any country that buys oil from Iran will be subject to U.S. sanctions.

The cruel Donald Trump, John Bolton and Mike Pompeo have closed all channels that no Iranian national living abroad or any foreign citizen can send money to help the flood victims. **→12**



ARTICLE

Ebrahim Fallahi
Tehran Times journalist

Would Saudis play the U.S. puppet in Iran sanctions scenario?

The U.S. announced on Monday that the country is not going to extend the sanctions waivers which were granted to some of Iran's oil customers in November 2018.

Many analysts believe that Trump's decision on ending the exemptions is a double edged sword and the U.S. president might well be shooting himself in the leg by doing so, since on one hand he doesn't want the prices to follow their current upward trend and on the other hand he is willing to raise the pressure on Iran to its utmost level.

Finding the solution to make both these scenarios happen hasn't been easy for the U.S. government and clearly by announcing the end of waivers on Iranian sanctions, Washington is betting big on its allies in the region for preventing the situation to get out of hand.

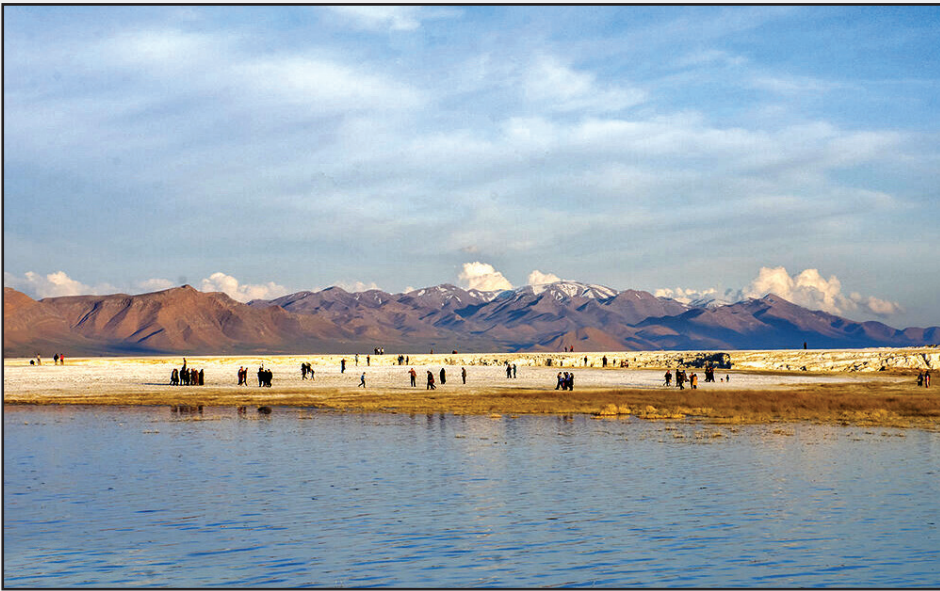
In this regard, Saudi Arabia's announcement on Monday about the possibility of a boost in production is a clear indication of the fact that like many other times, this time too, the U.S. expect Saudi Arabia to play the oil-rich puppet which is ready to offset the losses from Iranian oil.

Now the question is, would Saudis really fill the gap? To answer this question one should have a clear understanding of the market statistics these days. In theory it might be possible for the Arab country to raise its output to a certain level but for how long and at what cost? (Both figuratively and literary)

■ Saudi Arabia and the repeating scenario

As OPEC's biggest exporter, Saudi Arabia is currently producing around 9.8 million barrels of oil and the country has been trying hard to maintain a production cut deal which has held OPEC producers alongside nations outside the cartel in a battle to keep the prices from falling.

This is not the first time that the Saudis are being ordered to play obedient executor in the region. Trump has been constantly criticizing OPEC for its actions regarding its activities to maintain the prices and the Saudis have been pressured to increase production again and again. **→5**



Long-lost Mighan wetland displays water flow

TEHRAN — Mighan wetland, located in Arak county in central province of Markazi, has returned back to life due to the recent downpours, Mehr news agency reported on Tuesday.

Located in a 100-hectare desert, Mighan wetland is among the most important sites for ecotourism and bird-sighting in the country, which is home to over 130 migratory bird species, including cranes, ducks, flamingos, and geese.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Verdict against Nasrin Sotoudeh not final: Judiciary

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Judiciary spokesman Gholam Hossein Esmaili on Tuesday rejected media speculation about the jail sentence passed against human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh, saying the verdict is not final yet.

Esmaili said the verdict against Sotoudeh was issued by a court of appeals after she appealed against an earlier verdict, but she still has the right to appeal against the court's decision, Fars reported.

He emphasized that everyone is entitled to their rights according to the law, and cases of those who appeal their sentence will be reviewed carefully.

Media outlets reported earlier that Sotoudeh's 33-year jail sentence is final, and she must serve 12 years.



MPs: Salami's appointment sends 'clear message' to U.S.

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — 251 MPs on Tuesday issued a joint statement in support of the appointment of Major General Hossein Salami as the new chief of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), saying the appointment sends a "clear message" to the hegemonies including America.

Hossein Salami is a revolutionary, jihadi and experienced person who is trusted by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the statement read, according to the Mehr news agency.

The lawmakers also thanked former IRGC Chief Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari for his fruitful tenure under the Leader's command.



Prominent lawyer Bahman Keshavarz passes away

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Prominent Iranian lawyer Bahman Keshavarz passed away on Tuesday, his son Karim Keshavarz told ISNA.

He died of heart disease in Mehrdad Hospital in Tehran, the son said.

Keshavarz, 75, had been practicing law since 1971. He served as president of the Iranian Central Bar Association for two consecutive periods.

He was also president of the Nationwide Union of the Iranian Bar Associations, where he served three times within the course of thirteen years, in the same position.

Keshavarz held an L.L.B from the University of Tehran School of Law and an L.L.M. in criminal law from Shahid Beheshti University and another L.L.M. in private law from the same university.



Turkey: Ending waivers on Iran oil threatens 'regional peace'

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — A few hours after the United States announced that it will not extend sanctions waivers for buyers of the Iranian oil, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said this action will threaten "regional peace and stability".

"The U.S. decision to end sanctions waivers on Iran's oil imports will not serve regional peace and stability," Cavusoglu tweeted.

Cavusoglu said such a move "will harm the Iranian people."

He added Turkey, which imports oil from neighboring Iran, opposes unilateral sanctions against Tehran.

"Turkey rejects unilateral sanctions and impositions on how to conduct relations with neighbors," he noted.



Tehran, Moscow review U.S. anti-Iran moves

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran's Ambassador to Russia, Mehdi Sanaei, and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov in a meeting on Tuesday discussed the latest regional and international developments as well as anti-Iran measures by the Donald Trump administration, IRNA reported.

The two officials exchanged views on the United States' unilateral sanctions and its provocative measures against Iran. They also discussed the Venezuela crisis and Iran's cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Both sides reiterated that the U.S. measures contradict international rules and regulations which will lead to chaos across the globe.



'Iran highly unlikely to negotiate with Trump'

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Wendy Sherman, the former senior U.S. nuclear negotiator with Iran, said on Monday that Iran is highly unlikely to negotiate with U.S. President Donald Trump.

"Sanctions don't end malign behavior. They can focus choices including coming to negotiate. But Iran highly unlikely to negotiate w/ @realDonaldTrump. More likely Iran waits for 2020 election. Resistance is often watchword," Sherman tweeted.

In another tweet, she said that "when Europe began negotiating w/ Iran in early 2000s, Iran had 164 centrifuges. After punishing sanctions imposed and enforced, crushing their economy, Iran had 19,000 centrifuges by 2013."

Zanganeh: U.S. unable to reduce Iran's oil exports to zero

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The United States will not be able to reduce Iran's oil exports to zero, Oil Minister Bijan Zanganeh said in a parliamentary session on Tuesday, the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) reported.

"Surely, the dream of zeroing out purchase of oil from Iran will not come true and we will act with all our force to break American sanctions," Zanganeh asserted.

The oil minister said the United States, in its "aggression against the Iranian nation", has mainly targeted oil exports and "we must all join hands to emerge victorious" in this battle.

Zanganeh added the U.S. has made a bad mistake by politicizing oil and using it as a weapon.

According to Reuters, oil prices on Tuesday hit their highest level since November after Washington announced all waivers on imports of sanctions-hit Iranian oil would end next week, pressuring



"Surely, the dream of zeroing out purchase of oil from Iran will not come true and we will act with all our force to break American sanctions," Zanganeh asserted.

Trump endangering intl. security: Hatami

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian Defense Minister Amir Hatami said on Tuesday that U.S. President Donald Trump is endangering international security by violating international law and ignoring humanitarian principles.

"Trump has been endangering security of the world by being selfish and violating international law and humanitarian principles," he told reporters upon arrival at Vnukovo International Airport to attend the Moscow Conference on International Security.

He also said that the conference is a good opportunity to discuss international security.

"Today, Trumpism is the most important issue in the



world which has characteristics similar to Nazism," the defense minister remarked.

The minister said dimensions of such threats and common strategies to have a safer world will be discussed in such conferences.

Hatami's visit comes upon the official invitation of Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu.

According to the Russian Defense Ministry, the conference "will encompass the problems of utmost significance in terms of shaping views on the international security. Separate plenary sessions will offer space to exchange views on modern military challenges and threats, including the improvement of the arms control system."

Haddad-Adel: Iran seeks strategic ties with China

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Gholam-Ali Haddad-Adel, a member of the Expediency Council and a cultural and political figure, said on Tuesday that Iran seeks strategic and long-standing ties with China.

During a speech at Beijing International Studies University, Haddad Adel said Iran attaches great importance to expansion of cultural relations in order to lay grounds for expansion of ties.

He also praised China's policy of non-interference in other countries' internal affairs, describing it as "proper" and "wise" policy.

"We believe that in a world in which nations are suffering from adventurism of some powers, China can help create a balance in the international atmosphere through preventing the world from become unipolar," he stated.

The former parliament speaker added that Iran and China can establish stable economic relations, suggesting Iran can meet China's energy needs and China can make investments in Iran.

Haddad Adel noted that Iran prioritizes ties with China in its foreign policy.

The White House announced on Monday



that U.S. President Donald Trump has decided not to renew waivers that allow eight countries, including China, to buy Iranian oil without facing Washington's sanctions.

China's Foreign Ministry said on Tuesday it has formally complained to the United States over its decision to end waivers on sanctions on Iranian oil imports, Reuters reported.

Geng Shuang, a ministry spokesman, said that China is resolutely opposed to the U.S. enforcing unilateral sanctions.

Trump unilaterally pulled Washington out of the 2015 nuclear deal in May 2018 and ordered reimposition of sanctions against Iran. The first round of sanctions went into force on August 6 and the second round, which targets Iran's oil exports and banks, were snapped back on November 4.

Iran's Human Rights Council slams UK crackdown on climate protesters

The top Iranian government watchdog on human rights has issued a statement condemning Britain's ongoing crackdown on people protesting against its environment policies.

Iranian Judiciary's Human Right Council said on Tuesday that it was deeply concerned by the way climate activists were being treated by police in the capital city of London, saying UK authorities should respect international rules on protection of civil rights.

It also called on United Nations Human Rights Council to observe its declared mission and duties and study the case which it called a "blatant human rights violation".

More than 1,000 people have been arrested and over 50 formally charged over attending protests in the British capital since earlier last week.

The protesters want a drastic change in UK government policies on environment, saying they will not leave the streets until their demands are met.

The activists insist the government and parliament should adopt specific legislation to guarantee that UK's greenhouse gas emissions will be cut down to net zero by 2025.

After a week of protests, police announced



on Monday that they will no longer tolerate disruptions to public transportation in certain areas of London.

Senior government officials and notable figures have also sought to belittle the action by using diminutive remarks about the protesters.

The protests come amid accusations that the UK government has been imitating the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump in disrespecting international conventions on environment.

The government has mostly ignored calls for cancelling oil fracture operations in a site near Preston, in northern England, where activists have repeatedly clashed with police and workers of a major international energy company.

(Source: Press TV)

Zarif to Trump: Inheritors of Persian civilization do not seek advice from Americans

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — In a post on his Twitter account on Tuesday, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said the "inheritors of the ancient Persian civilization don't base their strategy on 'advice' of foreigners-let alone Americans."

The remarks by Zarif came one day after U.S. President Donald Trump claimed in a tweet that Iran is being given very bad advice by former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry "and people who helped him lead the U.S. into the very bad Iran Nuclear Deal."

Zarif also said the decision by Trump's administration to end sanctions waivers on Iran's oil exports shows "panic and desperation" in Washington.

"Escalating #EconomicTERRORISM against Iranians exposes panic & desperation of US regime—and chronic failures of its client co-conspirators," Zarif tweeted.

Washington announced on Monday that all Iran sanc-

tion waivers will end by May, causing crude oil prices to rise and pressuring importers to cut their Iranian imports to zero.

China's Foreign Ministry said on Tuesday it has formally complained to the United States over its decision to end waivers on sanctions on Iranian oil imports, adding another fault line to already complicated Beijing-Washington ties.

China is resolutely opposed to the United States enforcing unilateral sanctions or "long armed jurisdiction", Geng Shuang, a ministry spokesman, told a daily news briefing.

"The decision from the U.S. will contribute to volatility in the Middle East and in the international energy market. We urge the United States to take a responsible attitude and play a constructive role, not the opposite," Geng said, according to Reuters.



Majlis declares CENTCOM as terrorist



■ **Govt. is duty bound to take retaliatory actions against U.S. forces**

Based on the parliament's approval, the government is also duty bound to take coun-

It was the first time that the United States has designated a country's military as terrorist.

The terrorist designation against the IRGC was announced on April 8, one day before elections in Israel. Political analysts, including Noam Chomsky, said the designation was a gift to Benjamin Netanyahu.

On the same day that the U.S. took such a move against the IRGC, Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) declared CENTCOM as terrorist and the U.S. government as sponsor of terrorism.

teractions against the U.S. forces within the framework of the SNSC approvals.

The bill was approved with 166 votes in favor, 9 against, and six abstentions.

The government is also tasked to take legal actions against the U.S. move.

The government should also provide parliament with reports on the acts taken against the U.S. move against the IRGC.

The bill was ratified with 172 votes in favor, 9 against, and 3 abstentions.

■ **Foreign Ministry tasked to help close down American bases in region through legal and diplomatic measures**

Lawmakers also voted in favor of a motion that tasks the Foreign Ministry to make efforts to help close down American military bases in the region by using its legal, political and diplomatic capacities.

With 176 votes in favor, 3 against and 2 abstentions, the parliament approved Article 5 of the motion to counter U.S. designation of the IRGC as terrorist organization, Mehr reported.

According to the ratified motion, the government is also obligated to support those individuals who are targeted by the United States for cooperating with the IRGC.

Houthis warn Saudi Arabia, UAE: Strategic spots within reach

1 → Last December, the United Nations mediated talks between the Houthis and the former officials in Sweden. The negotiations led to establishment of a ceasefire in the coastal city of al-Hudaidah, the port of entry for most of Yemen's imports.

The Houthis have, time and again, complained about repeated violation of the deal by the invading forces and their mercenaries.

According to a December 2018 report by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), a nonprofit conflict-research organization, the Saudi-led war has claimed the lives of over 60,000 Yemenis since January 2016.

The war has also turned Yemen into the site



of the world's biggest humanitarian crisis by pushing it close to the edge of outright famine.

"It is possible to target strategic, vital, sensitive, and influential targets in the event of any escalation in al-Hudaidah," the Houthi leader warned.

The Houthis and their allied forces launch back-to-back retaliatory strikes against the southwestern Saudi regions of Jizan, Asir, and Najran.

Last July, the combined forces fired a domestically-designed and -developed ballistic missile at a strategic economic target in Jizan in retaliation for the ongoing war. Houthi fighters also fired two ballistic missiles at a facility belonging to Saudi Arabia's Aramco oil giant in Jizan last April.

Daesh claims responsibility for Sri Lanka bombings

TEHRAN- Daesh (ISIL) terrorist group has claimed responsibility for coordinated bombings in Sri Lanka which killed 321 people and injured about 500 others, the group's AMAQ news agency said Tuesday.

The group did not give evidence for its claim.

According to Daily Star, a Sri Lankan official had said earlier Tuesday that the attacks were retaliation for a recent attack on mosques in New Zealand, adding that two domestic groups were believed to be responsible.

"The initial investigation has revealed that this was in retaliation for the New Zealand mosque attack," junior minister for defense Ruwan Wijewardene told parliament. "It was done by National Thawheed Jama'ut along with JMI," he said, referring to another local group, Jammiyathul Millathu Ibrahim.

As a state of emergency took effect Tuesday giving the Sri Lankan military war-time powers, police arrested 40 suspects, including the driver of a van allegedly used by suicide bombers involved in deadly Easter bombings and the owner of a house where some of them lived, officials said.

Sri Lanka's president gave the military a wider berth to detain and arrest suspects - powers that were used during the 26-year civil war but withdrawn when it ended in 2009.

The death toll from Sunday's attacks rose to 310, police spokesman Ruwan Gunasekara said.

The United Nations said Tuesday that at least 45 children were among the dead.

"The total now is 45 children who died," UNICEF spokesman Christophe Boulierac told reporters in Geneva, stressing that others "are wounded and are now fighting for their lives," meaning the toll among minors from the Sunday attacks could rise. On Tuesday, which President Maithripala Sirisena declared a day of mourning, Sri Lankan authorities planned to brief foreign diplomats and receive assistance from the FBI and other foreign intelligence-gathering agencies after officials disclosed Monday that warnings had been received weeks ago of the possibility of an attack by the radical Muslim group blamed for the bloodshed.

The six near-simultaneous attacks on three churches and three luxury hotels and three related blasts later Sunday were the South Asian island nation's deadliest violence in a decade. The government blocked most social media to curtail false information. Even after an overnight, nationwide curfew was lifted, the streets of central Colombo remained mostly deserted and shops closed as armed soldiers stood guard.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said he feared the massacre could unleash instability and he vowed to "vest all necessary powers with the defense forces" to act against those responsible.

In an indication of the tensions, three explosions caused



panic but apparently no injuries Monday as police were defusing bombs inside a van parked near one of the stricken churches. Dozens of detonators were discovered near Colombo's main bus depot, but officials declined to say whether they were linked to the attacks.

At Bandaranaike International Airport outside of Colombo early Tuesday morning, police walked explosive-sniffing dogs outside as inside cheery video advertisements of gamblers and snorkelers played. At a roadside checkpoint at the airport, security officials checked car trunks and questioned drivers.

The lack of social media access was contributing to the confusion and doing little to reassure residents and visitors that the danger had passed.

U.S. military propping up Daesh in Afghanistan

TEHRAN- The United States military has been allowing members of Daesh (ISIL) and their weapons into Afghanistan following the terror group's recent defeats in Syria and Iraq, a new report suggests, raising serious questions about Washington's future plans for the country.

According to the Monday report by the Economic Times, while Afghanistan's skies remain under full control of American and NATO forces stationed in the country, sources are claiming that weapons are often being transferred to the country by helicopters that bear no identifying insignia.

The report estimated that around 10,000 members of the Takfiri terrorist group were present in Afghanistan and the number was growing on Washington's watch.

The suspected ties between Daesh and the U.S. military in Afghanistan is nothing new.

Hamid Karzai, Afghanistan's former president, told Al Jazeera in 2017 that the U.S. was colluding with Daesh in Afghanistan and helping it cement its grip on areas in the eastern parts of the country.



"In my view, under the full [U.S.] presence, surveillance, military, political, intelligence, Daesh has emerged," he said. "And for two years, the Afghan people came, cried loud about their suffering, of violations. Nothing was done." Karzai further noted that America had

specifically used Daesh as an excuse earlier that year to drop the largest non-nuclear bomb ever built in Afghanistan.

"And the next day, Daesh takes the next district in Afghanistan," he said. "That proves to us that there is a hand in it and that hand

can be no one else but them [the U.S.] in Afghanistan."

On April 11, 2017, the U.S. military dropped the GBU-43/B Massive Ordnance Air Blast (MOAB), dubbed the "mother of all bombs", on alleged Daesh hideouts in Afghanistan's Nangarhar Province, killing nearly a hundred people, whom the U.S. insists were all militants.

According to press TV, Daesh's rise in Afghanistan comes at a time when the Trump administration is engaged in peace talks with the Taliban militant group, claiming that the war -- which began in 2001 -- has run its course and it is time to bring U.S. troops back home.

Today, around 14,000 U.S. troops remain in Afghanistan, half of them assigned to what Washington insists are counter-terrorism missions.

The Taliban's five-year rule over at least three quarters of Afghanistan came to an end following the 2001 U.S.-led invasion, but 17 years on, the militant group has mounted a comeback.

Yemeni forces, allies shoot down three Saudi-led reconnaissance drones

TEHRAN- Yemeni army forces, supported by allied fighters from Popular Committees, have intercepted and targeted three unmanned aerial vehicles belonging to the Saudi-led military coalition, as they were flying in the skies over the country's western coastal province of Hudaydah and the kingdom's southwestern border region of Najran.

Yemen's Arabic-language al-Masirah television network, citing an unnamed Yemeni military source, reported that Yemeni air defense forces and their allies shot down two drones on Monday afternoon, as they were on reconnaissance mission over Kilo 16 district in Hudaydah.

Earlier in the day, Yemeni troops and fighters from Popular Committees brought down an unmanned aerial vehicle as it was flying over the Boqa' desert area of Najran, located 844 kilometers south of the Saudi capital Riyadh.

The developments came only a day after Yemeni forces and their allies intercepted and targeted a drone in the skies over the

same Saudi region.

According to Press TV, a Yemeni military official, requesting not to be named, said the drone was struck as it was on a mission over Wadi Al Abu Jabbareh area in Najran.

Last week, the media bureau of Yemen's Houthi Ansarullah movement announced in a statement that Yemeni air defense forces and their allies had shot down a Chinese-built medium-altitude and long-endurance Wing Loong drone with a surface-to-air missile.

The statement issued on April 19 added that the drone was struck as it was on a surveillance mission over Bani Muadh area in the Sahar district of Yemen's northwestern province of Sa'ada. It was armed with air-to-surface weapons.

Saudi Arabia and a number of its regional allies launched a devastating campaign against Yemen in March 2015 with the goal of bringing the government of former president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi back to power and crushing the Houthi Ansarullah movement.

Kazakh ruling party nominates Tokayev for presidency

TEHRAN- Kazakhstan's ruling party nominated Kassym-Jomart Tokayev as its candidate for a snap presidential vote in June after he was backed by the country's founding leader Nursultan Nazarbayev, setting the stage for a smooth handover of power in the Central Asian nation.

Tokayev's candidacy received unanimous backing from 600 delegates of the ruling Nur Otan party, which is loyal to 78-year-old Nazarbayev, at a conference in the capital Nur-Sultan, newly named for the former leader. Speaking at the conference on Tuesday, Nazarbayev, who stunned the oil-rich country by suddenly resigning last month, proposed Tokayev, the current interim president, as candidate at the polls, Al Jazeera reported.

Sixty-five-year-old Tokayev is now all but certain to win the June 9 vote, marking a rare handover of power in ex-Soviet Central Asia where local leaders usually hold on to office until death. A seamless transition will reassure foreign investors who have pumped money into the country's energy sector but frustrate those calling for democratic reforms in the

authoritarian state.

"I ask everyone to support his candidacy," Nazarbayev said at the conference in the capital Nur-Sultan, renamed from Astana in his honor following his resignation.

"I am sure he will be a worthy leader," said Nazarbayev, who retains significant powers and said he would still play a role in shaping policy.

"People need stability and confidence in tomorrow. I will continue to work in the interests of the people of Kazakhstan."

Tokayev had announced the snap election in a televised address to the nation after taking his acting role as president.

Nazarbayev remains the lifelong chair of Kazakhstan's powerful security council and is constitutionally designated as the country's "Elbasy", or "Leader of the Nation".

However, Tokayev's own public profile has been growing in recent weeks.

He has visited Moscow for talks with Russian leader Vladimir Putin, a close ally of Nazarbayev, as well as Uzbekistan, a key regional player.

counterpart Vladimir Putin in the Black Sea resort city of Sochi on September 17, all militants in a demilitarized zone, which surrounds Idlib and also parts of the adjacent provinces of Aleppo and Hama, were supposed to pull out heavy arms by October 17, and Takfiri groups had to withdraw by October 15.

U.S. intensifies pressure against Lebanese Hezbollah, sets \$10 million dollar reward

TEHRAN- The United States has offered a reward of up to \$10 million dollars in return for information about Hezbollah finances, intensifying its pressure campaign against the Lebanese resistance movement.

The U.S. State Department's "Rewards for Justice Program" made the announcement on Monday, saying that it is seeking "information leading to the disruption of the financial mechanisms of Lebanese Hezbollah."

According to Press TV, the statement further went on to name what it described as some of Hezbollah's "malign" activities, listing the group's support for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad as an example of the group's "terrorist operations".

Washington claims that the Lebanese resistance movement condones terrorism despite the fact that Hezbollah has been involved in a fierce fight against foreign-backed Takfiri terrorist groups, including Daesh and al-Nusra Front, thus preventing the spillover of the militancy gripping neighboring Syria into Lebanon.

In October, the administration of President Donald Trump imposed a new round of sanctions on the movement known as the Hezbollah International Financing Prevention Amendments Act 2018 targeting individuals and international organizations that do business with the group.

In trip to Lebanon last month, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo also urged Lebanese authorities to counter the group.

Pompeo's comments were, however, strongly rejected by leading Lebanese politicians, most importantly Lebanese President Michel Aoun, Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil and long-serving speaker of Lebanon's parliament, Nabih Berri.

UN says war has set back Yemen's development by 20 years

TEHRAN- A UN-commissioned report says the war in Yemen has set back its development by more than 20 years.

The study commissioned by the UN Development Program found that if the war ends this year, it will have caused economic losses of \$88.8 billion. If the conflict lasts until 2030, it would leave 71 percent of the population in extreme poverty, 84 percent malnourished and cause economic losses of \$657 billion, AP reported.

The UNDP's Yemen representative, Auke Lootsma, says that "even if there were to be peace tomorrow, it could take decades for Yemen to return to pre-conflict levels of development."

Saudi Arabia and a number of its regional allies launched a devastating campaign against Yemen in March 2015 with the goal of bringing the government of former president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi back to power and crushing the Houthi Ansarullah movement.

EU still sees no reworking of Brexit deal

TEHRAN- The European Commission again ruled out Tuesday any reopening of the withdrawal treaty negotiated with Britain last year after a media report in London that Prime Minister Theresa May had asked aides to review alternative arrangements for the Irish border, Reuters reported.

"It is excluded that we renegotiate or reopen the withdrawal agreement because this is the best solution possible," deputy chief spokeswoman Mina Andreeva told a news conference, citing remarks by Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker.

She had been asked about a report about pro-Brexit members of May's Conservative Party pressing the prime minister again to seek changes to the treaty so as to remove the controversial "backstop" protocol that is intended to avoid disruptive customs checks on Northern Ireland's sensitive land frontier with the European Union.

African summit gives Sudan military three months for reforms

TEHRAN- African leaders meeting in Cairo on Tuesday agreed to give Sudan's ruling military council three months to implement democratic reforms, Egypt said on Tuesday, amid pressure for a quick handover of power to civilians.

The decision extends a 15-day deadline set by the African Union last week for Sudan's Transitional Military Council (TMC) to hand over power to civilians or to be suspended from the grouping. The TMC took over after President Omar al-Bashir was ousted on April 11.

According to Press TV, any suspension of Sudan's AU membership could affect the TMC's efforts to win international recognition as the country's legitimate rulers during an interim period of up to two years, and thus delay any aid to the country that has been trying to cope with a dire economic crisis.

The TMC has been under pressure from demonstrators to hand power rapidly to civilians since the military ousted Bashir following months of protests against his 30 years in office.

Speaking at the end of a summit attended by several African heads of state, Sisi said that the meeting agreed on the need to deal with the situation in Sudan by working to "quickly restore the constitutional system through a political democratic process led and managed by the Sudanese themselves".

Sisi, who holds the rotating African Union presidency, said that the African Union Commission Chairman Moussa Faki Mahamat had briefed the meeting on his recent talks in Khartoum.

"We agreed on the need to give more time to Sudanese authorities and Sudanese parties to implement these measures," Sisi told the meeting.

Syrian army finds Israeli, U.S.-made weapons

1 → The Britain-based monitoring group added that the airstrikes caused heavy damage to militant positions.

According to Press TV, Russian jets have been carrying out air raids against targets belonging to the Daesh Takfiri terrorist group and those of other terror outfits inside

Syria at the Damascus government's formal request since September 2015.

The airstrikes have helped Syrian forces advance against anti-Damascus militants.

Under a deal reached following a meeting between Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Russian

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	202857.4
IFX	2480.03

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,267 rials
GBP	54,549 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$74.27/b
WTI	\$65.94/b
OPEC Basket	\$70.81/b
Gold	\$1,273.55/oz
Silver	\$15.01/oz
Platinum	\$892.25/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Iran, Pakistan stress expansion of trade ties

➔ Addressing the business forum on Monday, TCCIMA head lamented that the \$1-billion annual trade between Iran and Pakistan is not satisfactory at all, while the figure could be risen easily.



TCCIMA Head Masoud Khansari (1st L), Iranian Transport Minister Mohammad Eslami (2nd R) and Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan (1st R) in an Iran-Pakistan business forum in Tehran on Monday

He mentioned problems related to the banking and financial channels between the two sides and also high tariffs as some barriers for the expansion of bilateral trades and stressed the necessity of signing free trade agreement between Iran and Pakistan.

Imran Khan, for his part, said: “In the new Pakistani government we are seeking to open a new chapter in trade with Iran and we are determined to expand economic ties with Iran despite the sanctions.”

Low national saving rate stores up trouble ahead for Britain

The Scottish economist Adam Smith described Britain as a nation of shopkeepers in his book The Wealth of Nations, published in 1776.

According to Financial Times, today, the UK is simply a country of shoppers. Rarely has Britain been consuming so much and saving so little.

As a nation — which statisticians break down into households, companies and the government — Britain spends far more than it earns. On this measure, the UK borrowed 5 percent of national income in 2015, according to the OECD, the Paris-based international organization.

This implies that UK households, companies and the government spent 5 percent more than they earned in that year and financed the deficit by borrowing from overseas.

Britain was still borrowing 5.1 percent of gross domestic product from foreigners in the third quarter of 2018, according to latest data from the Office for National Statistics on so-called sector balances. Since the 2016 EU referendum, every large sector of the economy — classified as households, companies and the government — has been in deficit at the same time: a situation last recorded in the boom years of the late 1980s.

Senior UK policymakers have long worried that running an economy on such low levels of national savings would be storing up trouble for the future, but they have often been at a loss to find solutions.

Mervyn King, former governor of the Bank of England, regularly expressed concern over Britain's adeptness at consuming but felt he had to pump it up further at the BoE by keeping interest rates low for fear of a slump.

He called this a “paradox of policy” and noted an irony in his 2016 book The End of Alchemy that “those countries most in need of this long-term adjustment [to higher national savings levels], the US and the UK, have been the most active in pursuing the short-term stimulus”.

Such is the alarm over the lack of national savings that the ONS issued a stern warning in its most recent release about Britain's accounts. Rob Kent-Smith, head of GDP at the ONS, said last month that “households spent more than they received for an unprecedented nine quarters in a row”.

Martin Weale of King's College London, a former external member of the BoE's Monetary Policy Committee, expressed concern that low rates of national savings would lead to future disappointment with living standards.

“National savings is important because if you have a situation where people want to retire you have to ask how they can do it,” Professor Weale said, noting that savings can come from many places — for example, companies' contributions into defined benefit pension schemes.

“You can save for retirement, you can hope young people will pay for your retirement, you can decide not to retire, or I suppose you could retire and starve,” said Prof Weale. Happy countries, he added, tended to be those with high national savings rates.

Many economists are, however, not nearly as worried. David Miles of Imperial College London and another former MPC member said that low national savings rates might be a flashing warning light, but “the more one delves, if there is a problem, you won't find it in the aggregate [national savings rate] number” produced by the ONS.

TSE issues 128% more trading codes yr/yr

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The number of trading codes issued at Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) rose 128 percent in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2019) compared to its previous year, TSE Head Ali Sahraei announced.

The official made the remarks in a press conference held on the sidelines of 12th International Exhibition of Exchange, Banks and Insurance of Iran (IRAN FINEX 2019) which kicked off at Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds on Monday, Mehr news agency reported.

Sahraei said some 327,000 trading codes have been issued at the TSE during the past year.

He also highlighted that TSE's net profit in the previous year equaled its total net profit over three preceding years.

TEDPIX, the main index of TSE, which stood at 96,000 points at the beginning of the past year, climbed to 178,659 points at the yearend, which indicates an 86-percent growth year on year, the official further announced and said that this high growth shows the proper performance of all companies.

CBI governor discusses expansion of banking ties with Iraqi officials

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Central Bank of Iran Governor Abdolnaser Hemmati met some Iraqi senior officials during a visit to Baghdad to explore the ways for the expansion of banking relations between the two countries, IRIB reported.

Hemmati met Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi on Monday, Iraqi Finance Minister Fuad Mohammed Hussein and Central Bank of Iraq Chairman Ali Mohsen Al-Allaq on Sunday.

Iran and Iraq are determined to boost their trade ties and to meet this target many officials and delegations from each side have been recently visited the other side.

Heading a high-ranking economic and political delegation, Iraqi Prime Minister Abdul Mahdi visited Iran on April 6 and 7. The visit came after Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's landmark visit to Iraq in March.

During their stay in Tehran, the Iraqi officials met their Iranian counterparts to discuss different areas of cooperation between the two neighbors.

In that visit, an Iran-Iraq business forum was also held at the place of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA).

During the business forum, the two sides called for further expansion of the trade ties between the two countries.

During the stay of Iraqi delegation in Iran, CBI governor met Iraqi Finance Minister Fuad Mohammed Hussein.

On the sidelines of his meeting with the



Iraqi official, Hemmati said that Iran-Iraq banking relations would be eased to lubricate transactions between the two countries' businessmen.

He said that regarding the ever increasing trade transactions between the two sides and Iran's exports of gas and oil to Iraq besides Iranian private sector's exports to the country, the exports value from Iran to Iraq has increased recently up to \$12 billion per year.

“There are some banking difficulties about which negotiations were made with the Iraqi minister today and as accorded, to ease Iranian tradesmen's activities in Iraq the impediments will be removed soon”, CBI governor said.

At that time, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi agreed on the future visit of Hemmati to Iraq with the aim of finalizing and implementing financial and banking agreements between Iran and Iraq.

Hemmati had visited Iraq last year to talk on using local currencies between the two countries.



IRAN FINEX is the most prestigious event concentrating on finance industries in Iran. It is the most important event in this field in the region that brings together all the companies operating in the financial

sector under the same roof.

In this edition of the four-day exhibition, the latest achievements of banking industry, insurance, and capital market is being showcased.

Development of trade a priority for Iran, China

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Chairman of the Majlis Economic Committee Mohammadreza Pour-Ebrahimi said on Tuesday that promoting trade cooperation is a priority for Iran-China relations, IRNA reported.

Talking to Iranian reporters in Beijing, Pour-Ebrahimi said that meetings have been held between respective officials of Iran and China to promote economic relations.

He added that the Iranian delegation has put on the agenda developing economic cooperation with senior officials of China Communist Party during the current visit.

Pour-Ebrahimi, accompanying a delegation led by former Iranian lawmaker Gholamali Haddad-Adel is in China to attend the second Forum on Belt and Road slated to be held on April 25.

Referring to the fact that some meetings are supposed to be held on economic fields, he expressed hope that the meetings would help boost cooperation on banking and financial fields.

He went on to say that thanks to its historic role of the Silk Road, Iran has especial position in Belt and Road Initiative.

Reiterating the fact that China has put on the agenda financing economic projects in the second Belt and Road forum, the Iranian lawmaker said that naturally due to its sensitive position with having access to Central Asia, high seas and Europe, Iran has a great and undeniable status



which creates opportunity for developing economic ties with China.

Pour-Ebrahimi noted that implementation of economic projects regarding ‘Belt and Road Initiative’ would be one of the most important topic for Iran, saying that negotiations will be held on financing and implementing economic projects, banking cooperation, creating new approach in banking transactions through digital currencies and establishing bilateral and multilateral monetary agreements.

The second Belt and Road forum is to be held with the attendance of over 5,000 foreign guests from 137 countries including 37 presidents and prime ministers and 150 ministers on April 25-27.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), also known as the One Belt One Road (OBOR) is a development strategy adopted by the Chinese government involving infrastructure development and investments in 152 countries and international organizations in Europe, Asia, Middle East, Latin America and Africa.

Eurozone slowdown is worse than the global one

By Daniel Lacalle

In recent days, one of the most repeated messages among European financial analysts has been this: “we are in a global slowdown”.

The sentence, however, hides important nuances and very relevant differences. The European Union suffers a severe slowdown. The rest of the world only a moderate reduction in the pace of growth. Data from the United States tell us something very different from what we get from the Eurozone.

Retail sales rose 1.6 percent in March in the U.S. and the implied annualized growth rate for the first quarter remains above 2.1 percent. If we look at the employment data, the United States only sees a slight moderation in employment growth... But we are talking about the creation of 196,000 jobs, a figure that indicates much better growth than other similar economies. The same applies to the latest manufacturing and service indices: They remain above 50 (in expansion). The Markit service index was 56.3 compared with an expectation of 54.8 and the compound showed a figure of 54.6 compared to the previous 54.3.

The economic surprise index of emerging markets also indicates an improvement. A strong but stable dollar (DXY Index) has not damaged the macroeconomic figures of the main emerging economies. It is true that the “usual suspects”, Argentina and Turkey, have seen their currencies plummet against the dollar, as they continue to implement counterproductive monetary policies of financing public spending with direct printing of currency.



However, the macro data of most emerging countries as a whole is better than expected, and that must be acknowledged. Brazil was the latest to show a marked improvement in the Economic Activity Index in February. Commodity prices have helped, but that tailwind is not the main driver. We cannot be complacent, but the recent capital outflows seen in March are modest compared to the inflows into February.

China has shown slightly better data in the recent manufacturing index as well. Their huge imbalances remain, and we should not indulge in complacency or optimism, as the Asian giant shows macroeconomic indicators improving within a long-term trend that has been signaling a clear deceleration since 2016. We must remain concerned about China's indebted model, but it is still a trend of relatively weaker growth, not of stagnation.

So, where is there evidence of stagnation? In Europe and Japan.

Japan's manufacturing PMI came at 49.5 and output at 47.9. Both in 3rd month of contraction. The Japanese slowdown does not surprise

anymore, because it is in its third decade of stagnation repeating the same mistakes of disguising the demographic and productive model challenges with misguided Keynesian government spending policies and more debt.

The most concerning problem is Europe. A European Union that completely abandoned its reform agenda to bet it all on the mirage of monetary policy, while economic, demographic, state and political risks rise. The data from Germany remains poor, but the country enjoys enviable unemployment, trade balance and fiscal strength. However, in the rest of the Eurozone, the fragility of the economies is linked to both fiscal imbalances and excessive interventionism that make them more vulnerable to a change in the cycle.

At least in France, from where I write this article, the debate on television and media is constant. The entire country is aware that the slowdown is severe and tax reductions and measures to strengthen economic performance are announced. The word “crisis” appears on the front page of newspapers and economic programs as a real possibility. In the periphery, countries must be aware that they have exhausted their fiscal space and acknowledge their vulnerability to a modest change of cycle.

Spain is not immune to these risks. The OECD index of leading indicators already shows a negative figure and the leading indicators published by the Ministry of Economy also reflect more than ten in negative territory. That's why the Eurozone should be more prepared. Because most countries do not have the capacity that others have to confront a slowdown. The

United States or the United Kingdom have buffers to face a slowdown. Most Eurozone countries are dangerously ignoring it and, even worse, proposing large government spending and high taxes as the “solution”.

All of you have read that the slowdown was due to temporary factors. It is not. The fall in the flash Composite PMI, from 51.6 in March to 51.3 in April was worse than the consensus estimate of 51.8.

Some demand a massive stimulus from Germany to address the problems of the Eurozone. Making the same mistakes as other countries is not a growth policy, it is a suicide action. It would not work. There is no evidence that Germany is importing less than it needs, quite the opposite. Its industrial utilization has risen from 71 percent in 2009 to 86 percent today. Meanwhile, private investment is at pre-crisis highs. We cannot ask Germany to make the mistakes of others to disguise the imbalances of its Eurozone partners.

The problem of the Eurozone is threefold: demographic, high state and fiscal interventionism, and lack of technological leadership. If we add the political risk of some governments which want to penalize high productivity sectors while subsidizing those of low productivity, we have an economic challenge that will not be solved with liquidity injections and low rates. With rates at zero and almost 1.8 trillion euros of excessive liquidity, the problem of the European Union is not the moderate global slowdown. It is the perpetuation of a rigid, intervened and extractive model.

(Source: ejinsight.com)

Inflation slowdown is again stalking Sweden's central bank

Central banks across the world are grappling with the mystery of how to bring back inflation and there are few places where the struggle has been as profound as in Sweden.

As reported by Bloomberg, this week, policy makers in Stockholm are meeting as price growth has slipped far below their estimates and their 2 percent target. Just a few months ago, they raised rates for the first time in seven years, plotting a path out of negative rates this year amid growing confidence they had managed to restore credibility in their inflation regime.

But on Thursday they will likely be forced to again lower their rate outlook, potentially pushing back an increase signaled for September and prolonging an era of negative rates. Led by Governor Stefan Ingves, the bank is also expected to extend its bond purchases (by pre-reinvesting bond maturities) beyond June, while keeping the benchmark at minus 0.25 percent.

Inflation pressure has “definitely been lower than the Riksbank

counted on” said Torbjorn Isaksson, chief analyst at Nordea Bank Abp. “There are fewer and fewer economic arguments for the Riksbank to raise rates.”

As global and European growth loses momentum, Sweden's economy is cooling and unemployment is forecast to rise. A global reassessment of monetary policy, led by the Federal Reserve halting its hiking cycle, is weighing on the Riksbank's plans to tighten. The European Central Bank is planning more stimulus as it expects its key rate to be unchanged at least through 2019.

Nevertheless, policy makers in Sweden have a lot invested in their exit out of so many years of negative rates and they surprised markets in February by sticking to their plans. The krona has tumbled this year, giving the Riksbank more room to raise rates. Some on the board, including Deputy Governors Cecilia Skingsley and Martin Floden, have also flagged that they

are willing to live with inflation that holds just below the target, as long as expectations stay anchored around 2 percent.

According to SEB AB, the main scenario is that the rate path will indicate a slightly later hike but that the Riksbank will maintain that an increase will come “during the second half of the year.”

But unemployment surprised negatively in March and the number of jobless seems to have bottomed, according to Svenska Handelsbanken AB's Chief Economist Christina Nyman.

“Unless there's considerable inflation pressure, it's going to be a challenge if you are at about to raise rates and you at the same time have rising unemployment numbers,” she said.

Policy makers have also said they will provide the next step forward on what to do with their bond purchasing program. Opinion is divided, but the main outcome could be continued purchases at a slower pace than the recent 20 billion kronor per year.

S.Korea to continue negotiations with U.S. over Iran sanctions

By Ebrohim Fallahi

TEHRAN — Following the U.S. announcement on Monday regarding the end of exemptions from sanctions on Iranian oil imports, South Korean foreign ministry said in a statement that the government has been negotiating with the U.S. at all levels to extend the waiver, and that it will continue to make every effort to reflect Seoul's position until the May deadline.

According to a report by Yonhap, earlier this month, South Korea's finance minister, Hong Nam-ki, held talks with U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin in Washington to seek a waiver extension. South Korea, which relies heavily on Iranian condensate to produce



petrochemical products, had been in negotiations with the U.S. to gain an extension to the waiver that expires May 1.

In November 2018, The United States granted exemptions to eight countries including South Korea allowing them to continue buying Iranian oil.

South Korean companies stopped importing Iranian crude oil in September 2018, however receiving waivers, after a five-month hiatus, South Korea imported \$101.2 million worth of Iranian crude oil in January.

The Northeast Asian country is not an oil producer and more than 13 percent of its total oil purchases come from Iran.

South Korea is the third-largest buyer of Iranian oil.

Oil hits six-month high as U.S. announces end of Iran sanction waivers

ENERGY Oil prices hit their highest since November on Tuesday after Washington announced all waivers on imports of sanctions-hit Iranian oil would end next week, pressuring importers to stop buying from Tehran and further tightening global supply.

According to Reuters, Brent crude futures were at \$74.67 per barrel at 0855 GMT, up 63 cents or 0.85 percent from their last close, after hitting their highest level since No-

vember at \$74.70.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude futures marked their strongest since October 2018 at \$66.14 per barrel, up 59 cents or 0.9 percent from their previous settlement.

The United States on Monday demanded that buyers of Iranian oil stop purchases by May 1 or face sanctions, ending six months of waivers which allowed Iran's eight biggest buyers, most of them in Asia, to continue importing

limited volumes.

U.S. President Donald Trump is confident that Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates will fulfill their pledges to make up the difference in oil markets, a U.S. official told reporters.

Saudi Energy Minister Khalid al-Falih said on Monday that his country would "coordinate with fellow oil producers to ensure adequate supplies are available to consumers while ensuring the global oil market does not go out of balance".

Would Saudis play the U.S. puppet in Iran sanctions scenario?

1 → In July 2018, when Trump was planning on leaving Iran's nuclear deal, he had asked the Saudis to rise their production to compensate the Iranian oil which was supposed to be wiped out of the market.

The kingdom promised to increase production to 12 million barrels per day, a dream that never came true.

At the time many experts and analysts pointed out the unrealistic nature of Saudi Arabia's claims.

Gary Ross, head of global oil analytics at S&P Global said "The Saudis do not have 2 million bpd of spare capacity as it would imply production of 12 million bpd. They can likely produce a maximum of 11 million and even that will be running their system at stress levels."

"I do not believe that Saudi can increase production to 12 million bpd but they can increase exports by digging into their reserves," Ole Hansen, head of commodities research at Saxo Bank said.

However, this time the situation is a little different. Considering the kingdom's current production which is under 10 million bpd, the possibility of an increase to 11 million bpd is not that far from the reality.

But would the Saudi's be able to go through

with this promise?

■ Saudis and OPEC: The pact

Despite clear opposition from Trump, in December 2018, Saudi Arabia and its other fellow OPEC members along with the non-OPEC oil producers reached an agreement based on which all the signees would commit to a certain level of production cuts to take 1.2 million barrels per day off the market for the first six months of 2019. The 15-members of OPEC agreed to reduce their output by 800,000 bpd, while non-OPEC allies including agreed to contribute a 400,000 bpd reduction.

Since the beginning, all the OPEC+ members showed significant commitment to the deal and their efforts led to an almost balanced market in which the prices started to rise from their low levels.

In the meantime, Saudi Arabia has been pressured multiple times by the U.S. to end the accord and to increase production, however since the kingdom desperately needs the prices above \$50 to maintain its precious Aramco's value, the Saudis have resisted the U.S. requests for cooperation.

If the Saudis go through with Trump's request this time, the kingdom would not only be ending a deal which has kept the

prices from falling for so long, but it will also negate its position of strength within OPEC.

Despite all the pressures from the U.S., Saudi Arabia wants to make sure that in the next OPEC+ meeting in June, the pack would stay committed to the cuts deal. And if Saudi Arabia goes through with the commitment to rise its production under the U.S. pressure, it would definitely come to the OPEC+ gathering empty handed and it cannot expect other signees to stay in a deal which needed all the members to cut to certain levels.

Considering the fact that other members of OPEC+ deal are not at a position which could be able to increase production, the U.S. is expecting Saudi Arabia and the UAE to shoulder the burden.

If they do so, this would be a clear indication for the OPEC+ deal to end and that would not be good news for the Saudis that do not want to go back to the bad old days of under-\$50 oil.

That's why Saudis haven't been clear about their position in all these, they have said that the kingdom is going to assess the impact of the U.S. decision on the oil market before any raise in output.

Let's not forget Iran's ability to maintain some level of its oil exports under any circum-



stances. Iran has proven multiple times that it has its own strategies and approaches for seeing its oil in the global markets and many oil experts and analysts alongside Iranian officials including Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh have clearly asserted that the U.S. cannot realize its dream of "zero Iranian oil".

So with some portion of Iranian oil added to the mixture, and despite the short-term spike in the prices for now, the markets could be awaiting a downfall for oil prices if Saudis go through with the U.S. plans.

There is also the possibility of a conflict in the region, since Iran could potentially close the strategic Strait of Hormuz.

Unreliable nature makes renewables much more expensive: study

Solar panels and wind turbines are making electricity significantly more expensive, a major new study by a team of economists from the University of Chicago finds, Forbes reported.

Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS) "significantly increase average retail electricity prices, with prices increasing by 11 percent (1.3 cents per kWh) seven years after the policy's passage into law and 17 percent (2 cents per kWh) twelve years afterward," the economists write.

The study by Michael Greenstone, Richard McDowell, and Ishan Nath compared states with and without an RPS. It did so using what the economists

say is "the most comprehensive state-level dataset ever compiled" which covered 1990 to 2015.

The cost to consumers has been staggeringly high: "All in all, seven years after passage, consumers in the 29 states had paid \$125.2 billion more for electricity than they would have in the absence of the policy," they write.

Last year, I was the first journalist to report that solar and wind are making electricity more expensive in the United States — and for inherently physical reasons.

Solar and wind require that natural gas plants, hydro-electric dams, batteries or some other form

of reliable power be ready at a moment's notice to start churning out electricity when the wind stops blowing and the sun stops shining, I noted.

And unreliability requires solar- and/or wind-heavy places like Germany, California, and Denmark to pay neighboring nations or states to take their solar and wind energy when they are producing too much of it.

My reporting was criticized — sort of — by those who claimed I hadn't separated correlation from causation, but the new study by a top-notch team of economists, including an advisor to Barack Obama, proves I was right.

First Announcement



Permit No.1398.479

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TENDER NO.: **31-32-86306-44-002**

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Material Description
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The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 63,567 EURO or 2,996,000,000 RIAL, in favor of NISOC.

Tender documents including the materials thorough technical specifications and Qualitative Assessment Forms can be accessed via: WWW.nisoc.ir-material procurement management tab

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FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT
Bldg. No. 104, Material Procurement Management Complex
Kouy-e Fadaeian Islam (New Site), Ahvaz, Iran
Tel. No.: 061 341 23455 Fax No.: 061 3445 7437

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The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. /Indent No.	Estimated value (Rial)
National Iranian Drilling Company	3,197,190	Tender No.: FFP/09-98/002 Indent No.: 08-22-9745081	5,895,780,000
Qualitative evaluation of tenderers			
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.		
	1- Applicants who have more than 4 in process contracts with NIDC are not allowed to participate in this tender. 2- Applicants which have more than 2 in process contracts 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.		
Submitting Method	Hall No.:113, 1 st floor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahvaz, IRAN - Tel.: 061.34148601 Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 510,000 Iranian Rials under account number 4001114004020491 (Shaba No. IR 520100004001114004020491) 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.		
Closing date	Days after the last time of Purchasing 35		
Documents Receiving Method	Hall No. 107, 1 st 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	295,000,000 Rial/ 6,211 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 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 ۹۸/۲/۳ نویت دوم ۹۸/۲/۴

Reflection of the French game against Iran



1 → It was during this visit and among American senators that Theresa May called the JCPOA a “controversial deal” for the first time since 2015.

In this way, and indirectly, May announced her company with the United States for changing the JCPOA. Afterwards, it was time for the French President, Emmanuel Macron to take part in the joint game of London and Washington. In July 2017, Macron assured Trump that he would do its best to include Iran’s missile capability in the context of the nuclear deal, and thus limit the regional power of Iran.

But Macron never imagined that he had practically turned to Trump’s piece in his confrontation with Iran. In September, 2017, and during the United Nations General Assembly meeting in New York, British and French officials were urged by the United States to attract Germany’s positive stance to participate in the “West’s joint effort to change the JCPOA.”

Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor, surrendered to her Western counterparts much earlier than expected. As a result, by mid-2017, talks between American and European diplomats on changing the nuclear deal entered a new phase. A deal in which diplomats from the United States, Germany, France, and Britain, worked on a common goal called “complementary” or “secondary” agreement aimed at achieving Trump’s four demands.

Undoubtedly, the activities of the French in contrast to the Iranian nation, more than before, will be monitored by Tehran. It’s been around 4 months since the start of 2018. Although the United States has officially left a nuclear deal with Iran, French dissent continues to confront Iran. This is while France’s main duty and commitment was to maintain a nuclear deal with Iran! However, the French president and his government members, Emanuel Macron, should be mindful of the consequences of their absolute dependence on the United States.

Why did Europe give a six-month deadline to London?



By Saeed Sobhani

TEHRAN - Many political analysts in Europe believe that extending the London deadline for leaving the European Union will lead to a referendum on “election” again. It is noteworthy that the leaders of the two traditional British parties, the Labor and Conservative Party, are not opposed to this issue either.

However, the story does not end there! EU officials also seem reluctant to leave the UK out of this collection. Britain’s granting a grace period of 6 months to be analyzed in the same way. Undoubtedly, European and English officials are trying to stay London in the European Union.

“Brexit” continues to be an implicit term in the Britain’s political equations. Complicating the process of the British withdrawal from the European Union is a joint measure taken by the British government and European authorities. At the same time, the British government, with its widespread negative propaganda against the Brexit, is seeking to re-arrange a referendum. In other words, the European authorities are trying to direct the public opinion about the Brexit.

Recently, some western news sources are speaking of an issue called “repeating the Brexit referendum”, and name it as a possible option! An option that had been previously denied by British authorities, including Theresa May, the Prime Minister of the country. According to the France news agency, regarding the increasing doubt about the British Prime Minister’s efforts to conclude an agreement with the United Europe, the possibility of holding a second referendum on Brexit has multiplied.

This source has also announced that there are major obstacles on the way of confirming this agreement between Theresa May and European leaders, which has in turn intensified this trend. The existence of legal complexities in this agreement made its implementation difficult for both sides. Meanwhile, it is possible that the members of the parliament will vote in favor of Theresa May’s decision.

It seems that the game in London is very complicated! Meanwhile, supporters of the “People’s Vote” campaign, who are now very active in UK, believe that the parliament’s negative vote will pave the way for a new referendum on the Brexit. This issue is no way contrary to the demands of Theresa May and the Conservative Party, but it’s secretly supported by them. The negative propaganda of the Theresa May’s government against the Bexit since 2016 is known to everyone.

After the British citizens voted to leave the European Union in 2016, the two Labor and Conservative parties (as UK’s two traditional parties) tried their best to change the general vote on this issue. The active role played by people like former British Prime Minister Tony Blair can well indicate the dissatisfaction among British authorities over the Brexit.

The insistence of the European authorities on British participation in the European Parliamentary elections can also be analyzed in the same vein. They want to set England to stay in the EU. Meanwhile, supporters of Britain’s withdrawal from the European Union will be victimized by the British and European politicians.

The resurgence of religion in the last modern century: prof. Scott Thomas

Is it possible to remain religious and to become modern?

By Rooholamin Saeidi

Part 1 **TEHRAN** - Dr. Scott Thomas is an American who lectures in International Relations and the Politics of Developing Countries. He studied in the School of International Service at the American University, Washington, DC before going to the Department of International Relations at the London School of Economics for his MSc and PhD. He taught at universities in the United States, Switzerland, and South Africa before coming to Bath in 1994 where he is a permanent member of the teaching staff. At Bath he teaches a variety of courses on international relations.

Following is the text of the part 1 of his interview with Asre-Andisheh Magazine:

Q: Why contrary to all predictions, hasn’t Western modernization led to the erosion and demise of religion even in developed countries?

A: It is true that we now live – especially for most Westerners, or Europeans, ‘We live in a world that is not supposed to exist.’ Why do we live in a world that is not supposed to exist – the short answer is that religion was supposed to decline with modernization and economic development, and this has not happened. The idea that there is such a relationship – is a product of (Western) social science, in which what happened to the West – socially, politically, economically, was thought to establish general principles, patterns, propositions, or relationships which were valid for all peoples and cultures in the world. However, there may not be a set relationship between religion, secularization, and modernization, and the relationship between them might be related to specific cultures, religions, and civilizations.

The decline of religion as a part of modernization has been predicted since the 18th century Enlightenment: education, urbanization, science, technology, and the rise of literacy, and the middle class (i.e. better living standards) were all – allegedly – supposed to lead to the end of religion. This has not happened, and these factors have even contributed to the vitality of religion.

A number of factors come together to shape the contours of the global political and religious landscape in the 21st century: (i) the rise of the global South (demography), (ii) the rise of emerging powers (economy), (iii) the rise of global urbanization (megacities in the global South), (iv) the rise of the global middle class (in the megacities, in the global South), (v) the rise of refugees, migrants, and diaspora communities, and (vi) how these contours intersect or come together in the ‘religious world of the global South.’ So, from Buenos Aires, Sao Paulo, Lagos, and Cairo, to Seoul, and Jakarta - contrary to secularization theory, and contrary to the European experience of modernization, megacities, mega-churches, mega-mosques, and being religious, educated, and middle class go together in the 21st century. Religion returning to public life, and religion and modernization can go hand in hand, especially in the global South, and dramatically so in East Asia (China, Korea, Japan, where the state, the nation, religion, and modernization have gone together). Moreover, by 2050, if not before this time, China will have the largest number of Christians and Muslims in the world.

We do need to careful since the Middle Ages were not entirely the great ‘age of faith’ as it is often made out to be, so there also may not be a great age of decline. Moreover, these are factors which might link not necessarily be linked to all religions, but only Christianity and modernization, or perhaps only European Christianity and modernization, i.e. the close relationship between church and state (‘throne and altar’ in European history) is what contributed to the decline in religion, and this is not like Christianity in other parts of the world. It is often argued the separation of church and state has contributed to vitality of religion in the U.S. (an argument



going back to Alexis de Tocqueville in the 19th century, seeing the close relationship in Jacksonian America between religion, voluntary organizations, and civil society).

A couple of other points may be relevant. The idea of ‘decline in religion’ is often seen as synonymous with ‘decline in church attendance,’ membership figures, etc., but it is not clear this is an indication of the interest of people in spirituality (regardless of how this concept is defined). The number of people – even in what might be called ‘neo-pagan’ secular Britain, there is still a wide desire, thirst, for meaning, authenticity, spirituality, and transcendence. If this is the case, then it might be argued one part of the explanation has to do with the nature of religious institutions themselves. It is also not clear a decline of institutional religion is directly caused by cultural trends – since many institutions are struggling with members (e.g. political parties, trade unions, etc., and these are secular institutions).

Q: Why do some thinkers name the 20th century as ‘The Last Modern Century’? Should we consider Western modernity as a linear process and generalize it to other parts of the world or can we think of ‘multiple modernities’?

A: The idea of the ‘last modern century’ is a recognition of the rise of the ‘postmodern’ and the ‘postsecular’ in the sense that toward the end of the 20th century there has been a growing lack of faith, even a collapse of faith, in a hegemonic narrative of (Western) modernity and modernization. In other words, a lack of faith in a single overall character, direction, and meaning of progress, modernity, and development, which would now spread around the world. What is now happening is postmodernity and postsecularity open up the possibilities for the rise of multiple modernities (i.e. the collapse of the hegemonic Western narrative), multiple ways of being religious and being modern in the 21st century. This connects with what I said earlier about the religious world of the global South or the religious world of the 21st century.

I first examined this idea of the 20th century as the ‘last modern century’ in my book *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations*. I argued there that one of the aspects of the global resurgence of religion was the way (cultural) ‘authenticity has come to rival development as a key to understanding the political aspirations of the non-Western world.’ This referred to the ways societies, countries, want to gain economic prosperity, and organize their political, economic and social systems in ways that are consistent with their moral base, their cultural heritage, and religious traditions. Basically, it is one

of the results of the failure of the secular, modernizing, state to produce democracy and development. Now I would add the failure of more and more people to share in the benefits of globalization. It is also for these reasons why it would be misleading to view the global religious resurgence as the same as ‘fundamentalism’ or a ‘clash of civilizations.’

Moreover, given what I have said about the religious world of the global South, it is simply no longer the case that secularization is inherently a part of modernity and modernization. Modernity – as a type of social condition, and modernization - as a type of social process – yes, was a linear process, began in Europe, and now was spreading – or seemingly spreading, around the world. How much this ‘linearity’ is itself a product of a Judeo-Christian or really ‘Abrahamic’ view of history (i.e. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) is an interesting question, but clearly for the West this linear view of history is a product of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

However, the alternative view is still with us - it is the idea that what happened in the West – a particular type of modernization and development, will happen in the rest of the world, or as V.S. Naipaul, the British write born in Trinidad who won the Nobel Prize for literature famously put it, ‘Western civilization is the universal civilization.’ However, what we can now see is that the European great power politics went together with the universal idea of the inevitability of the global spread of Western civilization (i.e. spread in the early ideas of European anthropology, sociology, etc.). This is also why today the decline in Western hegemony is accompanied by the increasing idea of multiple modernities to account for the ways of being modern and being religious in the rise of the global South.

Q: Do you consider modernity or secularism as a universal theory or as a faith or myth?

A: I do not consider modernity or secularism to be a universal theory, or universal theory of modernization, but (like the sociologists Robert Bellah and Robert Wuthnow) I consider them to be a type of myth, or a type of faith, in a certain (Western/European) view of progress, modernization, and development (how the doctrine of progress is itself a secularization of the concept of Christian eschatology I will not examine now). What makes the theory of secularization ‘mythic,’ i.e. the idea that modernity, modernization, secularism, and secularization are inherently interrelated social processes, is that it does what myths have always done – for (so-called ‘traditional societies’ as well as ‘modern’ societies,’ myths are powerful stories we tell ourselves – who were are (identity), and who we want to be in the world (the ‘telos’ or end goal of ourselves, our societies, and what our

countries, or civilizations can offer the world, which need not be based on arrogance, but on a genuine appreciation of others).

We have to remember that what are now regarded as the periods of Western or European history – what are now called ‘the dark ages,’ the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Enlightenment began as ideological constructions to legitimate certain ideas, interests, groups, and institutions before they became merely the periods of time. The idea or concept of ‘the Renaissance’ - the way European history is divided up and characterized, is itself an ideological construction by Vasari, Petrarch, and other Renaissance artists and thinkers. The point was to link Italy – and see all of Europe or Renaissance Europe (e.g. Henry XVIII as a renaissance Prince), as a ‘rebirth’ a ‘renaissance’ of classical Greece and Rome – derogatively, calling the period in between as ‘the dark ages’ or the ‘middle ages’ and the cultural rebirth of Greek and Roman heritage in the city-states of Italy. Now the concept of the ‘global renaissance’ tries to connect the Italian Renaissance within ideas, events in international relations – trade, finance, commodities, patronage, imperial conflict, and encounters/exchanges between other cultures (esp. Islamic world of Levant, Middle East), which were also part of the Renaissance. In other words, the collapse of faith in (Western) modernization, and multiple modernities are opening up a new reading of history, even a new reading of Western history, one which tries to argue not necessarily against Western achievements, but towards a greater recognition of the interdependence of cultures and peoples around the world.

Q: If Westphalian order led to the marginalization of religion in international relations, can we say that the emerging post-Westphalian order and the erosion of states’ absolute power has resulted in the return of religion to public sphere?

A: It is true that Westphalia – the treaty in 1648, which brought the (allegedly) religious wars or Thirty Years War to an end, frames the dominant narrative in the discipline of International Relations on the rise of the modern international system, and the rise of modern international relations. ‘Westphalia was the majestic portal which leads form the old world to the new world,’ as the conventional story is famously told. In this sense ‘Westphalia’ is the benchmark or template against which contemporary international political change or social and political change is assessed in international relations.

It is important to recognize that sovereignty is a legal condition, and autonomy (states’ absolute power) is a political condition. The U.S. after 1945 was in a uniquely powerful position – it was the most unique ‘unipolar’ movement, and yet the U.S. still worked to found the United Nations (rather than only ‘coalitions of the willing’), which arguably was established on the legal equality of states – even though the U.S. was one of the most powerful. European states also agreed to limit to some extent their sovereignty to found the European Community. I have argued that religion mattered in both instances - in the U.S. it was a kind of ‘Protestant’ hegemony, in which theologians such as Reinhold Niebuhr, and the Christian realists, and Christian liberals (i.e. the mainline churches, at a time when American evangelicalism was in a low position), helped form the United Nations, and World Council of Churches. The Protestant churches in the 1940s actually produced Sunday School materials to support the founding of the U.N. something now, with the rise of conservative evangelicalism, would never take place. The point is that these early theologians constructed a ‘public theology of international order’ which supported international law and international institutions, and it was Christian Democrat leaders (de Gasperi in Italy, Adenauer in Germany), and Catholic social teaching which provided many of the ideas underlying the European Union. So, the idea of ‘the return of religion to the public square’ does need to be contextualized.

Resistance against Riyadh

TEHRAN (FNA) - Lijan al-Hirak al-Shaabi, a popular group protesting against the policies of the Saudi ruling system, in a statement on Monday underlined continued resistance against Riyadh, describing the House of Saud as a sponsor of terrorism.

The statement described the Saudi government as a “sponsor of terrorism”, stressing that the flames of popular moves against the regime will not die.

“The Saudi regime which rules the Arab Peninsula, introduces itself as a supporter of Islam, while it is a sponsor of terrorism and it shelters terrorists by means of misuing global political support in return for economic resources that it has gained from people’s assets and properties,” it added.

The statement referred to the Saudi security forces’ destruction of al-Mansourah village in Qatif region, the birthplace of Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, the prominent Shiite cleric executed by Riyadh in 2016, saying that if the Saudi regime wants to annihilate the popular resistance, it will



face more resistance.

Qatif, situated in Saudi Arabia’s Eastern Province, has been the scene of anti-regime protests since 2011, with

demonstrators demanding free speech, the release of political prisoners, and an end to economic and religious discrimination.

Riyadh has suppressed pro-democracy rallies, but to no avail as protests have intensified since January 2016 when the Al Saud regime executed respected Shiite cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr. In 2017, Awamiyah, another Shiite-populated Qatif town, witnessed a deadly military crackdown on protests that were being held against the regime’s attempt to raze the historical Musawara neighborhood.

Saudi rulers claimed the district’s narrow streets served as a hideout for armed men who were behind the attacks on Saudi forces in Eastern Province. Riyadh then deployed military forces with heavy weapons to the town, while bulldozers escorted by heavily armored military vehicles demolished several houses, businesses and historical sites across the region.

Dozens of civilians were killed during the weeks-long military crackdown. Some 30,000 people also fled the town.

The dialectic of secularism and religionism: prof. Elizabeth Shakman Hurd

The presence of religion in the public sphere and its implications for secularism

1→ We can and should continue to acknowledge the power of differences that are organized around the 'religious' and the 'secular,' but without treating them as fixed, inevitable, or universal. I adopt a critical cross-cultural perspective on religion and politics, with attention to their mutual co-implications and transformations.

■ Do you think that religion went into exile (private sphere) and has returned to public sphere recently or do you believe that it never went away at all?

A: It never went away. As I see it, there are two central and competing storylines about religion, politics and public life that dominate the discussion right now. They are both descriptive and prescriptive. That is, they claim to both describe the world as it is and they also prescribe particular ways of acting. In the first narrative, which is perhaps falling out of style, religion is seen as irrelevant to politics and public life, confined to private affairs, spaces, places, and fields of study that deal with these matters—anthropology, theology, religious studies. This notion—the sense that religion 'left' public life—has now been successfully and I think rather definitively debunked. In the second, competing narrative, the pendulum has swung, religion is back, and it has "gone public." Religion is now everyone's business. This is a popular narrative right now, but it is also problematic because it assumes that at one point religion had been evacuated from public life, which of course is simply not the case. There is some tension between these two narratives, despite their shared foundational assumptions, but the second one is prevailing in most quarters. In my estimation, most scholars would now agree that religion cannot be ignored, or written off as epiphenomena to the "real stuff" of social and material life. The notion that religion has "gone public" has gathered momentum as an alternative to the conventional story of secularization as religious privatization or decline. I find this shift between the two narratives fascinating. It motivated me to write my book, *Beyond Religious Freedom: The New Global Politics of Religion*. It is fascinating to me that scholars and public policymakers, many with minimal or no background in the study of religion, have been drawn almost magnetically to a stable, transhistorical and transcultural notion of 'religion' as a freestanding analytical and descriptive category. This secularist presumption seems to have at least nine lives. It does a lot of cultural and political work.

■ Some scholars believe that 'it seems time to carry the secularization doctrine to the graveyard of failed theories.' What is your idea? Do you think that secularism has lost its legitimacy and is in crisis duo to the global resurgence of religion?

A: This is an interesting question because the answer is both no and yes. Secularization and various doctrines of secularism have been and continue to be highly influential both historically and in the present. On the other hand, the historical, legal, religious and political contingencies of secularist settlements, and the normative commitments and theological and political presumptions that underlie and sustain them, make it impossible to speak of any fixed or final definition or understanding of 'secularism.' To move forward, we need to pose a series of new questions about religion and politics. To name a few: What if we were to suspend the assumptions about religion and about politics that underlie separationism? What if we were to avoid collapsing religion into the social or political, making it evaporate, so to speak—but at the same time also avoid treating religion as an ahistorical essence



Secularization and various doctrines of secularism have been and continue to be highly influential both historically and in the present.

that stands outside of history, law, economics, politics or the natural environment?

This involves continually reassessing and reckoning with the histories of the categories of religion and of politics. It involves deep contextualization. It involves a lot of work. The need for this kind of effort first came into sharp relief for me in writing my first book, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations*. I was struggling with apprehending that which was denominated as "religious" and "political" in non-European, including many colonial and postcolonial, contexts, as well as in Iran and Turkey. What can it mean to talk about secularism as the "separation" of church and state in societies in which there is no "church" in a European Christian sense? How should scholars study religion and politics in such a way so as to avoid merely reproducing the discourses of separation, secularism, disestablishment, free exercise, and religious freedom that often contain nestled within them the very assumptions that are most in need of interrogation? What do we have if we have neither complete religious freedom—in the sense of religion's total autonomy from the social and political—nor religion's complete absorption into the political? I am interested not only in rethinking our understanding of the religious but also and simultaneously rethinking our understanding of the political. This is the challenge.

■ In your opinion why the Western civilization has failed in implementing what Max Weber called "disenchantment of the world"? Was it totally a wrong idea to consider religion as an irrational and obsolete tradition that must be marginalized and finally eradicated in modern era?

A: The notion that religion should be marginalized or eradicated requires a very stable and secure definition of "religion" which we simply do not have. We live in a complex world characterized by diverse and shifting ways of belonging, believing, and being. These lifeways both shape and are shaped by legal, economic, political and historical factors and institutions, and cannot be fully separated from the latter in such a way as to definitively demarcate the 'relig-

ious' from the 'political.' The latter, of course, is the defining move of secularism. To challenge the foundations of the assumptions that underlie secularist epistemology does not however mean that secularism was a "failure" but rather that it needs to be carefully contextualized historically and politically. It needs to be understood rather than either celebrated or condemned. One of the aims of my first book was to do precisely this work in the context of the twentieth-century politics of Iran and Turkey, a deep and longstanding interest of mine.

■ Do you think that we need a mode of analysis in International Relation and foreign policy that attempts to merge the spiritual and the material? What deficiencies do you diagnose in these fields of study in the absence of religion?

A: The discipline of International Relations has come a long way in recent years in terms of the level of sophistication of the discussion and debate around religion and politics -- with a little help from political theory, religious studies and cultural anthropology. The challenge as I see it now is to strike a balance which involves simultaneously accepting the power of the categories of secular and religious without giving in to their fixity, primacy, or stability in any given context. There is temptation to abandon the terms altogether—to move toward new vocabularies—for a variety of reasons. I don't think scholars should abandon the terms however. Rather I agree with Webb Keane when he observes in his excellent book *Christian Moderns* that "conceptual categories like religion and culture have been let out of the bag, and we are hardly in a position to scoop them back up again. Like 'the modern,' they are part of both elite and everyday discourses and mediate self-awareness just about everywhere; the categories have themselves become social facts... to accept existing categories demands (at least) considerable self-awareness. It asks us to reflect on (what Foucault would call) their genealogy and explore its implications." David Chidester makes a related point in the concluding chapter of his book *Empire of Religion*. I highly recommend

both of these texts to anyone interested in the study of the politics of modernity.

■ Are the existing theories of International Relations adequate for understanding religion's role in world politics or should there be new theories based on different approaches and meta-theories?

A: New approaches are needed. My book *Beyond Religious Freedom* emerged from my own inability to reconcile what I had learned about religion and politics from the disciplines of Religious Studies and Critical Theory—including the complexities and instabilities of these categories themselves—with the ways in which International Relations and public policy experts were talking and acting with regard to religion. The deep epistemological and disciplinary divides in the politics and practice of knowledge production around 'religion' is crucial to my argument. While religious studies appears to be increasingly skeptical of world religions discourse, building on the work of Tomoko Masuzawa and others, social scientists are living in a different reality: they are drawn to the world religions frame magnetically, relying on it to design sophisticated measures and models to account for (and, as I argue in the book, to realize) the public and political salience of 'world religions'. It is these religions and their spokespersons that are becoming actors and advocates on the global political stage. They are the central players on what the American comedian Stephen Colbert calls the international "faithscape." In political science and policy studies, scholars are working overtime to identify the contribution of religion and religious leaders to world affairs, to control it for political ends. I am continually surprised by the degree of consensus, energy, certainty, and excitement that surrounds the perceived need to identify and manage deviant, radical religion, and to cultivate and celebrate compliant, conforming religion. It's an odd preoccupation—what's this about?

This of course led me to more and deeper questions: who gets nominated to be a religion and who doesn't, who speaks for 'religion' and who cannot, who and what is made invisible or illegible in such deeply politicized and 'religionized' global institutional and intellectual fields? Whose religion is being protected in international legal efforts to promote religious freedom? What is the relationship between the legal "religions" that are privileged through these efforts, and the broader life worlds in which they intervene? Who speaks on behalf of the 'religious' individuals that populate our faith-based global policy landscape? And whom exactly are those representatives presumed to represent? To address these questions the book examines the specific kinds of religion and religious subjects that are created and protected through three sets of governing arrangements: international religious freedom,

protections for religious minorities, and projects to create tolerant religious subjects who practice interfaith dialogue and disavow (whatever the authorities denominate as) extremism.

■ How do you predict the future of secularism in the West given the fast growth of religious beliefs?

A: I'm not much for predictions, but I suspect claims to secularism will retain their appeal in many quarters for some time. Rather than focus on the 'success' or 'failure' of secularism, of interest to me, and here I am following the pioneering contributions of anthropologist Talal Asad, is to ask: why are these claims felt to be necessary or even urgent? What is it that those making such claims seek to accomplish? What assumptions about religion or the secular underlie them? And what forms of life are enabled (or disabled) in and through a focus on realizing particular notions of secularization?

In his wonderful book, *Beyond Church and State*, Matthew Scherer has shown that the transformative processes that produced the notion of secularism as separation did not merely separate religion and politics along a clear line of distinction, but rather re-determined the nature of both politics and religion simultaneously. This is important. Modern secularism did not simply emerge "from a religious past with which it had broken." Instead, it should be seen, to quote Scherer again, as both "divided from a religious past and also locked in continuous and shifting patterns of interrelation with religion in the present." Despite these obvious complexities of the secular-religious binary, which have been acknowledged by scholars around the world for some time now, contemporary US (and other) governmental efforts continue to rely on and also to produce a stable rendering of the 'religious' in order to 'solve' global policy challenges associated with so-called 'religious' sources of violence, and those that require the irenic qualities of religion as a source of community, morality and freedom.

My recent book is critical of these efforts. It destabilizes the category of "religion" as an object of political and legal intervention. This is a familiar move in religious studies, but less so in the study of politics. The challenge as I see it is to communicate with an audience that does not see any problem, or any politics, in defining and 'restoring' religion in international public life. To show the politics involved in this move, I developed a set of heuristics (lived, expert, and governed religion). These categories allow me to show that there are no stable things out there in the world called 'religions' or the 'religious' that stand cleanly apart from their 'secular' or 'political' counterparts, waiting in the wings to be restored to public life. Upending that assumption moves us into a different epistemological field, which I discuss in the concluding chapter of the book and also in more recent writings.

First Announcement



N.I.S.O.C

Permit No.1398.492

NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY AHVAZ-IRAN

TENDER NO. : 48-32-9500052

National Iranian South Oilfields Company(NISOC) intends to purchase the following goods

Items	Material Description	Quantity
02	PLUNGER PUMP MANUFACTURER:LEWA(GERMANY) MODEL: G3K200 DISCHARGE & SUCTION PRESSURE (BARG): 70-5	03+ SPARE PARTS

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tenders are requested to send their "intention To Participate" letter via fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form no. 1, available at: WWW.nisoc.ir, not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded.

The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 7,947 EURO or 375,000,000 RIAL, in favor of NISOC.

Tender documents including the materials thorough technical specifications and Qualitative Assessment Forms can be accessed via: WWW.nisoc.ir-material procurement management tab

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Second Announcement			
 Call for public tender (First/Second publish) Two Stages (semi compressed) tender Subject of Tender: (TUBING PIPES 5-1/2")			
Tender descriptions:			
The Tender holder National Iranian Drilling Company	Registration No. through national elect ronic tendering system 3197403	Tender No. /Indent No. TenderNo. PFP/AZD/97/023 Indent No: 48-22-9722005	Estimated value (Rial) 18,400,200,000
Qualitative evaluation of tenderers			
Method Based on minimum scoring (60) made in award criterion reflected in the tenderers' pre-qualification forms.			
1. The tenderers who have more than four (4) active contracts with NIDC are not allowed to attend in this tender. 2. The tenderers who have more than two (2) active contracts with same subject (exactly compliance with this subject) with NIDC are not allowed to attend in this tender.			
Purchasing & Submitting			
Tender Document Distribution Company	Distribution Place A) Hall No.:316, 3th floor, Foreign Procurement Dept. (DRILLING PROJECTS), National Iranian Drilling Company, After Airport square, Ahvaz, IRAN. 06134148329 B) jomhuri street , yaghma alley nioc 8th building floor no : 04 room no 428 -tehran -iran :02166700249	Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of Iranian Rials under account number 4001114004020491 (Shaba No. IR520100004001114004020491) 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 Receiving Method	Closing date 14 Days after the last time of Purchasing.	Address H 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	920,000,000 Rial/ 19,320 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. IR350100004001114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran. -NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.		
Duration of credit & quotation	Tender Guarantee and quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for onetime in initial validity duration.		
(Name of department) More of this & other tenders are accessible by click on: www.nidc.ir http://sapp.ir/nidc-pr تهران تایمز نوبت اول ۹۸/۲/۴ نوبت دوم ۹۸/۲/۷			

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\$1000
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Qeytarieh
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renovated, 2 parking spots
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Valiasr-Bagh Ferdows
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place, elevator
storage, parking, **\$1900**
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Apt in Mahmoodieh
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Apt in Vanak
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spj, parking, **\$2000**
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Villa in Sheykh Bahayi
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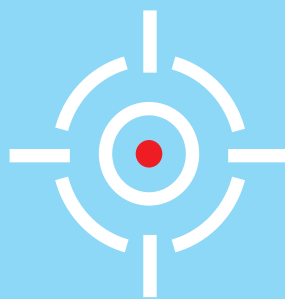
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“Natural” bottled water has natural arsenic contamination, new testing finds

Several brands of bottled water contain concerning levels of arsenic contamination, according to an investigation by Consumer Reports.

The worst offenders in the report were Starkey, a brand owned by Whole Foods and marketed as water in its “natural state,” and Peñafiel, owned by Keurig Dr. Pepper and imported from Mexico.

Samples of Peñafiel tested by CR had arsenic levels that averaged 18.1 parts per billion, well above the federal allowable limit of 10ppb set by the Food and Drug Administration. Testing of Whole Foods’ Starkey Water revealed levels at or just a smidge below federal limits, with results ranging from 9.48 ppb to 10.1 ppb.

Arsenic is a trace element in rock and sediment and can contaminate groundwater naturally from geological sources or from human activities, such as mining and runoff from agricultural and industrial sources.

■ Exposure to arsenic

Long-term exposure to high-levels of arsenic are associated with skin disorders and increased risks of certain cancers, diabetes, and high blood pressure, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Some studies have also linked arsenic to impaired intellectual development following exposure early in life.



In response to CR’s findings, Keurig Dr. Pepper announced that it had suspended bottled water production at its Mexico facility and would revamp its filtration. Whole Foods, on the other hand, said that it had run its own tests on batches of water that CR tested and determined that the levels were acceptable. The company’s test results “show these products are fully compliant with FDA standards for heavy metals,” Whole Foods told CR in a statement. It added that it tests “every production run of water before it is

sold” and that the company would “never sell products that do not meet FDA requirements.”

Yet, this is not the first time Starkey Water has run into issues with arsenic. From late 2016 to early 2017, Starkey recalled 2,000 cases of water over arsenic levels above the federal threshold.

As such, some states have set different arsenic standards for their water. New Jersey, for instance, set the maximum allowable arsenic level in tap water at 5ppb. But the Garden State still goes by the federal 10ppb

limit for bottled water.

■ Cutting the threshold down

Scientists hired by CR recommend that regulators cut the threshold down to 3ppb. In their analysis of 130 bottled waters, CR found six brands that had levels at or above 3ppb. In addition to Starkey and Peñafiel, those brands are Crystal Geyser Alpine Spring Water (3.8ppb), Danone’s Volvic (4ppb), and two regional brands, Crystal Creamery (5ppb) and EartHO (3ppb).

One reason to keep the levels low in water is that water is just one source of arsenic exposure in daily life. As a naturally occurring element in soil, it can be found in plants, air, and food. Advocates have also expressed concern over levels of arsenic in fruit juices and rice-based baby foods.

Given its natural sources, avoiding arsenic can be difficult in some instances — but the multibillion-dollar bottled water industry in the United States is not one of them, according to critics.

“With bottled water, why should you have arsenic in the water?” Ana Navas-Acien, professor of environmental health sciences at the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, asked CR. “There should be plenty of opportunities for treatment and remediation.”

(Source: arstechnica.com)

Research team modifies ‘white graphene’ for eco-friendly energy

Scientists from TPU, Germany, and the United States have found a new way to functionalize a dielectric, otherwise known as ‘white graphene’, i.e. hexagonal boron nitride (hBN), without destroying it or changing its properties. Thanks to the new method, the researchers synthesized a ‘polymer nano carpet’ with strong covalent bond on the samples.

“For the first time, we have managed to covalently functionalize hexagonal boron nitride without strong chemical compositions and the introduction of new defects into the material. In fact, earlier approaches had resulted in a different material with altered properties, i.e. hydrolyzed boron nitride. In our turn, we used nanodefects existing in the material without increasing their number, and eco-friendly photopolymerization.”

One of the promising options for using the new material, according to researchers, is catalysts for splitting water in hydrogen and oxygen. With this in view, ‘polymer carpets’ functioned as carriers of active substances, i.e. matrices.

Nickel nanoparticles were integrated into the matrix.

Catalysts obtained were used for electrocatalysis. Studies showed that they could be successfully used as an alternative to expensive platinum or gold.

■ One important challenge

“One of the important challenges in catalysis is forcing the starting material to reach active centers of the catalyst. ‘Polymer carpets’ form a 3D structure that helps to increase the area of contact of the active centers of the catalyst with water and makes hydrogen acquisition more efficient.

It is very promising for the production of environmentally friendly hydrogen fuel,” - says the scientist.

Boron nitride is a binary compound of boron and nitrogen. While, hexagonal boron nitride or ‘white graphene’ is a white talc-like powder with hexagonal, graphene-like lattice.

It is resistant to high temperatures and chemical substances, nontoxic, has a very low coefficient of friction, and functions both as a perfect dielectric and as a good heat conductor.

Boron-nitride materials are widely used in the reactions

of industrial organic synthesis, in the cracking of oil, for the manufacturing of products of high-temperature technology, the production of semiconductors, means for extinguishing fires, and so on.

Previously, a number of studies were devoted to functionalization of hexagonal boron nitride. Typically, this process uses strong chemical oxidants that not only destroy the material but also significantly change its properties. The method, which TPU scientists and their foreign colleagues use, allows them to avoid this.

“Studies have shown that we obtained homogenous and durable ‘polymer carpets’ which can be removed from the supporting substrate and used separately. What is more, this is a fairly universal technology since for functionalization we used different monomers which allow obtaining materials with properties optimal for use in various devices,” - says Prof Raul Rodriguez.

(Source: natureworldnews.com)

NASA preps mission to most interesting asteroid in our Solar System



In 2022, if all goes well, NASA will launch Psyche, a space probe intended to visit the asteroid of the same name (16 Psyche is its formal designation). It’s a particularly exciting mission given Psyche’s unique nature and highly unusual composition.

The asteroid belt is composed of three types of asteroid: C-type (carbonaceous, ~75 percent of all asteroids), S-type (silicate-rich, ~17 percent of asteroids) and M-type (metal-rich), which are roughly 10 percent of the total population. The numbers, in this case, don’t add up to 100 percent because we aren’t sure of the exact ratios. 16 Psyche is an M-type asteroid made of iron-nickel. What makes it unusual is that it’s believed to be the now-exposed core of a protoplanet. It’s also estimated to be worth \$10,000 quadrillion dollars, if anybody has a towing hitch handy.

16 Psyche isn’t large — its radius is estimated at 112 km, and it isn’t round. Our current best estimate of its composition indicates that it’s 90 percent iron. Its parent body, assuming that it had one, is assumed to have been approximately 500km in diameter, or roughly half the size of Ceres. If Psyche is a core remnant it’s possible that others remain as well, but the asteroid isn’t part of any known family. One theory for its formation is that it was struck a number of times, but never with enough force to shatter it. The remaining fragment represents the iron core of a protoplanet, possibly covered by a thin layer of silicates or remnant components of the original mantle.

Psyche’s high iron content means it punches above its weight class as far as mass. While it’s listed as the 11th most-massive asteroid on Wikipedia, it has the 35th largest diameter.

Psyche represents two fascinating opportunities. First, it’s the only known ‘iron world’ in the Solar System. Second, it’s likely the closest we will ever come to examining the core of an actual planet. We could theoretically learn a great deal about the earliest protoplanets — now-vanished objects believed to have formed the inner planets and contributed to the mass of the outer billions of years ago.

(Source: extremetech.com)



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
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Call for public tender:

Two-Stages (compressed-semi compressed) tender renewal
Subject of Tender: (Provision of Three tugboats and a guided ship for moving drilling rigs)



National Iranian Drilling Company

* Tender descriptions:

The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. /Tndent No.	Estimated value (Rial/Euro) (Rial/Euro)
National Iranian Drilling Company	3/191/447	SH K97/- 06 / 33 – 5274	(6,779,850) AED

* Qualitative evaluation of tenderers

Method	
	1-Based on minimum scoring made in award criterion reflected in the tenderers pre-qualification forms. (60 score) – Technical evaluation (60 score) 2. Tenderers which has a four active current contract with NIDC, will not be allowed to participate in other tenders . 3-Tenderers which have a two active current contract with same subject (exactly same subject) with NIDC, will not be allowed to participate in other tenders.

* 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.				
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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	
	266,766 AED or 3,051,000,000 IRR

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 in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.

Duration of credit & quotation	
	Tender Guarantee should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration.

(Name of department)

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

تهران تا میز نوبت اول ۹۸/۲/۳ نوبت دوم ۹۸/۲/۴

Using Yttrium-90 for liver cancer therapy in clinical stage

HEALTH **TEHRAN**— Iran is in clinical stage of producing Yttrium-90 resin microspheres, a radiopharmaceutical that can substantially help liver cancer treatment.

Radioembolization (Y90) is a minimally invasive procedure that combines embolization and radiation therapy to treat liver cancer. Tiny glass or resin beads filled with the radioactive isotope yttrium Y-90 are placed inside the blood vessels that feed a tumor.

Pars Isotop Company is the main producer of the new radiopharmaceutical, ISNA reported on Sunday.

Pars Isotop is among the companies that is faced with U.S. sanctions. The company's activities, however, are mainly in production and development of various radioisotopes, related equipment and services in the fields of medicine and industry.

With the help of Tehran and Shiraz medical sciences universities, the medicine has already went through the laboratory and preclinical stages and is now on clinical trial.

Y-90 resin microspheres has been tested on 12 patients with liver cancer.



In international market, the medicine costs around €5,000 to €6,000, but with its domestic production the prices will get far lower for Iranian patients.

In international market, the medicine costs around €5,000 to €6,000, but with its domestic production the prices will get far lower for Iranian patients.

Apart from catering for the domestic market, it is also possible to export the medicine in the future.

According to World Cancer Research Fund, Liver cancer is the fifth most commonly occurring cancer in men and the ninth most commonly occurring cancer in women. There were over 840,000 new cases in 2018.

Radiopharmaceuticals, or medicinal radiocompounds, are a group of pharmaceutical drugs which have radioactivity. Radiopharmaceuticals can be used as diagnostic and therapeutic agents.

They emit radiation themselves, which is different from contrast media which absorb or alter external electromagnetism or ultrasound. The main group of these compounds are the radiotracers used to diagnose dysfunction in body tissues. While not all medical isotopes are radioactive, radiopharmaceuticals are the oldest and still most common such drugs.

Iran ready for investment in Iraq's pharmaceutical market

HEALTH **TEHRAN** — Iranian Health Ministry is ready to make joint investments for producing medicine in Iraq, announced Health Minister Saeed Namaki.

Namaki met Iraqi Health Minister Alaeddin Alwan in Baghdad on Monday, IRNA reported.

Namaki added that Iran is not seeking profit in Iraq; rather, it aims to solve Iraq's problems in health sector.

"Increasing Iran's share in Iraq's pharmaceutical market is among the main reasons I made this trip," he said.

"Currently, 125 Iranian medicines are registered in Iraq and we are now negotiating to come up with a timetable for registering Iranian medicines in Iraq," he noted.

97% of medicines Iran needs are produced inside the country and 66 medical sciences universities are working in this field, said Namaki, adding that these universities are ready to share their experience with Iraq in areas such as medical training and developing health and



Iranian Health Minister Saeed Namaki in his meeting with his Iraqi counterpart Alaeddin Alwan

medical care infrastructures.

The Iraqi minister, for his part, announced that Iraq is currently trying to make reforms in its health system and can benefit from Iran's experience with running such cooperative projects.

Over this three-day trip, the Iranian official will also meet the Iraqi minister of trade and also the minister of higher education and scientific research to further discuss cooperation in health and medical training.

World's smallest baby boy at birth to leave hospital in Japan

Mother of Ryusuke Sekino said: 'It seemed he would break if I touched him. I was so worried'

Six-month-old Ryusuke Sekino, only 258g when born, sits in the arms of his mother, Toshiko Sekino, by his father, Kohei Sekino, at Nagano children's hospital in Azumino, Japan. Photograph: Kyodo News/AP

When Ryusuke Sekino was born last October, his mother feared that even touching him could prove dangerous for his tiny frame.

Six months later, Ryusuke, believed to be the world's smallest surviving baby boy, is preparing to leave hospital in central Japan on Saturday after his weight increased from 258g (9.1oz) at birth – roughly the weight of a pack of butter – to more than 3kg.

He was born two months after the birth, also in Japan, of the previous record holder, who weighed 268g. The infant,



who has not been named, was discharged from a Tokyo hospital in February.

Ryusuke was delivered on 1 October by emergency caesarean section at 24 weeks and five days as his mother, Toshiko Sekino, was suffering from hypertension.

The newborn, who was just 22cm in length, was treated at a neonatal intensive care unit at Nagano children's hospital, where he was fed via tubes and with occasional drops of his mother's milk administered with cotton buds.

(Source: The Guardian)

40 countries attend WHO regional meeting in Iran

HEALTH **TEHRAN** — A total of 109 experts from 40 countries will speak at the World Health Summit 2019 (WHS) regional meeting in Iran's Kish Island, said the meeting's secretary Amirhossein Takian.

The event is organized by Tehran University of Medical Sciences and will be held in Kish Island on April 29–30, ISNA reported.

In total, 750 people will attend the meeting and it includes 4 plenaries and 30 panels; furthermore, 79 Iranian experts will also give speeches in this event, said Takian.

This year's theme is "Primary Health Care: the Path to Universal Health Coverage", he added.

"This event is a platform for sharing different experiences to come up with solutions for the countries who have an average income, limited resources and increased need for medical services and want to give affordable, quality and fair medical care to all the people," he said.

According to Takian, three international documents will be unveiled over the event, including the Lancet medical journal exclusive edition on Iran, the international document on trauma

published by World Academy of Sciences and the international document on Fighting Obesity and Overweightness.

Students from 21 countries participate in WHS pre-event

The upcoming regional meeting is preceded by a one-day student pre-event on April 28th. This is the first time in the history of WHS that such a student event is running in sidelines of the main meeting.

According to Takian, 200 students will attend this conference; including 40 students from 21 countries and 150 Iranian students coming from Tehran University of Medical Sciences, among other universities.

The student pre-event is set to provide a platform for discussion of M8 Alliance of Academic Health Centers, Universities and National Academies.

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.



According to World Health Organization, main topics of WHS 2019 are health in uncertain situations, global health in a transitional world, sustainable health development, non-communicable diseases (NCDS) and mental health, planetary health and medical education.

Replacing red meat with plant protein reduces heart disease risk

A meta-analysis of trials comparing the health effects of red meat consumption with those of other diets found that substituting healthful plant protein for red meat helps lower the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Eating plant proteins, such as tofu, may benefit cardiovascular health.

Many studies throughout the years have linked the consumption of red meat to cardiovascular disease and cancer, but the results have been inconsistent.

A 2015 study comparing the effects of plant protein and animal protein on the risk of cardiovascular disease found that the evidence was inconclusive.

Recent studies further investigated the link between red meat consumption and heart disease and found that red meat does not significantly increase the risk of cardiovascular disease when a person sticks to the recommended intake. Most of these studies focused on the potential harms of red meat, but they did not include an analysis of other specific diets.

Researchers from Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health in Boston, MA, and Purdue University in West Lafayette, IN, conducted the first meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials analyzing the effects of red meat by replacing it with other types of food. The results feature in the journal Circulation.

Red meat consumption in the United States

This new approach allowed researchers to examine a different side of the issue. Red meat consumption remains a very controversial topic, especially in the U.S., where the consumption of red meat per capita was more than 200 pounds in 2018, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Although red meat consumption in the U.S. is still high, chicken production and consumption have been increasing.



The U.S. per capita beef consumption is down from its peak, but it is still remarkable — it is four times as high as the global average, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

A recent survey showed that many people in the U.S. might be open to reducing their meat consumption in the future because they are becoming more aware of the associations that red meat has with nutritional and environmental health harms. The researchers suggested that education campaigns are necessary to accelerate the shift to a more sustainable diet.

Asking 'Is red meat good or bad?' is useless

In this latest study, the researchers analyzed data from 36 randomized controlled trials, which included a total of 1,803 participants. The team looked at blood pressure and blood concentrations of cholesterol, triglycerides, and lipoproteins in people who ate diets with red meat. They then compared

these values with those of people who ate more of other foods, such as chicken, fish, carbohydrates, legumes, soy, or nuts.

"Previous findings from randomized controlled trials evaluating the effects of red meat on cardiovascular disease risk factors have been inconsistent," says Marta Guasch-Ferré, lead author of the study and research scientist in the Department of Nutrition at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

"But, our new study, which makes specific comparisons between diets high in red meat versus diets high in other types of foods, shows that substituting red meat with high-quality protein sources lead to more favorable changes in cardiovascular risk factors."

The findings showed that there were no significant differences in total cholesterol, lipoproteins, or blood pressure between those who ate red meat and those who ate more of other types of food. However, diets high in red meat did cause an increase in triglyceride concentrations. Conversely, diets rich in high-quality plant protein lowered the levels of bad cholesterol.

"Asking 'Is red meat good or bad?' is useless," says Meir Stampfer, senior author of the study and professor of epidemiology and nutrition at Harvard T.H. Chan. "It has to be 'Compared to what?'"

"If you replace burgers with cookies or fries, you don't get healthier. But, if you replace red meat with healthy plant protein sources, like nuts and beans, you get a health benefit," says Prof. Meir Stampfer senior author of the study.

The authors recommend that people follow healthful vegetarian and Mediterranean-style diets that provide plenty of high-quality plant protein because they offer excellent health benefits and promote environmental sustainability.

(source: medical news today)

Possible reasons weight loss is not working

When a person wants to lose weight, trying inappropriate diet and exercise routines is a common mistake. These methods can prevent weight loss or even increase weight.

Calories are a unit of measure that show the amount of energy in foods and drinks. The body requires a certain number of calories to function.

It will convert any excess calories into fat, increasing overall weight. The body can only lose weight when it is burning more calories than it takes in.

A person can lose weight through a calorie-restricted diet and regular physical activity. However, many factors can prevent weight loss.

1. Relying on exercise without addressing the diet

It is essential to be in a calorie deficit to lose weight. This involves the body burning more calories than it receives from the diet.

Exercise is an effective way to burn calories. But, to experience any significant weight loss, a person needs to combine exercise with consuming fewer calories.

Research suggests that, without sufficient changes to the diet, exercise alone is unlikely to lead to substantial weight loss for most people.

A person may be able to lose weight with extremely high levels of exercise, but even in these cases, shedding more than about 4.4 pounds (2 kilograms) is unlikely.

The body burns most of its calories through its basal metabolic rate. This refers to all the processes that sustain life, such as digesting food and breathing. Even brain activity burns calories.

Physical activity, which refers to all the body's movements, takes up a much smaller amount of energy. Household chores and walking up a flight of stairs qualify as physical activity. Structured physical exercise burns an even smaller proportion of calories.

Without a sufficient reduction in the number of calories that a person consumes, it is very difficult to lose weight through exercise.

Research also suggests that people tend to eat more food when they exercise regularly. This can make it harder to maintain a calorie deficit and lose weight.

The best way to lose weight is by combining exercise with a calorie-restricted diet.

2. Following a fad diet

Many fad diets are based on no scientific evidence, and they can be counterproductive for weight loss.

The large amounts of money that people make by creating weight loss diets has led to an overwhelming variety. Many of these diets are highly restrictive and can cause health problems.

It is possible for some fad diets, such as the Atkins diet, to result in weight loss. But in most cases, this is due to the loss of water and muscle, rather than fat.

Also, these diets can be hard to maintain, and most people regain any weight lost shortly after stopping the diet.

The most effective and healthful diets have significant variety and are balanced. It is important to consume fewer calories, but this should not result from placing extreme restrictions on any major food groups.

However, it is beneficial to cut down on sugar and unhealthy fats, such as trans fats.

3. Enough exercise

Some researchers recommend exercising for 225–420 minutes per week for effective weight loss.

Regular exercise is essential for weight loss.

A study in the journal Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise suggests at least 225 to 420 minutes of physical activity per week for effective weight loss. It is important to maintain this level over an extended period.

Engaging in different types of exercise can also affect weight loss.

The two main types of exercise are aerobic and anaerobic. Aerobic, or endurance, exercises involve the continuous and repetitive use of large muscle groups, such as the arms and legs. Examples of aerobic exercises include jogging and cycling.

Anaerobic exercises involve short, intense bursts of activity. Examples of anaerobic exercise include heavy weight training or sprinting.

While aerobic exercises rely on a continuous supply of oxygen for energy, anaerobic exercises receive all their energy from glucose stored in muscles.

Both forms of exercise have several advantages for overall health, but there is debate over which is most useful for weight loss.

According to the American College of Sports Medicine, aerobic exercise has a direct effect on weight loss, but anaerobic exercise alone does not. Anaerobic exercise can build muscle and burn fat but, because muscle weighs more than fat, there will be no reduction in weight.

However, anaerobic exercise can convert body fat into lean muscle. As muscle weighs more than fat, this likely explains the lack of weight loss from anaerobic exercise.

Anaerobic exercises, such as weight training, can also increase the body's basal metabolic rate. This means that they can have a more lasting effect.

A combination of aerobic and anaerobic exercise is likely the best method of exercising for weight loss.

Many people are unsure whether to pursue weightlifting or cardiovascular exercise. Here, learn which is more effective.

4. Sugary drinks

Consuming too many sugary drinks can prevent weight loss.

Research shows that the amount of sugar in the diet influences weight gain. But much of this could be specifically related to the consumption of sugary drinks.

It is easy to overlook drinks as a part of the diet. But many sugary drinks are high in calories.

Unlike various high-calorie foods, these drinks do not satisfy hunger and provide an insufficient amount of energy to the body. This makes it easier to consume too many sugary drinks without noticing.

Research suggests that sugary drinks could play a role in obesity, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease.

Limiting or eliminating the consumption of sugary drinks can help enhance weight loss.

5. Sleep

Poor quality or insufficient sleep may affect weight loss.

Studies show that poor sleep can increase the risk of obesity and diabetes. It is also possible that a lack of sleep can disrupt the body's ability to regulate hunger.

In a study involving 472 obese adults, the amount of time spent asleep was a significant predictor of the success of an intensive weight loss program. Stress was the other significant predictor.

According to the National Sleep Foundation, adults aged 18–65 should aim for 7–9 hours of sleep per night. Older adults should aim for 7–8 hours.

Takeaway

Losing weight can be difficult. There are no real shortcuts, and it requires hard work and patience to see results.

The key to losing weight is to maintain a calorie deficit through healthful dieting, a mixture of aerobic and anaerobic exercise, and a good sleep pattern.

(Source: medical news today)

‘It’s simplistic to believe that recent floods recharge groundwater resources’

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — Believing that groundwater resources will be simply recharged after recent floods is simplistic and unscientific, head of groundwater resources department at Qom Province Regional Water Company has said.

Despite heavy rainfalls in the past month in many provinces including Qom it is necessary to let the public know that groundwater resources will not be recharged and water shortages are not compensated, ISNA news agency quoted Reza Mohammadi as saying on Tuesday.



He went on to explain that water cycle [also known as the hydrologic cycle or the hydrological cycle] describes how water evaporates from the surface of the earth, rises into the atmosphere, cools and condenses into rain or snow in clouds, and falls again to the surface as precipitation.

Rainwater either soaks into the ground to become groundwater, evaporates, or flows over the surface of the land which is called runoff, Mohammadi added.

According to study.com rainwater that falls on land either seeps into the ground or it becomes runoff. Runoff is water that flows from the land into bodies of water like streams, rivers and lakes. There are several factors that determine whether rainwater seeps into the ground or runs off. One is the type of surface the rain lands upon. If the soil is porous and sandy, water can often soak in easily. Soils that are clay-based are more difficult for water to seep into. When rainfall lands on pavement, it can't soak in and will most likely be funneled into systems made for runoff.

The amount of rain also can determine whether it soaks in or not. If there is an enormous amount of rain in a short amount of time, even if the soil is sandy, the rainfall won't have time to soak in. In this case, runoff can be extreme and flooding occurs. The topography of the land also dictates the path of rainwater. It will flow downhill if the landscape is uneven, often running into existing streams and rivers. Eventually, some of the rainwater will end up evaporating back into the atmosphere as a part of the water cycle.

Mohammadi went on to say that in an arid province like Qom some 84 percent of the rainwater will evaporate, so that at best only 10 percent of the rainwater will seep into the ground.

“That we assume increased rainfall would recharge all groundwater resources and solve water shortages in unscientific and simplistic, groundwater resources that have been depleted over the years were formed after hundreds of years and one or two years of increased precipitations won't compensate the shortages,” he noted.

Implementing explicit and effective policies in managing water supply and consumption based on available water resources would help in sustainable use of water, he concluded.

Based on the latest data published on Monday by National Drought Warning and Monitoring Center affiliated to Iran's Meteorological Organization since the start of the current water year (September 23, 2018) the whole country received 290.1 millimeters of rain.

The number amounted to 114.1 millimeters in the previous water year and 198.3 millimeters in the long-term, the data indicated. The numbers show a drastic increase of 154.3 percent compared to last water year. It also reveals a 46.3 percent increase compared to long-term means.

Wetlands reduce flood devastation to a third

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — Wetlands played an important role in minimizing destructive effects of flood which has recently hit many provinces across the country, deputy chief for natural environment and biodiversity directorate at the Department of Environment (DOE) has stated.

Three wetlands, which stored 120 to 130 million cubic meters of flood water, have eliminated two thirds of flood destruction in northeastern Golestan province, IRNA quoted Hamid Zohrabi as saying on Monday.

Dredging and restoring the country's wetlands have decreased flood damages to a great extent, he highlighted, adding, if the wetlands were entirely drained and lost function, the damages would have been multiplied by 3 folds.

It has also been proven that a large amount of flood water flowed in Khuzestan province's wetlands prevented flood to vastly affect the area, he added.

Drainage and land use changes of wetlands especially in the mountainous areas are among the most destructive mistakes made, he lamented.

Turning wetlands into agricultural lands will lead them to lose their function of containing flood severity, he further noted.

He went on to say that it is so essential to take steps toward sustainable restoration of wetlands and providing their water right, otherwise, they will be lost once again due to rising temperature and evaporation.

Referring to good condition of wetlands in the country, he said that 40 to 90 percent of the wetlands are filled with water, except few of them which are still suffering water shortage, namely, Parishan Lake in Fars Province.

Even Gavkhooni wetland, Isfahan province, is covered with water by 10 to 15 percent, and Bakhtegan wetland, Fars Province, by 30 to 40 percent, he stated, adding that water also flowed in Hamoun wetland, Sistan-Baluchestan province and Hour-al-Azim wetland,



To contain the destructive effects of the flood, we must initially revitalize and protect the barriers that nature has created to control flood, such as forests, rangelands and natural resources.

Khuzestan province, by 70-80 and 90 percent, respectively.

■ Flood water pollution undeniable

Pointing to the quality of water entered the wetlands, he explained that flood water carried a large amount of sediment, estimated up to 50 percent in some areas, therefore, sediments can contain nutrients for farms, but on the other hand can destroy natural ecosystems.

The water also can lead to mortality of aquatic species along with changing their habitat conditions, he regretted, adding, some species are sensitive to water turbidity which bear the most harmful consequences.

Zohrabi noted that undoubtedly, floodwater in urban areas has been polluted by urban, domestic, industrial and hospital wastewa-

ter, however, when there is a huge amount of water, pollution cannot be very serious.

■ New SDS hotspots worrisome

Sediment loads and mud left behind after flooding could turn into new sand and dust storm (SDS) hotspots after being dried, therefore, we must think of a solution such as planting new vegetation, he said.

Estimating the entire damage is time consuming due to being involved in various processes, and requires deep and precise studies, he stated, adding, estimating damages in some countries lasted for about 4 to 5 years.

■ No permit issued for construction in riverbeds

Responsible organizations must prevent the reconstruction of damaged sites

in the river beds and banks, as floods have repeatedly occurred in these areas, he also said.

■ No oil spill in Hour-al-Azim wetland

So far, no oil spill in the Hour-al-Azim wetland has been reported by the Ministry of Oil, he stated, explaining, some parts of Hour-al-Azim is not filled with water due to its natural and geographic condition, therefore, the Ministry have not prevented water from reaching any part of the wetland.

■ Construction of destructive dams must be banned

Elsewhere in his remarks, Zohrabi noted that although, some environmentalists are opposed to any kinds of damming activities, dams can be both good and bad, if they are located in an inappropriate place, they have no contradiction with the environment.

The construction of any dam requires an environmental impact assessment, and if it shows any threat to the environment, the DOE will oppose, he further added.

■ Lessons learned from flood

Speaking of the recent unprecedented rainfalls, he stated that the recent flood event taught us a lesson that humans should not abandon and take measure against the environment but to protect it.

Land use changes and excessive exploitation of natural resources can lead to soil erosion and flooding, ultimately, environmental degradation, he highlighted, noting, flood challenged the misconception saying that all of the nature's components can be engineered.

He went on to explain that some believe that damming and defining plans such as watersheds can prevent flooding and destruction, but most of the damages occurred to the facilities lying in the river beds.

To contain the destructive effects of the flood, we must initially revitalize and protect the barriers that nature has created to control flood, such as forests, rangelands and natural resources, he concluded.

Increasing gasoline prices is a viable source to fix flood damage

1 → In such a situation in which the Trump-Pompeo-Bolton triumvirate is putting maximum economic pressure on Iran in violation of international law and it faces no serious international condemnation, it is the Iranian people themselves who should help each other and stand on their own feet. One of the way to counter economic problems and financial constraints is to put an end to unnecessary and blind subsidies including the one being allocated to gasoline for decades, even before the 1979 revolution.

In his nearly 68-month presidency, Hassan Rouhani's government has increased gasoline prices by just 300 toman (2 euro cent) but inflation started increasing incredibly since Trump pulled the U.S. out of the 2015 nuclear deal and the value of national currency, rial, started nosediving against foreign currencies.

Increasing petrol prices will not only put a brake on its rising consumption, which reaches about 105 million liters on certain days, it has many other advantages as well. It helps reduce air pollution and trafficking of gasoline, decreases unfair gasoline subsidies which have been mostly benefitting car owners as well as the rich and super-rich.

No sound economic system expends billions of euros for subsidizing petrol.

Depending on the value of oil in the international market, the government is selling gasoline at one-



fifth or one-seventh of its real price.

According to Donya-e-Eqtesad, an economic daily newspaper, the government is paying 400 billion toman (about 25 million euros) subsidy to gasoline per day.

We hope that the logic of economics will finally prevail, and partially, if not fully, decades of unreasonable and blind subsidy system to gasoline would come to an end. And let's hope that flood damage would serve as vehicle to achieve that goal.

Figures in this article are based on the street market rate for euro.

First Announcement

N.I.S.O.C

Permit No.1398.476

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TENDER NO. : **48-32-9700004**

National Iranian South Oilfields Company(NISOC) intends to purchase the following goods

Items	Material Description	Quantity
02	PORTABLE HIGH PRESSURE PUMP UNIT API 674.DRIVER: DIESEL . SKID MOUNTED CAPACITY : 17000BPD. WORKING PRESSURE: 90 BARG SUCTION PRESSURE: 0 BARG. MAX .FLUID.TEMP.: 70C	1+2 YEARS SPARE PART

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tenders are requested to send their “intention To Participate” letter via fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form no. 1, available at: WWW.nisoc.ir , not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded.

The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 26,257 EURO or 1,250,000,000 RIAL, in favor of NISOC.

Tender documents including the materials thorough technical specifications and Qualitative Assessment Forms can be accessed via: WWW.nisoc.ir-material procurement management tab

NO ADVANCE PAYMENT WILL BE PAID

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Second Announcement

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One -Stages (semi compressed) tender

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E-2000 for Drilling Rig

Tender descriptions:

The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. /Indent No.	Estimated value (Rial/Euro)
National Iranian Drilling Company	3,196,957	Tender No.: FP/17-97/047 Indent No.: 48-22-9622027	14,390,568,451 Rial

Qualitative evaluation of tenderers

Method	R Based on minimum scoring (60 Points) made in award criterion reflected in the tenderers pre-qualification forms.
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Tender Document Distribution by Company	
Distribution Place	The distribution of the documents will be started one day after the publishing of second advertisement and ended on the following tenth day thereof. Hall No. 113, 1 st floor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN 061-34148656 -06134148615
Submitting Method	Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 510,000 Iranian Rials under account number 4001114004020491 (Shaba No. IR 520100004001114004020491) 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
Closing date	Days after the last time of Purchasing 14
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	720,000,000 Rial/ 15,133 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.)
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Impact of social democracy on Scandinavia's economy

Case Study of Sweden and Norway

By Hanif Ghaffari & Hadi Ajili

Part 1 **TEHRAN** — In Sweden, the Social Democrats during the past century have been identified as the largest and most important party of the country. One of the reasons of maturing of welfare state model in Sweden and Norway is longterm rule of the Social Democracy in them. Thus we are faced with the consolidation of the welfare state in the Nordic countries. However, due to the institutionalization of the welfare state structure in their countries, willing, and able to transform the structure.

Although right-wing and liberal parties criticize practical approach of Social Democrats on tax issues, welfare and commercial issues and in the general elections, they go to the scene with the slogan tax cuts and shrinking the size of government and reducing the level of its involvement in social life, because of the institutionalization of the welfare state in the country, of course they haven't want and haven't been able to alter the structure. The next thing in this regard related to the development of the welfare state in the Nordic countries.

The question how and to what extent international developments including globalization lead to a change in the economic approach of the Social Democrats, resulting in a change in the policies of the welfare state in Sweden and Norway. One of the areas that have been subject to direct impact of globalization is economics and international trade. The same thing inevitably impacts on export-driven economy of Sweden and Norway. Here, the two countries have to define and interpret their policy in economics and international trade largely according to equations arising from the global market economy.

The same impacts on the economy of welfare state and domestic policy of Sweden and Norway; finally, expression of political and economic developments of international system and changes in domestic policy and economic development of Sweden and Norway is focus of this research. Swedish economy Sweden is known as a prosperous industrial state in the international system.

Sweden's economy is based on the structure of the welfare state and exports have a significant role in it. Strong role of government and significant welfare assistance to citizens and getting very high taxes from citizens to strengthen the public sector are Sweden's economic indicators. To understand the Swedish economy, we should understand the concept of well-being and its various manifestations in the country. Before addressing this issue, it is necessary to provide generalities about the domestic and international economy of Sweden.

As mentioned, the Swedish economy is in general export-oriented wood industry, water resources, iron ore and industrial products and automotive industry all are its export



products. Sweden's main industries include motor vehicles, telecommunications, pharmaceuticals, industrial machinery, chemicals, household products, agricultural and forestry products, iron and steel.

More than half of the local workforce is engaged in Sweden's engineering industry, mining, steel, pulp and paper manufacturing and internationally recognized companies such as Ericsson and Alfa Laval (Carlgren, 28 Sep 2012). In the nineteenth century, the Swedish economy was based on agriculture. But then began the process of industrialization of the economy.

The transition from an agricultural economy to an industrial economy, urbanization grew in the country. At the same time, poverty became widespread in Sweden. This has led to massive migration of Swedish citizens of this country to the countries like United States of America. Economic reforms in Sweden on social welfare in the country actually began in the second half of the nineteenth century.

At the time, establishment of companies, banks and generally modern economic structure began in Sweden. In 1930, Sweden got a unique opportunity in the international system. As a result of Sweden's neutrality during the First and Second World wars, it was immune from the effects of physical destruction of war. World War II has strengthened economic position of Sweden in the world (Persson, Mats, 2013). Since the beginning of the 1970s, we witnessed a recession in Sweden.

This trend reached its peak in 1990 before Sweden won again in the middle of the decade to restore the economy. Since then, Sweden in terms of purchasing power of citizens and GDP (based on population) is among the top countries in the world. Sweden paid a high price for the restoration of their country after the economic downturn. The next point on the Swedish economy is its mixed nature.

Sweden's economy is a mixed economy

consists of a combination of private and public economy, based on the welfare state structure. The economic structure in Sweden, receiving high taxes in favor of the public sector is of special relevance and centrality. Sweden's economy falls under the Nordic economic model (Carlgren, 28 Sep 2012). One of the key factors behind the economic success of Sweden and reducing its vulnerability in the course of developments of the twentieth century (specifically World War II) is the country's neutrality policy.

Because Sweden during World War II was identified as a neutral country and did not participate in the conflict, after the war was far less economically damaged compared to other European countries. After the war, Sweden, unlike other European countries, did not see the need to restructure their economies and political structure. In the aftermath of World War II, the Swedish economy was defined based on the relationship between the government and trade unions and the heavy reliance on taxes. Sweden economy was based on high tax and welfare benefits to citizens (about 50% of the country's GDP).

In the 1980s, the creation of a financial bubble in the housing sector occurred in Sweden, exactly the style that would later occur in the United States during the economic crisis the beginning at the third millennium. Inability to pay mortgages and thus reduced international growth of the Swedish economy led to recession. This process went on for years until between 1990 and 1993 and GDP went down to 5 percent, and by contrast, unemployment in Sweden rose.

In this period, the worst economic crisis since 1930 occurred in Sweden. Sweden has about 10 per cent employment rate fell during the economic crisis. The level of investment in the country fell, especially important in the field of information technology, and then again witnessed a boom in investment occurred in 1993 in the IT

sector in Sweden. Sweden employment rate fell by about 10 per cent during the economic crisis.

Even the efforts of the Central Bank of Sweden in 1992 for adjustment of exchange rate in the country failed (Ipsen, 20 November 1992). Establishment and continuation of the tax structure is due to the presence of Sweden's Social Democratic Party in power in the years after World War II and also due to Swedish citizens welcoming of this structure. Sweden then Denmark has the highest tax revenue annually.

Among the Nordic countries, Denmark is the country with the highest income tax in its structure and economic welfare. (Carlgren, 30 May 2016). One of the components that distinguish the country's economy from many other countries is "economic growth". National Economic Research Institute in Sweden predicted the economic growth rate for 2016 (based on GDP) at 3.4 %. This rate of growth is higher than in most of Europe member states.

Only the Baltic states, Poland and Slovakia, are expected higher economic growth than in Sweden (The Economist: 5 May 2015). Sweden is a country that since 1995 has been a member of the European Union; however, membership in Europe doesn't not mean single European and Swedish economic policy; Swedish non-membership in the Eurozone led to the separation of political and economic membership of Sweden in the European Union.

Although Sweden is a member of the European Union, in September 2003, during the referendum on the joining to European common currency (Euro), Swedish citizens opposed to this decision (Electoral geography: 2003). Since then ever, not only another referendum has not been held in this regard, but also Swedish citizens in various surveys have expressed their opposition to joining the Eurozone. Hence the Swedish krona is its official currency.

The same is now the currency Swedish krona enjoys the support of the majority of citizens (Statics in Sweden: 2015). Many Swedish parties believe that joining the euro strengthens the export and import and increases turnover within the country's economic system. However, this argument is rejected in the referendum and polls by Swedish citizens. Although many groups and parties support joining of Swedish to the Eurozone, Swedish citizens are not willing to accept it.

Sweden joining the euro proponents believes that since Sweden's economy is export-driven and based on trade with other EU countries and the Eurozone, therefore, the country joining the Eurozone contributes to the flow of domestic capital in this country. Anyway, more than 50 percent of Sweden's GDP is from exports.

BJP's Bihar alliance may not fetch votes

Asia Times — Growing friction between BJP and its ally Janata Dal-United could bode ill for Narendra Modi. It's said that elections in India are generally decided by two states, the first being Uttar Pradesh with 80 seats in Parliament. The next is Bihar, with 40 seats. In the 2014 elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party scored heavily in both states.

This year, however, with Uttar Pradesh shaky as the BJP faces a strong opposition alliance, it's noteworthy that Bihar is not looking as good as it was a few months ago.

India's ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) faces a big challenge in Bihar as the relationship between parties of the state's chief minister, Nitish Kumar, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi is falling apart after the conclusion of two phases of the country's seven-phased general elections.

Although Bihar doesn't have as many seats in Parliament as Uttar Pradesh, it forms a significant part of what is known as the "Hindi-speaking belt" of India. If the BJP wins this belt, it will romp home. If it does not, it will have to scramble to make up for huge losses.

Bihar voting is conducted in seven phases. The first two phases were held on April 11 and April 18, and the third is scheduled for April 23. Low or reluctant participation of BJP cadres in the campaign at several places is a major cause for worry. An early indication came when the BJP agreed to contest only 17 seats. In 2014 the party had won 22. The fact that the party gave up seats to accommodate allies is a key indication of the party's reduced confidence in the state.

The NDA has repeatedly claimed it will win all the 40 Lok Sabha — lower house — seats in the state. The top BJP leadership had also predicted an easy ride in Bihar in an alliance with Kumar, who heads the regional party Janata Dal-United.

But the situation on the ground appears quite ominous, several sources in both parties acknowledged. While the top leaders from the BJP and the JD-U routinely share an election rally dais, the grassroots BJP cadres are refusing to work with the JD-U workers.

■ Trouble in alliance

Modi has used his recent visits to the state to campaign for either JD-U or Lok Janshakti Party candidates, and not for the BJP's nominees. This indicates the trouble brewing in his alliance. The prime minister came to address election rallies in Bihar for the first time on April 2, seeking votes for JD-U candidate Vijay Manjhi in southern Bihar's Gaya town and LJP candidate Chirag Paswan in Jamui district.

Modi visited the eastern Indian state again on April 11 to address an election rally in favor of JD-U's Ajay Kumar Mandal from Bhagalpur. Bhagalpur had been a traditional seat of the BJP, and former federal minister Shah Nawaz Hussain contested from there for the past three terms. But this time the seat went to the JD-U's kitty under the alliance's seat-sharing arrangement, which has annoyed the BJP cadres.

Handing over traditional BJP seats to JD-U likewise has not gone down well with some higher-level leaders. BJP's sitting member from Valmikinagar, Satish Chandra Dubey, decided to contest as an independent after the seat was allotted to JD-U. Dubey said he had decided to contest at the request of his supporters, who were demoralized because of the seat arrangements.

Furthermore, lack of coordination between the respective groups of party workers on the ground was on full display during the NDA rally addressed by Modi in Patna in March this year. During the rally, the general BJP workers and leaders stayed away from the venue. Observers say only around 40% of the historic Gandhi Maidan could be filled up although the NDA pumped in all efforts — booking 17 trains, 8,000 luxury buses and more than 15,000 luxury cars to fetch villagers to the rally.

■ Kumar's shifting loyalties

"The BJP cadres are not fully cooperating with the JD-U in this election as the party's leader Nitish Kumar frequently changes allies and is not reliable," said political analyst DM Diwakar. "The BJP workers still look at him with suspicion for this very reason."

Kumar has changed his allies three times in the past six years. He broke his 17-year-old association with the NDA in June 2013 and formed a government with the support of the opposition. In May 2014, he handed over his seat to Dalit (oppressed caste) leader Jitan Ram Manjhi, after his party had a disastrous performance in the general elections, winning just two seats out of state's 40. He had chosen to break his alliance with the BJP and go it on his own.

Kumar then announced he would work at strengthening his party's organizational base till the next elections. Barely nine months later, he threw Manjhi out of power and grabbed the seat. Manjhi eventually, in 2015, founded his own party called Hindustani Awam Morcha. It has entered the current opposition "grand alliance" with the Congress and others.

Ahead of the 2015 state elections, Kumar had joined



hands with his arch-rival Lalu Prasad Yadav and won the polls in alliance with Yadav's party, the Rashtriya Janta Dal (RJD). After barely two years of being in government together, Kumar broke away from the alliance with RJD and formed a new government with the BJP. This shift eroded his political capital, raising doubts among the BJP workers about his political loyalty.

The BJP's worst fear appeared to come true earlier this month with a startling revelation by Yadav in his newly-published memoir Gopalganj to Raisina: My Political Journey. Yadav's book claimed that Kumar had wished to form his new government with RJD support just six months after walking out of the Grand Alliance and sent his emissary and party vice-president Prashant Kishor several times with the proposal. But the RJD rejected the offer and Kumar was forced to stay with the BJP.

Further, Yadav's wife, Rabri Devi, has claimed that Kumar offered to name the Yadavs' younger son Tejashwi as a candidate for chief minister in the 2020 state Assembly polls. She said Kumar wanted to have himself named as a prime ministerial candidate for the 2019 general elections. These revelations have not gone down well among the BJP cadres.

Kumar's "frequent shifting in his ideologies and move to change his political allies have damaged his credibility beyond repair and hence, the masses are not taking him very seriously this time," explained political analyst S Narayan. "You can see how the prime minister had to seek votes for JD-U candidates in his first two election rallies in the state. This means the BJP votes are not shifting towards the JD-U nominees." ...

What is the purpose of the Swedish nationalists?

By Hanif Ghaffari

TEHRAN — The nationalist front in Sweden plans to do its utmost to win the European parliamentary elections! Nationalists in Sweden did not get their desired results. This time they try to target the European Parliament like other extremist groups in Europe! The fact is that the far-right activists failed in Sweden's general election: They failed to achieve their goal of gaining 25 to 30 percent of the general vote.

True, the Swedish Democratic Party is still there as the third most powerful Swedish party in the recent election, but this is not exactly what while Jimmie Akesson was after; to become the most powerful party in the country with winning the majority of the whole vote. Though people like Jean-Marie Le Pen, the right-wing extremists' leader in France, speak of the Swedish Democrats' victory, the truth is something else!

Interestingly, surveys conducted before the Swedish general election indicate that Jimmie Akesson and his entourage would be able to win at least 25% of the vote. But recent results suggest that some of the people who were supposed to vote for the Democratic Party in Sweden, had eventually decided to vote for the traditional parties.

Many analysts from Sweden and Europe say that if Swedish nationalists fail to get good results in European Parliamentary elections, they will have little chance of reviving their lost political position. Meanwhile, traditional Swedish parties are also trying to prevent the victory of the Democratic Party.

The traditional parties of Sweden during the last year's elections and the formation of the government were able to curb Swedish nationalism. In this way, at least until 2022, Sweden is rescued from a serious crisis called "right-extremism dominance over Stockholm".

This time they (Traditional Swedish parties) try to prevent the Swedish nationalists from getting to the European Parliament again.

In general, the presence of Swedish nationalists in power will have devastating consequences for Stockholm and Europe. If Axon and his associates come to power in Sweden, we will see the destruction of the multicultural society of Sweden on the one hand and the creation of some fundamental changes in the structure of the "welfare state" in this country on the other hand.

And it should be noted that the development of populist policies in the welfare state will definitely lead to the elimination of the achievements that the Swedes have been struggling to deploy at the welfare and economic levels of society for decades.

U.S. plotting to occupy Bukamal, Al-Mayadeen cities in Eastern Syria

TEHRAN (FNA) — The U.S. plans to occupy the strategic border regions in Eastern Deir Ezzur, including the cities of Bukamal and al-Mayadeen, through launching attacks and urging the U.S.-backed militants to recruit more forces in besieged al-Rukban Camp, Syrian media said.



The Arabic-language Al-Watan newspaper quoted sources close to militants as saying that the U.S.-backed Jaish Maghavi al-Thura has forced tens of youth in al-Rukban Camp to join their ranks in al-Tanf region near the borders with Iraq.

It pointed to the intensive military training given to the people, including light and heavy weapons, and said this attempt is taking place in line with imminent U.S. attack on the Syrian Army as well as an attempt to occupy the two strategic cities of Bukamal and al-Mayadeen in Eastern Deir Ezzur.

Al-Watan newspaper also quoted informed sources as saying that the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) backed up by the U.S.-led coalition forces have dispatched elite forces to al-Amr Oil Region.

The sources also pointed to efforts by the SDF to send further equipment to the region, and said that the main aim for this operation is cutting the international Beirut-Damascus-Baghdad-Tehran road.

In a relevant development on Saturday, media reports revealed that Washington had dispatched new military aid to the Syrian Democratic Forces in Eastern Euphrates after declaring an end in the war on ISIL.

The London-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported on Saturday that the U.S.-led coalition has sent new military convoys, including tens of trucks carrying military aid and logistical equipment, from Iraqi Kurdistan region to areas occupied by the SDF in Eastern Euphrates.

It added that over 810 trucks, carrying military and logistic equipment of the U.S.-led coalition have arrived in Eastern Euphrates.

Last month, Washington-backed Kurdish fighters in Syria declared their final victory over the ISIL terrorist group, ending bloody battle against the group that once held territory spanning a third of Syria and Iraq.

The U.S. Defense Department also announced that the Islamic State no longer holds any territory in Syria, according to former White House Spokeswoman Sarah Sanders.

In December 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump declared the ISIL terrorist group defeated in Syria and announced American troop pullout from the country but gave no timeline. The surprise announcement resulted in the resignation of Secretary of Defense James Mattis, U.S. anti-IS coalition envoy Brett McGurk and Pentagon Chief of Staff Rear Admiral Kevin Sweeney who disapproved of the American president's decision.

But, Trump confirmed that 400 U.S. soldiers will remain in the war-torn country indefinitely. Notably, the U.S. troops have been operating in Syria as part of an international coalition for about five years without the permission of Syrian authorities or the UN Security Council. The United States has, in particular, supported the Kurdish-led militia controlling the territories to the East of the Euphrates and opposing the Syrian government.

Man City’s Sterling wants harsher punishment to tackle racism

Clubs should be slapped with automatic nine-point deductions and ordered to play three games behind closed doors if their supporters indulge in racist behaviour, Manchester City and England forward Raheem Sterling has said.

Football authorities must adopt radical changes to tackle the menace, Sterling said, after signing a manifesto that calls for consistent and suitable punishment for racist and discriminatory behaviour.

“I’d call for an automatic nine-point deduction for racist abuse,” he wrote in a column for the Times newspaper.

“It sounds harsh but which fan will risk racist behaviour if it might relegate their team or ruin their title bid?

“The club should have to play three games behind closed doors. That way, they lose revenue as a direct consequence of racist behaviour.”

Sterling joined a number of professionals and clubs in endorsing the manifesto which also seeks more black and minority ethnic people in senior positions in football and no sanctions for players walking off the pitch if they encounter racism.

Framed with the guidance of anti-discriminatory bodies Kick It Out and FARE and the Black Collective of Media in Sport, key points of the manifesto also include the need for media and social media to take more responsibility in tackling abuse.

“Up and down the game, across the world, black and Asian players, fans and coaches are subjected to racism. Every day, from park football to the Champions League,” Sterling said.

“In my opinion the people who run the game are doing nowhere near enough to solve the problem. And that’s not good enough.”

Earlier this season, Sterling had accused sections of the British media of fuelling racism with a negative portrayal of young black players.

(Source: Guardian)

Injured Halep withdraws from Stuttgart

World number two Simona Halep has withdrawn from the Stuttgart Open with a hip injury.

The 27-year-old suffered the injury during her win over Caroline Garcia in Romania’s Fed Cup defeat by France on Sunday.

But Halep is hopeful she will be fit for next month’s tournaments in Madrid and Rome before defending her French Open title from 26 May.

“If I’m not 100%, I don’t want to step on the court,” Halep said.

“I’m also exhausted mentally because I gave my everything in that tie but unfortunately we couldn’t win.

“That’s why I decided to pull out, because I have to think about my health first.

“I’ve been very sad the last two days. I’ve been through these moments many times, so I know how to handle it. I just need to recover mentally and physically and then just start again.”

Spain’s world number 19 Garbine Muguruza has also had to pull out of Stuttgart through illness.

(Source: BBC)

‘Shattered’: S. Lankan cricketer recounts church bombing horror



Sri Lankan cricketer Dasun Shanaka barely survived one of the deadly blasts that killed more than 320 people in the island nation on Easter Sunday, and says the horrific scenes have left him “scared” to go out.

The 27-year-old allrounder skipped Easter service at St Sebastian’s Church in his hometown of Negombo because of a long trip the day before, he told Cricinfo.

It was among six churches and hotels targeted by suicide bombers who killed 321 people and injured hundreds more -- the worst violence seen in the country since a civil war ended a decade ago.

The government has blamed the attacks on Islamist militants.

“Normally I would have gone to church... (but) I was tired,” Shanaka told the website in comments published Monday.

“That morning, when I was at my house, I heard a sound, and then people were saying a bomb had gone off at the church. I rushed there, and I’ll never forget the scene.

“The entire church was destroyed, absolutely shattered, and people were dragging lifeless bodies outside.”

The destruction at St Sebastian’s was still visible Tuesday -- parts of broken religious statues and smashed pews littered the floor -- as funerals of victims were held.

More people are believed to have died in the blast at St Sebastian’s than any of the other attacks, with the local hospital receiving more than 100 bodies.

“If you saw the scene, you would know there was no way anyone inside could have survived, because simply the debris from the blast had injured everyone even in the vicinity,” Shanaka told Cricinfo.

After the blast, the cricketer rushed to the church looking for his mother and grandmother, who were at the Easter service. Both survived, he said, but his grandmother required surgery because she was hit in the head with shrapnel.

(Source: AFP)

Title, top four and pride at stake in massive Manchester derby



Even by the rarified atmosphere of Manchester derbies, there will seldom have been so much on the line for both sides of the city when Manchester United host Manchester City on Wednesday.

For City, the Premier League title is at stake with Pep Guardiola’s men needing to win their remaining four matches to be sure of becoming the first side since United a decade ago to retain the title.

Those days of dominance are long gone for the Red Devils with just a place in the top four and Champions League qualification their target.

However, United also have to restore some sense of pride after a 4-0 thrashing at Everton on Sunday.

Defeat at Goodison Park was United’s sixth in eighth games, a run that has seen them crash out of the Champions League and FA Cup, as well as slip back down to sixth in the Premier League.

But with Tottenham, Arsenal and Chelsea also faltering, they remain just three points off the top four. The momentum and feel good factor built up by Ole Gunnar Solskjaer’s first few months in charge has gone.

Now the Norwegian, only hired on a permanent basis last month, has to show he has the ability to arrest the slump even before a major restructure of his squad takes place in the summer.

Solskjaer questioned the work rate and desire of some of his players on Sunday,

making it clear that big changes are needed.

However, he is clinging to the hope that those he currently has to call on will be shocked into a short-term response.

“Against City at Old Trafford on Wednesday, that’s the biggest incentive we can have,” said Solskjaer after the Everton embarrassment.

“Old Trafford at home, in front of our fantastic fans, they were unbelievable again and

Former Liverpool striker Fowler to coach Brisbane Roar



Former Liverpool striker Robbie Fowler has been appointed coach of A-League club Brisbane Roar, taking his first serious management role in the Australian top flight where he enjoyed a two-year stint as a player.

Fowler, who was briefly player-coach of Thai side Muangthong United before retiring in 2012, would take over the struggling Roar from the 2019/20 season on a two-year deal, the club said.

The 44-year-old has coached at the Liverpool academy since hanging up his boots but has had precious little management experience at the highest level.

“Just because I’m not as experienced as some of them, doesn’t mean I’m going to do as bad a job,” he told reporters in Brisbane on Tuesday.

“You could have Jurgen Klopp here, you could have Pep Guardiola, it doesn’t necessarily mean they are going to be great managing Brisbane. I had a good career in terms of playing football. Now this is really the start of my managerial career,” added Fowler.

“There’s not going to be any stone left unturned. I’m going to do everything

right. There are going to be plenty of hours on the training pitch to bring the club and the team up to speed.

“I’m really keen to get started and make a difference.

Capped 26 times by England, Fowler skippered North Queensland Fury in 2009/10 before the Townsville-based team collapsed under debts, then transferred to A-League rivals Perth Glory the following season.

He proved a popular drawcard in Australia and was top scorer at both clubs before heading to Thailand.

Fowler faces a big challenge to rebuild the once-mighty Roar, who have endured a miserable season and are ninth in the 10-team league with only four wins from 26 games.

Former boss John Aloisi resigned from the three-times A-League champions in December and caretaker Darren Davies has proved powerless to lift a team who suffered a 6-1 humiliation at home against the Newcastle Jets last weekend.

Fowler will attend the Roar’s season-ending game against Adelaide United at their Lang Park home on Thursday.

(Source: Mirror)

Sources: Sarri angry at Burnley bench obscenities



Several individuals on the Burnley bench riled Chelsea head coach Maurizio Sarri by repeatedly calling him “s--- Italian” prior to the touchline brawl that marred Monday’s 2-2 draw between the clubs at Stamford Bridge, sources have told ESPN FC.

Sarri was sent down the tunnel in the closing minutes of the match by referee Kevin Friend and fourth official Roger East after losing his cool with members of Sean Dyche’s backroom team, though the Burnley manager himself was not involved.

Sources have told ESPN FC that Sarri’s anger boiled over when he was branded a “s--- Italian” by multiple members of the visiting club, and Chelsea’s head coach was so offended by what he had heard that postmatch media duties were delegated to his assistant Gianfranco Zola.

Details of the words exchanged between the two benches are expected to be included in the referee’s report given that East was in position to hear everything, and after the game Zola suggested that Chelsea could ask the Football Association to take action against Burnley for what was said.

“He’s very frustrated, so he’d prefer not

Liverpool have already set their highest ever points tally in the Premier League era of 88 to lead City by two points.

However, Guardiola’s men have a game in hand and should they move top once more with a win on Wednesday, would just need to see off Burnley, Leicester and Brighton to guarantee the title.

“With this Liverpool side, our side we know if we lose what happens,” warned Guardiola.

City’s quest for a quadruple of trophies fell short by the finest of margins as they lost on away goals to Tottenham in the quarter-finals of the Champions League last week.

However, they can still claim an unprecedented domestic treble by winning the league and FA Cup over the next month to go with their League Cup win in February.

“I love my team being there,” added Guardiola. “I am not going to criticise them because we are out (of the Champions League). I see every day what we have done over the past two seasons, they show me character every three days.

“I have good players, but they have to do it. And when people expect them to do it, it’s harder to do it. That’s why we push them but they respond really well. I love my team.”

City gained a small measure of revenge on Spurs with a 1-0 league win on Saturday, but victory came at a cost with Kevin de Bruyne unlikely to play again this season due to a hamstring injury.

(Source: AFP)

Doping - Lab director hits back at ex-WADA head over testing criticism

The director of a top Belgian laboratory has criticised former World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) head David Howman for suggesting drug testing was stuck in the 1970s and needed to be more innovative.

Howman, in an address to an anti-doping conference in London last week, had said urine analysis had not advanced much over the decades and that testing was not catching the real cheats.

“We’re still in a position where we’re getting the same number of positive cases each year, and many of them are in the category of what I call the ‘dopey dopers’ - the inadvertent dopers, or the ones who are just darned stupid,” he said.

Professor Peter van Eenoo, director of the WADA-accredited laboratory at the University of Ghent, said Howman had got it wrong.

“It’s incredible that somebody said this,” he told Reuters in a telephone interview. “What he says is the percentage of positive samples hasn’t changed much over the years. And therefore science has not made any progress.

“What he completely forgets is that for every step of progress we made, of course, the others adapt.”

Howman, who left the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) in 2016, is now chairman of the Athletics Integrity Unit board and has previously criticised his former employers for failing to support clean athletes and for allowing the reinstatement of Russia’s anti-doping agency.

Van Eenoo said the substances being used, the doses



and how they were being used by drugs cheats had changed over the decades.

Data from re-testing, using urine samples from the 2008 Beijing and 2012 London Olympics, had also demonstrated the advances of science.

“There were about 10,000 samples, 25 positives. What they’ve done is stored all those samples and re-tested 1,000 of these negative samples,” he said.

“Out of those 1,000 samples, 100 at re-testing later turned out to be positive. That is only through scientific progress, because nothing has changed. It’s the same urine.

“And because they know we can now detect substances for a longer period, they (athletes) switch to other substances

or take them in smaller doses. So they adapt everything and that is only pushed by scientific progress.”

■ **‘GOLD STANDARD’**

Van Eenoo said urine testing, first introduced at an Olympics in 1968, had its limitations but would remain the ‘gold standard’ for some time to come.

He accepted that some substances, such as growth hormone, were hard to detect in urine and that blood was a better indicator of the effectiveness of drugs.

“That’s why we are now investing in looking into blood concentration — dried blood spots, those kind of things — to complement urine,” he said.

“If we are looking at a zero tolerance policy which is important for most of the substances and especially those which are most performance-enhancing — steroids, EPO — then urine is the gold standard and will remain for quite a long time to come.”

Van Eenoo said it was difficult to look for 400 or 500 substances in a drop of blood.

“So that’s why I’m saying urine as a first and then for some of these substances where you have issues... you can re-analyse that drop of blood only for one or two substances,” he added.

“This makes absolute sense and we need to progress in that direction. That’s additional scientific progress, it doesn’t mean that the scientific progress we’ve made so far doesn’t exist.”

(Source: Eurosport)

Persepolis must win remaining matches: coach

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Persepolis coach Branko Ivankovic labeled remaining two matches against Uzbekistan's Pakhtakor and Al Sadd of Qatar as must-win games.

Persepolis lost to Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli 2-1 in Group D of the AFC Champions League on Monday at the Maktoum bin Rashid Al Maktoum Stadium in Abu Dhabi, the UAE.

The result left Persepolis at the bottom of the table with just four points.

Al Sadd top the group with seven points. Al Ahli are second with six points and Pakhtakor slipped down to third place with five points.

"I am so sorry after we failed to win the

match because we were the better team but lost the match. Persepolis defeated Al Ahli 2-0 in their previous match but we showed a better football in our second match, however we failed to win," Ivankovic said in the post-match news conference.

"I cannot criticize my players because they played well. This is football and you cannot talk about that. My players are very exhausted because of our busy fixture and also it is very hot here," the Croat added.

"We will travel to Tashkent to face Pakhtakor in Matchday Five and must defeat them. We must also beat Al Sadd in our home. We can do it. I am sure our players will recover mentally and physically very soon," Ivankovic said.

Persepolis fall short against Al Ahli Saudi

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Omar Al Somah scored a brace as Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli defeated Persepolis of Iran 2-1 in Group D of the AFC Champions League on Monday.

The two teams came into the match occupying the last two places in the group, with Persepolis sitting third with four points after their 2-0 win against Al Ahli on Matchday Three left the Saudis bottom of the group with three points.

It took half an hour for the first goal of the game to arrive, and it was Al Somah who registered it for the home team.

Ghareeb skipped past two defenders and looked to round Persepolis goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand who brought him down inside the box.

The Chinese referee awarded a penalty which Al Somah emphatically drove home for his third goal of the campaign. Persepolis controlled the dominance in the second half

and created several chances but Ali Alipour, Siamak Nemati and Soroush Rafiei wasted their chances.

Eight minutes before the end of the 90 minutes, Beiranvand was left helpless to rescue after Al Soma curled a free-kick from the edge of the box into the top corner to add the second goal for Al Ahli and for himself on the night.

As he did in the first match, defender Shojae Khalilzadeh showed his eye for goal, heading home Rafiei's cross in added time. His goal this time was merely a consolation for Persepolis as the final whistle confirmed a 2-1 win for the Saudis.

Competition for qualification spots remains heated in Group D, with Al Sadd of Qatar, who defeated Uzbekistan's Pakhtakor 2-1, climbed to the top with seven points. Al Ahli sit second with six points. Pakhtakor are third collecting five points and Persepolis sit bottom of the table with four points.

Fun-packed mini volleyball festival held in Palestine



A Mini Volleyball Festival was held at Al Ahliyyah College School here on Saturday, April 20 under the auspices of School Director Father Jamal Daeibes, with mini volleyball in Palestine expert and Instructor Rani Asfour organising matches for young students with participation of their parents.

Mini volleyball is very popular in Palestine as it's an ultimate aim of promoting and exposing the sport to new players increasing dramatically over the past six years thanks to the FIVB's Mini Volleyball initiative.

Since February 2013, the Palestine Volleyball Association (PVA) has adapted its strategic plan to focus 90 per cent of their resources on developing the sport in the country. Mini Volleyball was first introduced to the PVA nine years ago but it is only recently, with the help of expert Rani Asfour, that it has taken off. The Association's aim is to establish a foundation from which they can develop a strong national team to compete globally in the near future.

This resulted in more mini volleyball

events to be held in Palestine under the theme "If you want to go fast go alone, if you want to go far go together."

After the mini volleyball event has been taking place in many locations in Palestine and in Jerusalem in particular, the recent Mini Volleyball Festival took place in Ramallah, a Palestinian city in the center West Bank located 10km north of Jerusalem and historically an Arab Christian town.

Children taking part in the festival at Al Ahliyyah College School in Ramallah had fun and were all smiles as they joyfully competed in matches with supports of their parents nearby.

Mini volleyball is a discipline recognised and encourage by the FIVB. It is the game for children aged 9-10 up to 12-13 years played in teams of two to four players. The objective of play is to send the ball over the net to touch the ground of the opponents' court while preventing the same action of the opposing players.

(Source: asianvolleyball)

Kobe to host 2021 World Para Athletics Championships



Kobe, Japan, has been announced as the host of the 2021 World Para Athletics Championships, the first time the country has staged the competition. It will be the 10th edition of the World Championships with around 1,300 athletes from 100 countries set to compete at the Universiade Memorial Stadium.

The 45,000-seater stadium was built in 1985 for the Summer Universiade and since then has hosted a series of major international events such as the 2011 Asian Athletics Championships and the 2012 FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup.

Haozhe Gao, Head of World Para Athletics, said:

"We would like to congratulate Kobe for the extraordinary work done to put together the bid for the 2021 World Para Athletics Championships. We are fully confident that the city of Kobe will continue the legacy of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games and stage a great event.

"It will be the first World Championships in East Asia representing an important step in the development of Para athletics

in the region. We look forward to working together with the Local Organizing Committee, the City of Kobe and our partners to deliver a successful Championships."

Kizo Hisamoto, Mayor of Kobe, said: "Carrying on the legacy of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics, we aim to further building the opportunities for Para sport and make a great success of the Championships. We will endeavor to be proactive in our preparation for the Championships so that the athletes and staff can focus all of their efforts on the sports.

"In addition, we will take the opportunity afforded by the hosting of the Championships to further promote inclusive community development in Kobe, and to share our city's charm with the world. We would love to have many people from around the world come and visit Kobe in 2021."

London, Great Britain, hosted the last edition of the World Championships in 2017 with 33 new world records set in 10 days of competition.

(Source: Paralympic.org)

Al Sadd coach Jesualdo Ferreira insists there is plenty of work to do in order to qualify for the 2019 AFC Champions League last 16 after the Qatari side secured a hard-fought 2-1 victory over Uzbekistan's Pakhtakor on Monday.

Xavi scored his second free-kick – and third goal – in two games as Al Sadd took an early lead at Jassim bin Hamad Stadium before Egor Krimets leveled proceedings as the sides went in level at the interval.

But with the clock ticking down, Baghdad Bounedjah capitalised on a defensive error before slotting home to seal all three points as the 2018 semi-finalists moved to the top of the Group D standings.

"We expected the match to be tough and everyone saw the strength of the opponent," Ferreira told the club's website.

"The match did not play out in the way we wanted it to, but we stayed true to our identity and tried to create chances to score and win on merit."

Nothing could separate the two sides in Tashkent in a 2-2 draw on Matchday Three and a similar scenario seemed to be panning out in Doha in what is a congested group.

But Al Sadd had the better of the possession and, just like



in their previous home game against Persepolis, the 2018 AFC Champions League's top scorer Bounedjah popped up with a late goal to secure a vital win.

"In the game against Persepolis, we got the win in injury time; everyone on the team knows that if they want the win, they need to fight until the last minute and this

is what we did today – and Baghdad was able to score the winner in the 87th minute," said the Portuguese coach.

"The changes in the positions between [substitute] Yasir [Abubakar] and Abdelkarim [Hassan] had a positive effect on the result of the match. All the players performed at a good level and we succeeded in fulfilling our objective, which was to win the game."

With Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli defeating the Islamic Republic of Iran's Persepolis 2-1 in Monday's other Group D fixture, the stage is set for an intriguing final two rounds of fixtures.

Just three points separate top from bottom, with Al Sadd leading the way on seven points, Al Ahli on six, Pakhtakor on five and Persepolis on four.

"The task remains difficult for everyone, because the competition is very intense, even if we defeat Al-Ahli at home," added Ferreira.

"We then have to go to Iran to face Persepolis and everyone knows the strength of Iranian teams when they play in front of their home fans."

(source: the-afc)

Iranian shooter Najmeh Khedmati earns quota place for Tokyo 2020

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iranian female shooter Najmeh Khedmati earned a quota place for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games on Tuesday.

She came fifth at the 10m Air Rifle Women with a score of 186.6 in the 2019 ISSF World Cup Rifle/Pistol underway in Beijing, China.



"I am very happy to earn Iran's first quota in the shooting. I will work hard to do my best in Tokyo," Khedmati said after booking a place in Tokyo.

Russia's Yulia Karimova, 25, bagged the gold medal with a score of 251.1.

Korea's Eunji Kwon took silver with 250.2 points and the bronze medal went to her compatriot Jihyeon Keum with 228.0.

The 2020 Summer Olympic Games will be held in Tokyo between July 24 and August 9 and will see a total of 339 sets of medals to be contested in 33 sports (50 disciplines).

Freestyler Reza Atri wins gold at Asian Wrestling C'ships

TASNIM — Reza Atri from Iran claimed a gold medal at the 2019 Asian Wrestling Championships on Tuesday.

He defeated Kumsong Kang from North Korea 9-3 in the final match of the 57kg.

Pejman Biabani from Iran won a bronze medal in the 65kg weight category, defeating Sirojiddin Khasanov from Uzbekistan 3-2.

Younes Emami also claimed a bronze medal in the 70kg after defeating Batyr Borjakov from Turkmenistan 11-0.

The 2019 Asian Wrestling Championships are being held in Xian, China, from April 23 to 28.

Yankees officially release Gio Gonzalez

The New York Yankees released left-hander Gio Gonzalez from his minor league contract on Monday, officially making the 33-year-old a free agent.

Gonzalez opted out of the deal on Saturday, leaving the Yankees facing a 48-hour deadline in which to either place on him on the 25-man roster or grant him his release.

He would have received a \$3 million base salary plus \$300,000 for each start if he was added to the roster.

Gonzalez went 2-1 with a 6.00 ERA in three starts at Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre.

Gonzalez didn't land a major league contract in the off season as a free agent, but the market might be a little more active now.

The two-time All-Star is 127-97 with a 3.69 ERA in 11 big league campaigns. He was 10-11 with a 4.21 ERA while splitting last season with the Washington Nationals and Milwaukee Brewers.

Gonzalez's best season came in 2012 when he went 21-8 with a 2.89 ERA for the Nationals.

He began his career with the Oakland Athletics in 2008 and was traded to Washington after the 2011 season.

(Source: Reuters)

France Télévisions secures Olympic rights

France Télévisions will be the free-to-air Olympic broadcaster for the Olympic Winter Games in Beijing in 2022 and the Olympic Summer Games in Paris 2024 following an agreement with rights holder Discovery.

Coverage will also be shown on Discovery's Eurosport brand.

"Our Olympic Games partnership with France Télévisions is a big win for viewers as we can guarantee the access to free-to-air coverage that can inspire the nation, alongside Eurosport super-serving fans with every minute of the Games and unrivalled sports expertise across all screens. The Games also continue to exceed our expectations from a strategic and commercial perspective," said JB Perrette, President and CEO, Discovery International.

The Summer Games in Paris will be the first to be hosted in France for more than a century.

Delphine Ernotte Cunci, President, France Télévisions, said: "This is an important moment for the public service broadcaster. France Télévisions will be able to offer the Olympics Games to all audiences and all the French people. I am happy that they will watch and be thrilled by the Olympics."

The sub-licensing arrangements follows Discovery's long-term partnership with the International Olympic Committee (IOC), announced in June 2015, which included exclusive multimedia rights for 50 countries and territories in Europe and began for Olympic Winter Games PyeongChang 2018 and runs through to Olympic Games Paris 2024.

The rights awarded to Discovery in France included 2022 and 2024. Coverage for 2018 and 2020 had already been secured by France Télévisions.

(Source: Broadbandtvnews)

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The best kind of freedom from want is abandoning desires.

Imam Ali (AS)

Tehran Intl. Book Fair kicks off with slogan “Reading Is Ability”

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — The 32nd Tehran International Book Fair was officially inaugurated with the slogan “Reading Is Ability” at the Imam Khomeini Mosalla on Tuesday.

Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Abbas Salehi and his Chinese counterpart, Luo Shugang, along with a number of foreign diplomats attended the opening ceremony of the event, which hosts China as a special guest.

Speaking at the ceremony, Salehi said that despite the U.S. sanctions and obstacles facing the country, Iranians try to connect to the world via books and cultural diplomacy.

He called books Iran’s envoys to the world, and added, “The world knows Iran through the Shahnameh, Masnavi-ye Manavi, Bustan and Gulistan, and Avicenna’s Canon.”

“There are people in the world, who plan to isolate the great civilized Iranian nation in the international arena, but the books and the cultural ties established by them will foil the plan,” he noted.

In his brief speech, the director of the 32nd Tehran International Book Fair Mohsen Javadi, who is also the deputy culture minister for cultural affairs, said that Iran aims to deepen the bond of friendship with other nations by promoting reading and cultural issues.

China is the special guest of the Tehran International Book Fair this year. The country is attending the event with a delegation composed of about 200 Chinese cultural figures and officials as well as over 100 publishers, writers, translators and illustrators. The book fair will be open to the public until May 4.

“Women with Gunpowder Earrings” to go on screen at One World Festival

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian director Reza Farahmand’s acclaimed documentary “Women with Gunpowder Earrings” will go on screen at the 13th One World Festival, which opened today in Brussels, Belgium.



A scene from “Women with Gunpowder Earrings” by Iranian director Reza Farahmand.

The film tells the story of Nur, a female journalist who covers stories about Syrian and Iraqi women and children in the war against the ISIS terrorists.

The One World Festival, which is an international human rights documentary film festival, will run until April 30.

Collection of David Carr’s writings coming in 2020

NEW YORK (AP) — Writings by the late David Carr, the revered author and journalist, are coming out in book form next year. Ta-Nehisi Coates, a friend whom Carr once mentored, is providing the introduction.

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt announced Monday that “Final Draft: The Selected Work of David Carr” was scheduled for the spring of 2020 and will be edited by his widow, Jill Rooney Carr. “Final Draft” will include everything from Carr’s cultural writing to his struggles with addiction.

Carr was a reporter and media critic for The New York Times at the time of his death, in 2015, at age 58. He wrote the memoir “The Night of the Gun” and also worked at such publications as New York magazine and the Washington City Paper, for which he hired Coates.

Photo: In this Nov. 21, 2011 file photo, New York Times journalist David Carr poses for a photograph as he arrives for the French premiere of the documentary “Page One: A Year Inside The New York Times,” in Paris. (AP Photo/Michel Euler, File)

Persian legends illustrator Ali-Akbar Sadeqi receives lifetime honor at Fajr

A R T **TEHRAN** — Ali-Akbar Sadeqi, a veteran artist who is famous for his illustrations and animated movies on Persian legends, was honored with a lifetime achievement award at the 37th Fajr International Film Festival on Monday.

He received the award from the director of the festival, Reza Mirkarimi, during a special ceremony held at Tehran’s Charsu Cineplex.

“I never learned how to work with a cellphone and a computer because, I didn’t want to waste my time with them,” 82-year-old Sadeqi said after accepting his award.

“I have taught art two times and also worked as a supervisor for students, because I feel it is our duty to help the youth,” he added.

Restored versions of Sadeqi’s animated movies, including “Zal and Simorgh”, “Seven Cities” and “Malek Khorshid”, were screened during the festival.

“In his long brilliant career, Sadeqi succeeded in making himself the true inheritor of Persian legendary art and this was fulfilled by his great prominence,” said renowned painter Aidin Aghdashlu who is also a close friend of Sadeqi.

“His art has its roots in the epics of the Shahnameh, and I don’t know anybody else except him who could have protected this heritage and he so richly deserves this position,” he added.

Actress Fatemeh Motamed-Aria and graphic designer Ebrahim Haqiqi also made comments on Sadeqi.

“With his artworks, Mr. Sadeqi taught us that it was possible to maintain the inner child forever and at the same time to discuss major issues,” Motamed-Aria said.

Haqiqi said, “Sadeqi was a graphic art theater for me,” and added, “Among all the demons he painted, he never forgot to draw sweethearts and heroes who are talking about love, which brings his associates’ love of him.”



Animator Ali-Akbar Sadeqi holds a Silver Simorgh after being honored for his lifetime achievements during the 37th Fajr International Film Festival at Tehran’s Charsu Cineplex on April 22, 2019.

Iran’s Graphic Design Week to open Friday

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iran’s Graphic Design Week, which is annually organized to observe World Graphics Day, will open at the Iranian Artists Forum in Tehran on Friday.

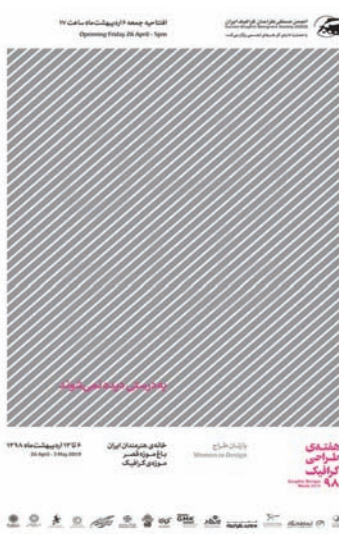
A wide variety of programs have been arranged for the week. Fatemeh Karkeabadi, head of the Iranian Graphic Designers Society’s board of directors, said in a press conference held at the forum on Monday.

“An exhibition of graphic designs by Iranian and Turkish female designers from the 1970s and 1980s will go on display in the international section of the exhibit,” she said.

“Iranian and Turkish female designers enjoy many cultural commonalities, and they are the first generation of graphic designers that encountered and worked with modern technology,” the secretary of the week, Zahra Pashai, said at the conference.

The exhibit is scheduled to put its spotlight on the influence of technology on the graphic designers’ works,” she added.

The influential female graphic designers Mahnush Moniri, Tahereh Mohebbi-Taban and Minu Vaseqi will receive lifetime achievement



A poster for Iran’s Graphic Design Week.

awards during a special ceremony, which is scheduled to be held at the Qasr Garden museum in Tehran on Monday.

The Iranian Museum of Graphic Design in Tehran will also be playing host to an exhibition of posters on Iranian plays as part of the program for Graphic Design Week.

Norway to deliver Iran’s “New Message to Europe”

A R T **TEHRAN** — “New Message to Europe”, an art project initiated by Iranian graphic designer Shahram Entekhabi, will be carried out on Friday at Kunsthall 3.14, an art gallery in the Norwegian city of Bergen.

Sets of mixed-media installation will be showcased as part of the program by Iranian curator Asieh Salimian, the gallery has announced on its website.

In addition, a lineup of short videos recorded in collaboration with 13 renowned Iranian intellectuals, academics and cultural figures from the various fields of art, music, literature, fashion, architecture, science, journalism and sports will be screened.

“After the so-called ‘Iran Deal’ was terminated by the U.S., the dialogue between the Western world and Iran has been endangered. In response, artist Entekhabi in collaboration with Zartosht Rahimi and Ali Mirmohammadi encouraged the participants to give a brief personal message to European audiences,” Kunsthall has written in a statement for the exhibit.

“Each one of the participants provides a small personal gift related to their activity. The gifts will be presented along with the videos in the exhibition at the Kunsthall 3.14. At the end of the exhibition, the visitors have the possibility to take one of the gifts with them in exchange for a small personal gift in response to the message



A poster for “New Message to Europe” of the interviewee,” it added.

“The gifts of the visitors will be brought to Iran and handed over to the Iranian participants. The installation attempts to create a direct and unfiltered dialogue between the interviewees and the Norwegian public, and to address personal issues that are often not found in the media landscape,” the statement concludes.

Writer Saeid Abbaspur, architect Taraneh Yalda, researcher and journalist Ali Dehbashi, musician Morteza Gudarzi, lawyer Bahman Yusefi, ethnologist Pupak Azimpur Tabrizi and psychologist Shiva Dowlatnabi are among the participants.

The exhibit will be running until June 9.

Movies from Iran line up for Geneva festival



A scene from “Dressage” by Puya Badkubeh.

A R T **TEHRAN** — Six Iranian films will compete in the various sections of the 14th International Oriental Film Festival of Geneva (FIFOG).

Acclaimed drama “Dressage” by Puya Badkubeh will go on screen in the official competition of the festival, which will be held in the Swiss city from April 29 to May 5.

“Lunch Time” by Alireza Qasemi, “The Pink Line” by Nina Zarrabi and “The Snail” by Mohammad Torivarian will compete in the short competition.

“I Am Zal” by Hooman Naderi and “Flying Fish” by Mohammad Torivarian will also go on screen in the School Competition of the festival.

End of “Avengers” movies cloaked in high-level Hollywood secrecy

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Walt Disney Co’s Marvel Studios went to great lengths to keep the plot of the movie “Avengers: Endgame” under wraps until its highly anticipated debut in theaters this week, the stars and directors said in interviews.

“Endgame” will offer the “grand conclusion” to a 22-movie story for six of Marvel’s Avengers — Iron Man, Thor, Black Widow, Captain America, Hawkeye and the Hulk, according to Joe Russo, who directed the new film with his brother Anthony.

Marvel took extra steps to keep the plot secret during filming, and many of the movie’s A-list cast said they did not know how exactly the story would unfold.

“Endgame” begins rolling out in theaters around the world on Wednesday.

Brie Larson, who plays the newest big-screen hero, Captain Marvel, called “Endgame” the “most secretive movie possible.” For scenes where she had no lines, Larson said she would be called to the movie’s set without any script for guidance.

“I’d just have to be on set figuring it out,” she said, “which

is very intimidating to the new kid.”

Mark Ruffalo, the actor who plays the Hulk, said he had not read a full script for the film and was unsure how it would end.

The predecessor to “Endgame,” last year’s “Avengers: Infinity War,” left audiences with an epic cliffhanger in which many of the superheroes appeared to turn to dust, and fans are anxious to see what’s next.

Captain America actor Chris Evans said he had faith that Marvel would put out a movie that will “end up being something pretty cool.”

Ethnocineca festival to premiere “Iranian Pets Club”



A scene from Hadi Afarideh’s documentary “Iranian Pet Club”.

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian filmmaker Hadi Afarideh’s documentary “Iranian Pets Club” will have its premiere at the 13th edition of the International Documentary Film Festival Ethnocineca in Austria on May 24.

Afarideh is scheduled to attend a

Q&A session during the festival, which will take place in Vienna from May 23 to 29.

“Iranian Pet Club” is a tribute to pets and their owners in Iran. It provides a surprising insight into Iranian society, and reveals that the affection for animals is something deeply human.