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ICCIMA to host Iran-Syria business forum on Wednesday

TEHRAN — Iran and Syria will continue exploring mutual trade opportunities in a business forum due to be held on Wednesday at the place of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA), IRIB reported.

Attended by officials, businessmen and entrepreneurs from both sides, the event is aimed at following up on the negotiations and agreements reached

in the previous business forums.

As reported, representatives of Syrian companies active in manufacturing, importing and exporting sectors of various industries including garment and clothing, dairy, petrochemicals, foodstuff, production and assembly of bicycles and motorcycles, carton production, pipes and plastic profiles, production of sodium silicate and international shipping are among the event's attendees. **→4**

Zarif says maximum pressure policy doomed to failure

TEHRAN — Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif says hawkish politicians within the American government and their allies in the Middle East want to escalate tensions with Tehran.

In an interview with Fox News set to air on Sunday, Zarif accused U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton as well as Israel, Saudi Arabia and the UAE of "drag-

ging the U.S. into a conflict" with Iran.

Asked if the group is trying to exercise a government change in Iran, Zarif replied, "At least, at least."

"They have all shown an interest in dragging the United States into a conflict. I do not believe that President Trump wants to do that, I believe President Trump ran on a campaign promise of not bringing the United States into another war. **→2**

'Economic terrorism spreading into cyber-economy'

TEHRAN — The United States' economic terrorism against Iran is being spread into the digital economy, Information and Communication Technology Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi said on Saturday.

"A report by the Information Technology Organization shows that the removal of Iranian apps from the Android operating

system was not limited to the themes of a messaging app, but also included some Iranian businesses' apps," Azari Jahromi said in a post on his Twitter account.

According to reports, Google has removed a number of Iranian apps from Google Play, including two messaging apps called "Hotgram" and "Talamgram".



EDITORIAL

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Why are human rights defenders silent?

The latest crime by Saudi Arabia's wild regime has led to anger and hatred of all the people of the world from Riyadh. Undoubtedly, not only the leaders of the Saudi regime, but also American and European supporters of this regime are also involved in the martyrdom of 37 people in Saudi Arabia.

Today, the public opinion of the world is more than ever informed about the nature and identity of the Saudi regime. The main question is why many human rights defenders in the world do not condemn this crime? Why do not many international organizations and institutions act in the face of the Saudi assassin regime?

The fact is that the recent crime in Saudi Arabia has been sustained by three United States, Britain and France. The three countries that support the Yemeni war and the killing of Yemeni children and women also support Riyadh. Therefore, these three countries use their influence in international organizations against humanity.

Today, the Islamic world is deeply upset about the great crime that has occurred in Saudi Arabia. But in the meantime, in addition to Riyadh, European and American supporters of the hated Saudi regime are also accused. They are responsible for the killing of innocent people in Yemen, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iraq, and so on.

For example, the United States and three countries, Germany, France and Britain, are well aware of the fate of their export arms to Saudi Arabia. The Saudi regime uses these weapons to produce terror in the West Asia region. Washington and its allies know well that many of these weapons come to the hands of terrorist groups such as ISIS through official lobbyists in Riyadh.

Ultimately, Saudi Arabia will pay a heavy punishment for its thousands of crimes against Muslims. The 37 recent Saudi victims were subjected to heavy torture. They were also deprived of having a lawyer. Meanwhile, none of the international institutions is taking action in the face of the riots and savagery of Riyadh. Soon, with the fall of the Saudi regime, there will be many documents about the numerous crimes of this regime. Documents that they are disturbing the hearts of the conscious and free people.

Nephew: UNSC highly unlikely to comply with Trump's IRGC designation

TEHRAN (FNA) — Richard Nephew, who served as the lead sanctions expert for the US team negotiating with Iran, says the impacts of the Trump administration's move to blacklist Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps as a terrorist entity are constrained by the United States' geographical boundaries as the world community seems to be adamant on the move.

Nephew, who is now a fellow at the Center on Global Energy Policy at Columbia University, told FNA that the UN Security Council is "highly unlikely" to comply with President Trump's decision on IRGC.

What follows is the full text of FNA's interview with the architect of Iran sanctions:

■ After designating Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps as a terrorist organization, the United States announced that the sanctions will not be imposed on those who cooperate with IRGC automatically. Is the US entitled to the right to impose sanctions on individuals, companies, and governments for cooperating with the IRGC? If yes, is this right legitimate?

A: I think the United States absolutely has the right to determine appropriate terms for those

who wish to do business in the United States. Iran has this right as well, of course.

The US decision to deny access to the United States for those who do business with the IRGC comes from this fundamental right.

The reason why this has sometimes upset non-Americans is because of the size and scale of the US economy. It leads to people deciding that they don't really get to make a choice because they're choosing between Iran and the United States, and -- for many -- they would rather do business in the United States. **→13**

Saudi men executed confessed under duress

TEHRAN — Dozens of Saudi Arabian nationals executed by Riyadh on Tuesday claimed to have been tortured into making false confessions, trial documents obtained by CNN revealed.

Saudi authorities said the 37 individuals were found guilty of attacking security installations with explosives, killing a number of security officers and cooperating with "enemy organizations" against the country's interests.

But the revelations by CNN suggest many of the executed men - who for the most part were members of the country's marginalized Shia minority - maintained their innocence until their dying breath.

One of the prisoners, Mohammed al-Musallam, told the court he had suffered multiple injuries while being interrogated by security forces.

"Nothing in these confessions is correct and I

cannot prove that I was forced to do it," al-Musallam said, according to documents.

"But there are medical reports from the prison hospital of Dammam and I ask your honor to summon them. They show the effect of torture on my body."

Munir al-Adam, a 27-year-old who was partially blind and deaf, denied confessing to any of the charges levied against him. **→3**

Russia and Syria are not planning assault on Idlib for now: Putin

TEHRAN — Russian President Vladimir Putin said Saturday he did not rule out Syrian forces, backed by Russian air power, launching a full-scale assault on militants in Syria's Idlib province, but that such an operation was impractical for now.

Russia, one of the Syrian government's staunchest allies, and Turkey brokered a deal in September to create a demilitarized zone in the northwest Idlib region that would be free of all heavy weapons and militant fighters.

According to Reuters, the deal helped avert a government assault on the region, the last major bastion of opponents of President Bashar Assad.

But Moscow has since complained about escalating violence in the area and said that militants who used to belong to the Nusra Front group are in control of large swaths of territory.

Speaking in Beijing, Putin said that Moscow and Damascus would continue what he called the fight against terrorism and that any militants

who tried to break out of Idlib, something he said happened from time to time, were bombed.

But Putin said the presence of civilians in parts of Idlib where militants were also active meant the time was not yet ripe for full-scale military operations.

"I don't rule it [a full-scale assault] out, but right now we and our Syrian friends consider that to be inadvisable given this humanitarian element," Putin told reporters. **→3**



© IRNA / Reza Ghaderi

Masjed-e Vakil: A bustling tourist destination in Shiraz

TEHRAN — A trip to Shiraz without a visit to Masjed-e Vakil (Vakil Mosque), which is part of a bigger 18th-century ensemble, may be tantamount to a trip to Istanbul while missing the Blue Mosque.

The atmospheric ensemble of Masjed-e Vakil, Bazaar-e Vakil, and Vakil Bathhouse has always been a bustling tourist destination in downtown Shiraz, and a must-see for both local and international backpackers. **→10**



ARTICLE

Raghieb Hussain
Analyst from Pakistan

Khan's Iran visit significant on many counts

Pakistan premier Imran Khan's maiden official visit to Iran was tremendously successful and marked a significant shift in relations between the two neighbors, especially after recent turn of events.

Khan kicked off his much-anticipated visit from the holy city of Mashhad where he paid his obeisance at the highly revered shrine of Imam Reza (as).

The cricketer-turned-premier, who catapulted to fame as the captain of Pakistan's World Cup winning cricket team in 90s, reaffirmed his commitment to strengthen ties between the two countries.

The relations between Iran and Pakistan have always been marked by ambiguity, mainly due to overt pro-Riyadh tilt of successive ruling dispensations in Islamabad over the years. But since Khan took over as the Prime Minister late last year, he has clearly and categorically spoken about his desire to balance ties between Tehran and Riyadh.

However, the recent terror attack in Iran's restive Sistan-Baluchistan province, targeting a cavalcade of Iranian security forces, threatened to derail ties between the two countries. Iranian politicians and military generals issued strongly-worded statements, urging Pakistan not to allow its territory to be used for attacks against its close ally.

Khan's growing proximity to Riyadh, like his predecessors, also raised concerns about Islamabad risking its relations with Iran, which made this visit more significant.

Upon his arrival in Mashhad, Khan sought to allay the fears of people in Iran that Pakistan would not compromise its historic and time-tested ties with Iran, its key ally and a regional bulwark.

Iran and Pakistan have more commonalities than differences. The evolution of global and regional security environment is pushing the two countries closer to each other. Further, the two countries can benefit vastly from mutual cooperation in economic, commercial, and security spheres.

Khan's visit to Tehran came at a critical time when the two sides can take advantage of vast opportunities to enhance bilateral cooperation in various fields. **→6**

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Interior Ministry election office chief named

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli has appointed Deputy Interior Minister for Political Affairs Jamal Araf as the head of the ministry's election headquarters, Tasnim reported on Saturday.

Rahmani Fazli also appointed Deputy Interior Minister for Security Affairs Hossein Zolfagari as the head of the election security headquarters.

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

The midterm elections of the Assembly of Experts will also be held on the same date in Tehran, Khorsan Razavi, North Khorasan, Fars and Qom provinces.



Guardian Council neutral on provincial parliamentary polls

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Guardian Council neither supports nor opposes parliamentary elections at provincial level, its spokesman Abbasali Kadkhodaei has said.

However provincial elections should not lead to a reduced communication between representatives and their constituencies or decrease election turnout, Kadkhodaei remarked, ISNA reported on Saturday.

He also said the Guardian Council will comment on the issue after the Expediency Council makes a decision, ISNA reported on Saturday.

Last month, Vice President for Parliamentary Affairs Hossein-Ali Amiri said that the Rouhani administration is in favor of the bill that changes parliamentary elections from local to provincial levels.

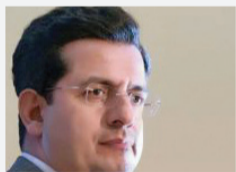


Ayatollah Yazdi re-elected head of teachers' society

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi has been re-elected as chief of the Supreme Council of the Teachers' Society of Qom Seminary, Mehr reported on Saturday.

During the internal elections of the council, Hashem Bushehri and Ahmad Khatami were elected as first and second deputies respectively, according to the head of the office of the Teachers' Society.

Mohsen Araki and Mahmoud Abdollahi were also elected as secretaries and Abolqasem Vafi was voted to become financial trustee.



Iran hails Nigeria's move to provide health services for Sheikh Zakzaky

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Tehran on Saturday welcomed the Nigerian government's "positive" move to allow a medical team to visit and examine Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky, leader of Nigeria's Shiite community, and his wife, the Iranian Foreign Ministry website reported.

In a Saturday statement, Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi expressed the hope that with Sheikh Zakzaky and his wife receiving full treatment inside or outside Nigeria, the trend of interaction and constructive talks between authorities of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN) and the Nigerian government will result in the settlement of problems and the release of the top cleric.



Economic council passes proposals to boost production

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Supreme Economic Coordination Council on Saturday passed a series of proposals made by two ministries with the aim of boosting production and resolving the problems facing industrial and commercial enterprises.

The decision was made in a meeting headed by President Hassan Rouhani and attended by Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi and Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani, IRNA reported.

The proposals, which were partly approved in the meeting, were made by ministries of industry and interior.

During the meeting, a proposal to boost exports was also mulled over.



Ex-FM warns UAE against entering into Trump's 'dangerous game'

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Former Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki has warned UAE sheikhs that by entering into the "dangerous game" of U.S. President Donald Trump against Iran, their oil exports will go down to zero.

"After the revolution, when the Emirati sheikhs created vast propaganda machines to make a move on Iran's islands with the incitement and guidance of England, Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani said 'the Emiratis must [first] pass a sea filled with water,'" Mottaki said in a tweet on Friday.

"Today, also, the Emirati sheikhs should know that entering into Trump's dangerous game will drive down their oil exports to zero," he added.

The comments were in reaction to expectations that Saudi Arabia and the UAE would fill any supply gap caused by a tightening of U.S. oil sanctions on Iran.

Zarif says maximum pressure policy doomed to failure

'Trump aides, regional allies dragging U.S. into Iran conflict'



There are always ways of going around sanctions'

In an interview with Reuters on Wednesday, Zarif also signaled Tehran would be resilient in the face of U.S. sanctions.

"I mean there are always ways of going around the sanctions. We have a PhD in that

area," Zarif said.

Zarif acknowledged that oil sanctions hurt ordinary Iranians and the government would do whatever it could to sell oil to provide for its citizens.

When asked who else Iran might consider selling oil to, Zarif said: "If I told you, we

"We will exercise prudence but it doesn't mean that if the United States changed the rules of the game, or changed the rules of engagement, it would be able to get away with that," Zarif notes.

'Many countries will be harmed if Iran's oil sale is stopped'

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Mohammad Ali Hosseini, a former Foreign Ministry spokesman, has said that if Iran's oil sale is stopped more than one country will be harmed.

"From an economic point of view, any fluctuation in oil market will cause harm to a group of countries and not just one," he told ISNA in an interview published on Saturday.

The U.S. announced on Monday that Washington has decided not to extend waivers allowing major importers to continue buying oil from Iran when they expire in early May.

Hosseini predicted that the U.S. will be harmed by "evil" strategies that is has adopted against Iran.

"No country welcomed this decision of the White House except the Zionist regime of Israel and one or two reactionary countries in the region," Hosseini stated.

He said Iran has a "strategic status" and will not act passively in the face of the "cruel" and "illegal" sanctions.

Over the past years Iran has learned how to circumvent

sanctions, he added.

He also said that it will not be easy to find an alternate for Iran's oil.

Foreign Minister Javad Zarif said on Thursday that Trump will not succeed in forcing Iran to capitulate to U.S. economic pressure because Tehran has a "Ph.D. in sanctions busting".

Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said in a statement on Thursday that Iran will not allow any country to replace its oil sales in the global market and warned the U.S. and its regional allies of the ramifications of their decision to halt Iranian oil exports.

In remarks on Wednesday, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Tehran will be exporting any amount of crude it wants, asserting that U.S. attempts to zero out the export of Iranian oil will be fruitless.

The Leader also warned that the enemies' hostile policies will not go unanswered because the Iranian nation would not

stand idle in the face of plots.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Saturday he hoped Iranian oil exports would continue despite Washington's efforts to stop them, Reuters reported.

The United States expects Saudi Arabia and its Persian Gulf allies to boost output in order to offset the cut in Iranian supplies.

But Putin, in Beijing to attend an investment conference, said he was unaware of any Saudi intention to increase production.

Putin also said Russia will not immediately raise oil output after the U.S. ends sanctions waivers for buyers of Iranian crude.

Eight countries including China, India and Turkey had been given temporary waivers by the U.S. when it reimposed sanctions on Iran last year.

The end of the exemptions sparked fears of supply shortages, pushing oil prices to near six-month highs.

"I can't imagine how the world energy market will react" after the waivers end in May, Putin said.

EU official: INSTEX conforms to international law

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — A spokesperson for the European Union has said that the 28-nation bloc will remain committed to the 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, as long as Iran fulfills its obligations under the agreement.

In an interview with IRNA published on Saturday, the spokesperson, who spoke on condition of animosity, said the removal of sanctions on Iran is one of the most important obligations in exchange for Tehran's commitment to its nuclear obligations.

The official said that the EU has taken effective steps to preserve the JCPOA despite the U.S. pressure.

The official pointed to the Instrument for Supporting Trade Exchanges

(INSTEX) and said the mechanism will help legal business with Iran.

INSTEX is not a mechanism against the U.S. and conforms to international law and money laundering standards, the official added.

U.S. President Donald 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.

In his newest move against Iran, the Trump administration on April 22 announced an end to sanctions waivers on Iran's oil export, saying any country that buys oil from Iran will be subject to sanctions. It will go into force in early May.

Iran dismisses claims it is seeking talks with U.S.

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi on Saturday dismissed claims by foreign media outlets that Iran is seeking talks with the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, calling them "unfounded".

"There has been no request for talks with the U.S. and there is no negotiation with Saudi Arabia except for the issue of Hajj which is apart from political relations,"

Mousavi said.

Iran's policy towards neighboring countries is based on good neighborliness and mutual respect, he noted. "All the neighbors who consider realities and the international developments are prioritized in productive relations."

The ministry spokesman added, "From the point of view of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Saudi Arabia is an

Iranian maritime fleet listed on IMO whitelist

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran's maritime fleet has been placed on white list of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), thanks to the set of measures the country has taken to preserve and enhance maritime safety, according to the managing director of Iran's Port and Maritime Organization (PMO).

The PMO's official website on Saturday quoted Mohammad Rastad as saying that one of the measures leading to the promotion of maritime safety is preparation of hydrographic maps of the ports and dredging.

"One of the other tasks to increase maritime safety, which has been done by

the Ports and Maritime Organization, is the establishment of navigational assistance symbols in ports and waterways," Rastad said.

"Creating a naval rescue fleet is another step taken to ensure maritime safety," he said, adding, "According to the Marine Search and Rescue Operations Scheme, the Ports Organization Fleet will be stationed in different parts of the northern and southern coasts and the marine search and rescue coordination centers are required to plan and act in response to emergency situations at sea."

"To ensure the safety of sailing, continuous technical inspections and safety of ships and

vessels are on the agenda of the Ports and Maritime Organization," he added.

"One of the tasks of the organization's inspection and control officers is to ensure that the vessels that enter the ports of the country have the necessary safety standards and, prevent them to enter if the ship or flotation does not meet the required standards," Rastad stated.

He went on to say that the measures taken by the PMO to maintain and enhance maritime safety have led Iran to stand among the world's top countries in terms of standard and fleet safety.

"The issue of safety at sea is very



important, and if ships lack the necessary standards for maritime safety, they naturally endanger the lives of people."

U.S., Europe targeting Syria with ‘economic terrorism’: Syria’s UN envoy

TEHRAN — Syria’s UN envoy Bashar al-Ja’afari has slammed the United States and the European Union for waging “economic terrorism” by imposing sanctions against the war-wracked country.

“This is economic terrorism that is escalating through unilateral economic measures,” Ja’afari said in a press conference in Kazakhstan’s capital Nur-Sultan, previously known as Astana.

The Syrian envoy added that the unilateral sanctions were illegitimate given that they were not issued by the UN Security Council< Press TV reported.

Ja’afari said that the sanctions were on par with the “diplomatic and political terrorism” carried out by the West against the Arab country.

The U.S. and its Western and regional allies stand accused of supporting a foreign-backed terrorism against the country which led to the killing of hundreds of thousands in the Arab country.

The U.S. and the European Union also imposed draconian sanctions against the country during the years-long conflict, targeting Syrian oil imports, trade and financial institutions.

The Syrian people, who withstood an eight-year-long foreign-backed terrorist onslaught, are now bearing the brunt of the West’s oil embargo.

The sanctions has halted the post-war



construction, and sparked widespread fuel shortages, bringing life to a standstill in Syria’s cities. The government has now tried to manage the crisis by rationing cooking gas and vehicle fuel distribution.

The EU voted last May in favor of extending the bans until June 1, 2019.

Seeking to counter Western measures hampering post-war reconstruction in the country, Damascus has greatly expanded its economic ties with Tehran and Moscow.

Earlier this year, Iran and Syria signed 11

agreements, including a “long-term strategic economic cooperation” deal, in what observers have described to be as a sign of changing realities in the Middle East.

■ Turkish Occupation of Syria

Speaking on Friday, the UN envoy also slammed Turkey for its occupation of Syrian territory.

“Today the Turkish authorities occupy six thousand square kilometers of Syrian territory in Afrin and other cities, as well as Idlib,” he said.

Ja’afari also said that Turkey was illegally

imposing its own curriculum in schools and building a 70 km long wall near Syria’s northern city of Manbij, separating Turkey-occupied Syria from Aleppo.

Speaking about the implementation of a demilitarization zone agreement in Syria’s Idlib province signed between Turkey and Russia last year, Ja’afari also condemned Ankara for failing to implement what it had agreed to.

“The Sochi agreement clearly stipulated that Turkey’s side was committed to the withdrawal of the terrorists groups to a behind a buffer of 20km,” he said.

Many terrorist groups have remained in the demilitarization zone despite the agreement.

Ja’afari made the comments as delegations from Iran, Russia and Turkey were in the Kazakh capital Nur-Sultan on Thursday for a two-day summit seeking an end to the eight-year conflict in Syria.

The UN envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen, also participated in the talks.

The talks, which are collectively referred to as the Astana peace process, have so far helped significantly reduce violence gripping the Arab country by establishing four de-escalation zones there. They have also paved the way for the formation of a Constitutional Committee.

Forming a constitutional committee is key to political reforms and new elections meant to unify Syria and end the conflict.

Trump heeds NRA, says he’s pulling U.S. out of Arms Trade Treaty

TEHRAN — U.S. President Donald Trump announced on Friday at the National Rifle Association’s (NRA) annual meeting that the United States will drop out of an international arms treaty signed in 2013 by then-President Barack Obama but opposed by the NRA and other conservative groups.

Trump told members of the gun lobby that he intends to revoke the status of the U.S. as a signatory of the Arms Trade Treaty, which was never ratified by the U.S. Senate.

“We’re taking our signature back,” Trump said to thousands of cheering attendees, many wearing red hats emblazoned with the Republican president’s “Make America Great Again” slogan.

The NRA has long opposed the treaty which regulates

the \$70bn business in conventional arms and seeks to keep weapons out of the hands of human rights abusers. The lobbying group argues it would undermine domestic gun rights, a view the Obama administration rejected.

Trump added that the United Nations will soon receive formal notice of the withdrawal.

The 193-nation UN General Assembly overwhelmingly approved the treaty in April 2013 and the U.S., the world’s top arms exporter, voted in favour of it despite fierce opposition from the NRA.

■ ‘Re-open the floodgates’

Trump’s action drew an immediate rebuke from some

international human rights groups.

“The United States will now lock arms with Iran, North Korea and Syria as non-signatories to this historic treaty whose sole purpose is to protect innocent people from deadly weapons,” said Oxfam America President Abby Maxman.

Adotei Akwei, of Amnesty International USA, said in a statement, “With this announcement the Trump administration will re-open the floodgates for arms sales with weakened human rights criteria.”

So far, 101 countries have formally joined onto the treaty. Another 29, including the U.S., have signed it, but not yet formally joined.

Israeli forces injure 60 Gazans, 15 of them children

TEHRAN — Israeli forces have attacked Palestinians protesting in the Gaza Strip near the fence between the besieged Palestinian enclave and the Israeli-occupied territories, leaving at least 60 people injured.

Ashraf al-Qedra, the spokesman for the Gaza Health Ministry, said that Israeli forces injured 60 Palestinians, including four

women and 15 children, during the protests in Gaza on Friday.

A paramedic and a journalist were also among those injured during the latest protests< Press TV reported.

Since March 30 last year, the Palestinians in Gaza have been holding weekly rallies to demand the right to return for those driven

out of their homeland by Israeli aggression and an end to the siege on the enclave. More than 270 Palestinians have been killed since then, and over 16,000 have been injured.

A United Nations (UN) fact-finding mission found earlier that Israeli forces committed rights violations during their crackdown against the Palestinian protesters in Gaza

that may amount to war crimes.

Gaza has been under Israeli siege since June 2007, which has caused a decline in living standards. Israel has launched three major wars against the enclave, killing thousands of Gazans each time and shattering the impoverished territory’s already poor infrastructure.

Russia says al-Qaeda, Daesh, similar groups emerging in Latin America

TEHRAN — Russia’s military intelligence chief says such terrorist groups as al-Qaeda and Daesh are establishing a foothold in Latin America to recruit members for their activities in the Middle East and North Africa, where they have been mainly based.

Igor Kostyukov, the head of the Russian military intelligence agency GRU, said that terrorist “training camps and harbors” were “new risk factors” emerging in Latin America, Russia’s TASS news agency reported.

Kostyukov was speaking at the 8th Moscow Conference on International Security, an international defense forum gathering defense ministers and experts from various countries.

According to Press TV, he said the terrorist groups were seeking to infiltrate the six million Muslims living in Latin America.

The terrorist groups “are recruiting militants to fill their



ranks in the Middle East and North Africa,” and “gathering the funds needed for that,” he said.

Extremist activity has been rare in Latin America so far. In a singular case last year, Brazilian prosecutors announced charges against 11 people for promoting Daesh through social media and recruiting militants to send to Syria.

Daesh overran large swaths of Syria and Iraq in offensives beginning in 2014. The group was, however, militarily defeated by the governments of the two Middle Eastern countries in the course of some four years.

Many of its members, including recruits from all across the world, were killed in the anti-terror operations, which were assisted by regional countries.

The group has largely shrunk as a result of that defeat, but it has sought to regroup in other regions, including Afghanistan, Southeast Asia, and Africa.

Al-Qaeda has been relatively less active since the death of its leader, Osama bin Laden, in 2011.

Yellow Vests take to the streets in rejection of Macron’s ‘rubbish’ olive branch

Unrelenting Yellow Vest activists have marched in Paris and other French cities for the 24th straight weekend, just days after Emmanuel Macron tried to placate the protest movement with promises of lower taxes.

The demonstrators who assembled in Paris, Toulouse and Strasbourg on Saturday appear to signal that despite the French president’s recent concessions to the group, the Yellow Vest movement is

alive and well.

Oh Thursday, Macron held the first major press conference of his two-year presidency, in which he announced that he wanted to implement “significant” income tax cuts. The televised conference, however, was not well received among those who have turned out week after week to demonstrate against Macron’s business-friendly austerity measures.

(Source: RT)

Terrorist groups kill 17 Syrian government troops in Aleppo

TEHRAN — Reports say at least 17 Syrian government forces have been killed in attacks by foreign-backed terrorists in northern Aleppo province.

The attacks were launched shortly after midnight on Saturday by two al-Qaeda-linked terror groups, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and Hurras al-Deen, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported.

Thirty other Syrian soldiers were in-

jured. The attacks were repelled and several terrorists killed after Russian aircraft pounded their positions in the area, Press TV reported.

The terrorist attacks were in violation of a previously agreed buffer zone, which separated Syrian government troops from the Takfiri terrorists. Under the agreement, which was signed between Russia and Turkey last year, Takfiri groups had to withdraw from the area.

can we counter such acute challenges amidst a global economic slowdown and gaps between countries in terms of well-being and technology,” Putin added.

The Russian head of state noted that the Belt and Road Initiative shared many similarities with Russia’s idea of a Eurasian partnership. The BRI would also strengthen cooperation and provide harmonious development in Eurasia, Putin told other leaders in attendance, adding, “these goals bring us together here in Beijing.”

■ BRI brings growth to Eurasia: Putin

Addressing the forum, Putin also called for a global response against protectionism, unilateral sanctions and “trade wars” in a veiled denunciation of the United States.

“The rise of protectionism in its most dangerous form, which at the present time is often used illegitimately as unilateral restrictions to bypass the UN Security Council, or worst of all, trade wars,” he said.

“We think that only when we are united

Yemeni forces fire 17 retaliatory missiles at Saudi Arabia’s Asir



TEHRAN — Yemeni forces and allied fighters from Popular Committees have fired 17 missiles at Saudi Arabia’s southwestern Asir region in retaliation for the Saudi war on the impoverished Arab nation.

A military source told the website of Yemen’s Houthi Ansarullah movement on Friday that 15 domestically-manufactured Zelzal-1 (Earthquake-1) ballistic missiles had hit the gatherings of Saudi-led mercenaries in the Alab border crossing, killing and injuring dozens.

The Yemeni forces also fired artillery shells at the crossing and managed to foil an infiltration attempt by Saudi-led forces from the same area, the source added.

He further noted that the Yemeni troops had fired two more Zelzal-1 missiles at the gatherings of Saudi-led mercenaries in Asir’s al-Majardah district, causing casualties.

According to Press TV, Saudi Arabia and its allies launched the war against Yemen in March 2015 in an attempt to reinstall the Riyadh-allied former regime and crush Houthis.

The invaders have, however, failed to achieve their objectives in the face of the Yemeni resistance.

The Houthi fighters, backed by Yemeni armed forces, have been defending the country against the Saudi aggression.

The Western-backed war on Yemen, coupled with a naval blockade, has destroyed the country’s infrastructure and led to a humanitarian crisis.

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

Yemeni fighters regularly target positions inside Saudi Arabia in retaliatory attacks against the protracted Saudi offensive on the import-dependent state.

Saudi men executed confessed under duress

1 → “Those aren’t my words,” said al-Adam. “I didn’t write a letter. This is a defamation written by the interrogator with his own hand.”

Mujtaba al-Sweikat, who was 17 at the time of his arrest in 2012, had only twice participated in the protests and only for five minutes each time, argued his father, Nader al-Sweikat, in court.

“He was subjected to psychological and physical abuse which drained his strength,” Nader al-Sweikat said, according to court documents.

“The interrogator dictated the confession to Sweikat and forced him to sign it so that the torture would stop. He signed it.”

According to Al Jazeera, Sweikat was preparing to travel to the United States where he had been admitted to the Western Michigan University when he was stopped at the airport and put in solitary confinement for 90 days.

Court documents said al-Sweikat had confessed to throwing petrol bombs at security personnel and organizing demonstrations through a chat group on his Blackberry smartphone.

The state executions came a day after the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL or ISIS) said it was behind an attack on Sunday on a Saudi security building in the town of Zulfi. In that attack, all four gunmen were killed and three security officers were wounded.

At least one of the men’s bodies was publicly hung from a pole for several hours in a process that is not frequently used by the kingdom and has sparked controversy for its grisly display.

On Friday, the U.S. government commission on religious freedom urged action against Saudi Arabia after it emerged that Abdulkarim al-Hawaj, one of the 37 men executed, was only 16 when he was charged.

The UN human rights chief had a few days earlier condemned the mass executions as “particularly abhorrent” in that “at least three of those killed were minors at the time of their sentencing”.

New York-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) said at least 33 of the 37 men put to death were Shia, describing the event as “the largest mass executions of Shia in the history of Saudi Arabia since the 1900s”.

According to a count based on official data released by the official SPA news agency, at least 100 people have been executed in Saudi Arabia since the beginning of the year.

Last year, the oil-rich Persian Gulf state carried out the death sentences of 149 people, according to Amnesty International.

Russia and Syria are not planning assault on Idlib for now: Putin

1 → Moscow is keen to help Assad retake territory, including eventually Idlib province, but Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has argued against a Russian-backed offensive in a region that borders his own country.

Ankara is concerned about potential refugee flows from Idlib in the event of a military operation, and wants to retain its influence there.

TEHRAN — Chinese President Xi Jinping and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin have called on world leaders to reject protectionist U.S. policies and join the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Speaking on the final day of the BRI summit in Beijing Saturday, Xi pleaded with leaders of 37 nations from Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America “to build an open world economy and reject protectionism.”

His remarks were an apparent jab at U.S. President Donald Trump who has launched

trade wars against China and several other countries. Xi’s signature foreign policy intends to reinvent the ancient Silk Road to connect Asia to Europe and Africa through massive investments in maritime, road and rail projects -- with hundreds of billions of dollars in financing from Chinese banks.

“We need to encourage the full participation of more countries and companies, thus expanding the pie of common interests,” he further told the leaders who attended the three-day event.

Xi, Putin urge world leaders to reject U.S. protectionism

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	205287.6
IFX	2519.62

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,880 rials
GBP	54,250 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$71.63/b
WTI	\$63.30/b
OPEC Basket	\$69.10/b
Gold	\$1,287.30/oz
Silver	\$15.13/oz
Platinum	\$902.70/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

ICCIMA to host Iran-Syria business forum on Wednesday

1 → A trade delegation from Syria visited Iran in March to attend a business forum which was held at Iran Chamber of Cooperatives and also to hold talks with Iranian private sector.

Iran and Syria have been exchanging numerous trade delegations in the past few months and Iranian private companies are already investing in different areas like providing construction materials especially cement and working on several reconstruction projects in Syria.

In August 2018, a delegation comprised of Iranian economic experts traveled to Syria to explore investment opportunities and finalize the reconstruction plans of the war-stricken country.

Also in January, the 14th preparatory meeting of Iran-Syria high joint technical committee of economic cooperation was held at Damascus.

Tehran, Moscow explore expansion of economic ties

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — In a meeting held in Moscow on Friday, Iran's Ambassador to Russia Mehdi Sanaei and Russia's Deputy Industry and Trade Minister Georgy Kalamanov discussed the ways for the expansion of economic collaboration between the two countries.



Iran's Ambassador to Russia Mehdi Sanaei (R) met Russia's Deputy Industry and Trade Minister Georgy Kalamanov in Moscow.

During the meeting held in Moscow, the two sides explored the avenues for broadening the scale of the cooperation between Iranian and Russian companies based on a roadmap focusing on industrial and mining sectors, Mehr news agency reported.

The officials also discussed collaboration in other fields, including the auto, railroad and airplane manufacturing sectors, as well as issues on the joint cooperation commission which is slated to be held in June.

The U.S.' withdrawal from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal was also discussed during the meeting. Reportedly, since Washington pulled out of the deal last year, the cooperation between Iran and Russia has increased.

UK markets vulnerable to any BOE hawkish surprise this week

Investors in the UK are underpricing the prospect of the Bank of England sounding more hawkish this week, Bloomberg reported.

While the BOE is seen holding rates at its policy decision Thursday, low unemployment and the UK's Brexit extension may prompt one or more officials to vote for an increase, according to some strategists. With money markets not pricing in any hike until 2021, such a move could boost the pound and further pressure benchmark gilts as they head for a monthly loss.

"There's a prospect of a hawkish tone -- they will obviously still be focused on the Brexit uncertainty and political risks, but they won't ignore the strength of labor-market and retail-sales data," said John Wraith, head of UK rates at UBS Group AG. "They won't convince the market a hike is imminent, but I think they would like more balanced two-way risk priced into the front end."

Both UK government bonds and the pound have been trapped in a range by the lack of progress on Brexit in recent months, even after Britain's departure from the European Union was delayed until October. As Prime Minister Theresa May is unlikely to put her withdrawal deal to a vote in Parliament next week due to insufficient support, it could be down to the central bank to provide impetus to a market that's grown weary of the political deadlock.

The pound traded at \$1.2930 as of 4:30 p.m. London time Friday, close to a two-month low touched Thursday. The yield on 10-year gilts has risen about 14 basis points from 1 percent at the end of March.

With the Brexit reckoning postponed, there is a chance that the BOE's Monetary Policy Committee will raise its key interest rate from 0.75 percent in August, according to Nomura International Plc. Six out of 24 economists in a Bloomberg survey expect at least one MPC member will call for an immediate tightening when the central bank announces its decision at noon Thursday in London, when it also releases its latest economic projections.

Iran Fara Bourse's index rises 8%

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — IFX, the main index of Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market, known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), has risen eight percent since the beginning of current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2019), IRNA reported.

Based on the already released reports and data, Iran's exchange markets witnessed fruitful performances and results in the past Iranian calendar year.

As reported, IFX touched a new record high in the past year, as it gained more than 100% to stand at 2,258 points on March 19, 2019.

The number and worth of trades at

IFB increased 89 percent and 71 percent, respectively, in the past year compared to its preceding year.

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

Meanwhile, as Shapour Mohammadi, the head of Iran's Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO), has previously

Turkey defies U.S. demand for cutting ties with Iran

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Turkey is in cooperation with Iran working on a mechanism to keep the trade between the two sides afloat amid increasing U.S. pressures on Iran's trade partners to cut ties, Bloomberg reported.

According to Turkey's Foreign Ministry spokesman Hami Aksoy, the two sides' trade ministries are working on a mechanism to avert U.S. sanctions designed to halt trade with Iran as Turkey negotiates with the U.S. over recently tightened sanctions on Iranian oil.

"We keep saying that Iran sanctions are



hurting cooperation and people of the region, they also hurt our commercial ties. We told the U.S. that we don't find the sanctions to be



announced the value of trades at Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) and IFB rose 80 percent during the past year.

Making the remarks in the inaugural ceremony of 12th International Exhibition of Exchange, Banks and Insurance of Iran

(IRAN FINEX 2019), which was held at Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds last week, the official referred to 80 percent growth of financing in the country's capital market during the past year, and noted that it indicates the good status of this market.

Over \$547m worth of commodities traded at IME in a week

ECONOMY **TEHRAN**— During weekdays ending up to April 25, approximately, 351,034 million tons (MT) of commodities worth over \$547.6 million were traded on Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME).

According to the report from IME International Affairs and Public Relations Department, last week, on the domestic and export metal and mineral trading floor of IME, 124,147 MT of various products worth close to \$222.3 million were traded.

On this trading floor, 106,820 MT of steel, 9,575 MT of copper, 2,000 MT of aluminum, 120 MT of molybdenum concentrates, 12 MT of precious metal concentrates, 5,000

MT of iron ore concentrates and 620 MT of zinc ingot were traded by customers.

The report declares that on domestic and export oil and petrochemical trading floors of IME, 235,727 MT of different commodities with the total value of \$334.6 million were traded.

On this trading floor, 80,500 MT of VB feed stock, 47,037 MT of bitumen, 77,610 MT of polymer products, 30,471 MT of chemical products, 640 MT of sulfur and 410 MT of insulation were traded.

Furthermore, 1,160 MT of various commodities were traded on the side market of IME.



China, U.S. face off on Iranian crude flows, with risks to global economy

China and the U.S. are in an intense standoff over Iranian crude oil, with China indicating they may continue to import those medium and heavy barrels even after a sanctions waiver expires next week and the U.S. threatening potentially severe consequences if they do.

"Really, we're now in a pretty serious poker game," S&P Global Platts quoted Richard Nephew, the principal deputy coordinator for sanctions policy at the U.S. State Department during the Obama administration as saying.

"It's a game of chicken, where neither side is prepared to fully concede, but each recognizes mutual interest in avoiding a collision," said Suzanne Maloney, deputy director of the Foreign Policy program at the Brookings Institution.

Beijing has called its oil trade with Iran lawful, formally criticizing the Trump administration's decision to allow waivers, known as significant reduction exceptions, to expire May 2 and indicating that oil flows may continue in spite of sanctions.

The Trump administration has publicly given little indication that it will allow China to import any Iranian crude, without facing full sanctions enforcement.

"What we are saying to countries is that they have a choice," Brian Hook, the U.S. State Department's special representative for Iran, said in a call with reporters Thursday. "They can either do business with the United States and with the global financial system, or they can import Iranian crude oil -- but they can't do both."

But analysts said it remains unclear if the U.S. is willing to fully enforce sanctions against potential flows of crude between Iran and China, knowing the impact that sanctions on a major Chinese bank, for example, might have on the global financial system.

"If China flagrantly violated the sanctions, the United States will have to respond or risk a substantial loss in credibility," said Elizabeth Rosenberg, director of the energy program at the Center for a New American Security and a former senior sanctions adviser at the Department of the Treasury.

If China does import Iranian barrels after its waiver expires next week, the U.S. could sanction any person or entity in the value chain, including the bank that processed the transaction, refineries, ship operators, insurers, flagging authorities and more.

But such comprehensive imposition of sanctions could have far-reaching impacts, Rosenberg said.

"The United States has to ask itself whether it wants to engage in a major economic ambush of the global economy announcing that kind of designation which will have spillover effects everywhere in the world, including in the United States, that are very significant," she said.

Second Announcement

IN THE NAME OF GOD
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING
INTERNATIONAL TENDER NO. 98-02/102

Tender Holder:
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING (IRIB)

Subject of Two-Stage Tender:
IRIB 9DAY Infrastructure Equipment for Project of SD to HD according to the tender documents

Deadline of Receiving Documents:
As of publishing second announcement of advertisement latest by the business hour dated on **Wednesday May 01, 2019.**

Place of Receiving Documents:
Secretariat of Tenders' Commission, Technical Purchasing (KALA) Dept., Media Technology and Development Deputy Office, Bldg. No. 2, IRIB, Jam-e Jam St., Vali-e Asr Ave., Tehran

Type and Amount of Guarantee for Participating in Tender:
The amount of **USD 25,346** which should be in the form of extendable bank guarantee

Time and Place of Delivering Priced Bid:
The sealed A, B & C packages/envelopes should be submitted within one main envelope marked with tender number no later than **15 p.m. on Saturday June 01, 2019** and submitted to the Secretariat of Commission of Tenders.

Time and Place of Opening Envelopes
The date of opening envelopes A&B is at **8:30 a.m. on Monday June 03, 2019** in the office of Vice President of IRIB Planning and Financial Resources and opening of envelope C will be after technical evaluation.
It should be noted that bidders should hold license from the authorized bodies.

For more information, please contact the following phone numbers: **0098-21-22166313**
It is obvious that cost of publishing two advertisements shall be borne by the winner of tender.

Public Relations Dept. of IRIB

Top OPEC, Saudi officials didn't discuss lowering oil prices with Trump: report

ENERGY **d e s k** Neither Saudi Arabia's energy minister nor OPEC's secretary general discussed lowering oil prices with President Donald Trump, sources told the Wall Street Journal, denying the U.S. leader's earlier claim.

Moments after the Journal reported the denials, Trump took to Twitter to double down on his earlier remark, CNBC reported. "Spoke to Saudi Arabia and others about increasing oil flow. All are in agreement," the president tweeted.

Earlier on Friday, Trump told reporters he had "called up" OPEC and urged the producer group to take action to bring down fuel costs.

"I called up OPEC. I said, 'You've got to bring them down. You've got to bring them down,' and gasoline's coming down," Trump said, inaccurately stating that gasoline prices are falling.

Oil prices tumbled more than 4 percent following Trump's comment.



When the president made the remarks, it was not clear whether Trump meant that

he had contacted the OPEC Secretariat in Vienna, or whether he was referring

to OPEC members like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which are close U.S. allies.

But as the day wore on, it remained unclear who was on the other line with Trump. The White House did not return requests for clarification.

OPEC Secretary General Mohammed Barkindo did not discuss the matter with Trump, and neither did Saudi Energy Minister Khalid al-Falih, sources familiar with the situation told the Journal.

Saudi officials told the Journal Trump did not speak with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The discussion did not involve Venezuelan Oil Minister Manuel Quevedo, who currently holds OPEC's rotating presidency, one of the country's oil officials told the paper.

OPEC could not immediately be reached by CNBC for comment. The Saudi Embassy did not immediately return a request for comment.

Iran will find ways to sell its oil in the market: Pakistani expert



ENERGY **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Pakistani Energy expert and former director of operations for the World Bank Moazzam Ziad Alahdad said U.S. sanctions cannot stop Iran from doing business with the world and the Islamic republic will definitely find a way to maintain its oil exports.

Speaking with IRNA on Sunday, Alahdad noted that U.S. sanctions on Iran will have a significant impact on the oil prices.

"But short answer, such decision will affect the oil market but in the long run we would see what will happen," he said.

The expert believed that as neighbors, Iran and Pakistan should expand economic cooperation to the maximum possible levels.

"We are neighbors, we have many complementary interests and we can increase trade to a much greater level and that what we should focus on," former WB director said.

He said Pakistan should complete gas pipeline project with Iran because Pakistan has not built its own infrastructure to use the gas which is available inside the country to overcome energy crisis.

The expert was of the view that it is very important for the Pakistani economy to be able to get its energy from where it can and of course at reasonable and viable prices and IP gas project is one such option.

The analyst hoped Iran could become part of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project. "Gwadar is very near to Iran and Chabahar and Gwadar ports can complement each other and they can work with each other," he said.

The United States last Monday announced that it will not renew exemptions granted last year to buyers of Iranian oil, asking them to stop purchases by May 1 or face sanctions, a move to choke off Tehran's oil revenues.

Russia identifies source of oil contamination as crisis wanes



ENERGY **d e s k** Russia identified the source of chemical contamination that shut down a major oil pipeline to Europe, blaming a private storage terminal in the center of the country for the problem.

"We can say for sure that the organic chlorides were fed into the pipeline through a control point run by privately-held Samartransneft Terminal," Bloomberg cited Russia's state-run crude pipeline operator Transneft PJSC as saying in a statement on Friday.

The terminal accepts oil from a number of smaller independent producers and is obliged to check quality of the crude, it said.

Russian authorities have initiated a criminal case and the first results of the investigation show the contamination was not accidental, the pipeline operator said without elaborating.

Transneft's statement comes as Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Poland agreed on a potential technical solution that could allow producers to resume shipments through the Druzhba line, at least via the southern branch

of the pipe through Ukraine, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic from early May.

The fix is still under review, but if successful it would reduce the risk of Russian crude shortages in Eastern Europe, just as global markets take a hit from restricted supplies out of Iran, Venezuela and Canada.

The Druzhba pipeline built in the Soviet era starts in central Russia and divides into two sections in Belarus. While the northern section goes to Poland and links up to the German pipeline system, the southern section supplies refineries in Ukraine, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic.

Refineries in some of the Eastern European countries stopped imports of Russian oil through the Druzhba pipeline this week after identifying high levels of organic chlorides in the batches.

Organic chlorides are not naturally occurring and "must be removed before bringing crude parcels to market" as they can cause severe corrosion of refinery equipment, said Amrita Sen, chief oil analyst at consultant Energy Aspects Ltd.

Oil bulls on longest run in 13 years as Trump demands price cut

Oil is on its longest bull run in 13 years, fueling a rally that has U.S. President Donald Trump fretting about higher prices, Bloomberg reported.

Hedge funds have increased bullish sentiment on U.S. crude prices for the last nine weeks, the longest such run since 2006, according to data released Friday. Almost 14 times as many bets have been placed on prices going up as on a decline, as investors see supply threats multiplying around the globe.

Gasoline prices have risen in tandem this

year, and Trump on Friday said that he has pressured OPEC to boost output to reverse the trend. That helped stall a rally that drove oil to a six-month high, partly due to tightened U.S. sanctions against Iran. But the ebullient tilt in speculative wagers suggested a correction was likely no matter what, said Phil Flynn of Price Futures Group Inc.

"The market is so bulled up right now," said Flynn, a senior market analyst. "There's been a lot of hedge fund buying, a lot of speculative interest, and we probably need to hit

the pause button for now."

West Texas Intermediate crude sank 2.9 percent to \$63.30 on Friday, capping its first weekly loss in two months. Brent, the international benchmark price, lost 3 percent.

The net-long WTI position -- the difference between bets on higher prices and wagers on a drop -- rose 3.6 percent to 314,387 futures and options contracts in the week ending April 23, the U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission said. Long positions edged up 1.7 percent, while shorts declined 18 percent.



Iraq's oil boom could be derailed by a lack of water

Iraq's oil boom could be in trouble because of a shortage of water it needs to keep the wells pumping.

According to a CNN report, oil output has doubled over the past decade, putting the country on track to overtake Canada as the world's fourth largest producer by 2030, the International Energy Agency said in a report on Thursday.

That would leave it trailing only the United States, Saudi Arabia and Russia.

But Iraq's oil growth may stall if it fails to find new sources of water, the global energy watchdog warned.

"Without it, production rates could struggle to climb much beyond their current levels," the IEA said in its report.

Years of war, violence and instability have battered the country's infrastructure. Yet the oil industry has enjoyed a resurgence in recent years, and big Western companies such as Exxon (XOM), BP (BP) and ENI (E) have invested in developing oil fields.

Over the last decade, Iraq has accounted for 20 percent of the growth in global oil supply. Production has recovered from 2.3 million barrels a day in 2009 to around 4.7 million currently. That number could rise to 6 million by 2030 if Iraq can solve its water crisis.



"To reach the projected production levels, Iraq would need an additional 3 million barrels a day of water for injection into reservoirs," the IEA said.

The industry already uses 5 million barrels of water a day to ensure there's enough pressure in the underground reservoirs to extract the oil. It needs as much as 1.5 barrels of water for every barrel of oil.

But Iraq relies on imports from neighboring countries for 70 percent of the water it consumes. River levels have

fallen by up to 40 percent in the last 20 years.

"The quality of the water available is also deteriorating, placing further constraints on available ground and surface water supply," the IEA said. "Reduced river flows have allowed seawater to encroach upstream, increasing the salinity of the freshwater."

Some operations at power plants and the country's largest oil refinery were scaled back in 2018 because "salt levels in water were four-times higher than operable limits," it added.

Iraq has a plan to process seawater from the Persian Gulf and transport it to the largest oil fields in the south of the country, but the project has faced several delays. A contract is now expected to be signed in 2019. The first phase could be completed in three years and transport 5 million barrels of water a day.

"It is critical for the oil industry to ensure the effective and efficient management of water, including making much better use of recycling and reusing produced water," the IEA said.

A lack of water is not the only challenge Iraq needs to overcome. Future oil growth will depend on its ability to attract investment and maintain political stability, as well as global demand, it added.

NIDC digs 7 oil wells in a month

ENERGY **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) dug seven oil wells during the first month of current Iranian calendar year (March 21-April 20, 2019), Mohammad Al-e Khamis, the acting deputy managing director of NIDC for drilling operation, announced.

The official said that over 14,466 meters of digging has been conducted for the mentioned wells, Shana news agency reported.

As Al-e Khamis previously announced, NIDC dug and completed digging operation of 123 oil and gas wells during the 11-month period from March 21, 2018 to February 19, 2019.



He said that over 173,386 meters of digging has been conducted for the mentioned onshore and offshore wells during the mentioned time span.

NIDC, a subsidiary of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), undertakes most drilling operations across the country and drilled 4,489 onshore and offshore oil and gas wells in nearly 40 years.

Russia's Putin says it is unlikely OPEC will quit oil cut deal

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Saturday that he has not heard any signals from members of OPEC (the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) about possibly leaving the deal on curbing oil output, adding this was unlikely.

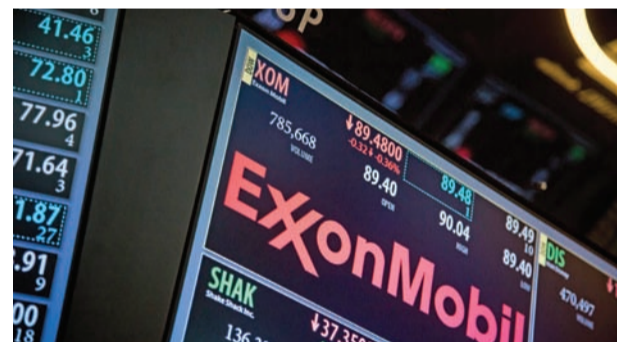
According to a report by Reuters, Putin told a press briefing that the deal is effective until the end of June and that he hoped Saudi Arabia, the OPEC kingpin, will not have to raise its oil production to offset possible exports curbs from Iran due to the U.S. sanctions.

Exxon, Chevron earnings slump on weak refining margins

U.S. supermajors ExxonMobil and Chevron reported on Friday lower Q1 earnings compared to a year ago, with profits squeezed by weak refining margins and volatile oil prices and Exxon badly missing on both earnings and revenues.

Both supermajors, however, reported higher upstream production, driven by increased production at the Permian—the key growth region for both companies, Reuters reported.

Exxon posted earnings of \$2.4 billion for the first quarter of 2019, or \$0.55 per share assuming dilution—down by 50 percent compared to the first quarter of 2018 and down 61 percent from Q4 2018.



The \$0.55 per share earnings fell well below the analyst estimate of \$0.70 earnings per share by the Wall Street Journal.

Exxon's upstream liquids production increased by 5 percent compared with the first quarter of 2018, driven by a nearly 140-percent jump in Permian unconventional growth.

However, downstream operations were hit by heavier refinery maintenance and "weak industry fuels margins from high gasoline inventory levels and narrowed North American crude differentials," said Exxon, whose global downstream operations swung to a loss of \$256 million from a \$940-million profit in Q1 2018.

"Solid operating performance in the first quarter helped mitigate the impact of challenging Downstream and Chemical margin environments," said Darren W. Woods, chairman and chief executive officer.

Earnings at Chevron also dropped due to weaker oil prices and weak refining and chemicals margins, but Chevron's profit beat—albeit slightly—analyst estimates.

Chevron reported earnings of \$2.6 billion, or \$1.39 per share, for Q1 2019—down from \$3.6 billion, or \$1.90 per share in the first quarter of 2018—but still above the analyst estimate of \$1.30 per share.

Chevron's upstream production volumes increased by 7 percent annually, mostly due to the Permian and Wheatstone in Australia.

"First quarter earnings declined from a year ago, largely due to lower crude oil prices and weaker downstream and chemicals margins," Chevron's chairman and CEO Michael Wirth said.

After the release of the results, Exxon's shares were down 2.85 percent while Chevron was down 1.52 percent at 2:01pm EDT on the NYSE on Friday.

Brazil's Petrobras to sell 8 refineries, gas station chain-filing

Brazil's state-controlled oil company Petrobras said on Friday its board had approved a plan to sell eight refineries in Brazil, including its large, recently built Abreu e Lima unit, according to a securities filing.

As reported by Reuters, Petrobras, or Petroleo Brasileiro SA, said that among the other refineries to be put up for sale are the Gabriel Passos, Getúlio Vargas and Alberto Pasqualini units.

The company also said it will sell a gas station chain in Uruguay and an additional stake in Brazil's No. 1 fuel distribution company BR Distribuidora SA.

Khan's Iran visit significant on many counts

1 → Before taking over as the premier of Pakistan, Khan repeatedly asserted that good relations with neighboring countries are in the best interests of Pakistan. He rose to power on the slogan of 'Naya Pakistan' (New Pakistan).

But, after assuming charge, he has been battling problems on multiple fronts, at domestic and international level. Many economic and security problems have engulfed him in recent months that has compelled him to change his core team. Beside, tensions with India, uncertainty in Afghanistan and constant sabre-rattling of U.S. have dominated his nine months in power.

Khan is visiting Iran at a time when the border they share has become prone to infiltration by terrorists and border regions have become safe havens of notorious terrorist groups. It has got both these friendly Muslim countries concerned about the security of their borders.

Only three days before Khan's visit to Iran, at least 14 members of Pakistan's security forces were killed in Balochistan province of Pakistan. It is clear that the attack was carried out by those who are not in favor of stronger Iran-Pakistan ties.

But Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi stirred the hornet's nest saying that the terrorist outfits that carried out the attack have "training and logistic camps inside Iranian areas bordering Pakistan". In such a situation, both countries should prioritize security and that was the main agenda of this visit, according to sources.

It is an undeniable fact that the enemies of Pakistan and Iran have always tried to disrupt relations between them. Both countries have geostrategic interests and other countries feel threatened by that.

Pakistan believes that cordial ties with Iran are important for regional economic prosperity and security. Closer cooperation between them is a source of strength and stability not only for the two counties but also for the region.

Khan also had a brief meeting with Sayyed Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of Iran, in which the Leader indicated that the terrorist groups responsible for disturbing security on borders are backed by enemies' money and arms. The anti-security moves at the frontiers of Iran and Pakistan seek to hurt the friendly relations between the two countries, he emphasized.

So, at a time when the enemies are creating roadblocks for the two countries, it is an ideal time to focus on commonalities and bolster ties. In order to promote bilateral relations, it is necessary to identify the enemy and get rid of it.

Pakistan-Iran economic and political relationship would improve only if the measures are taken to ensure better border management in coming years. Both the countries' geo-strategic locations make them crucial for each other and for the region.

Pakistan and Iran also seem to have arrived at a common ground that a stable, independent, and economically resilient Afghanistan is important for peace and stability in the region.

There are many areas of cooperation between Iran and Pakistan and it is expected that during Khan's tenure, the two countries would make use of all opportunities to enhance bilateral ties. They have to be on the same page to tackle multiple challenges imperiling their relations and regional stability.

Writer is a student and researcher from Gilgit Pakistan, currently based in Tehran.

Tough job ahead for Ukraine's new president

Global Times — Incumbent Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko came to power after the 2014 Ukrainian Revolution. The Ukrainian people had great expectations from Poroshenko at that time. He made many promises during his campaign but failed to accomplish his goals in his tenure, in particular he has failed to solve the country's massive corruption problem and contradictions with Russia.

Moreover, the fighting between Ukrainian troops and pro-Russia forces in eastern Ukraine has killed some 13,000 people since the conflict began in 2014. Such being the case, the Ukrainian people have been very disappointed.

Ukraine's President-elect Volodymyr Zelensky plays an unwittingly elected president in a political satire comedy TV series Servant of the People. Based on his popularity on TV, the political newcomer won the election in a landslide. The dramatic result reflects the Ukrainian people's expectations for their country to bring about national stability and overcome corruption. If the country's problems were not so serious, the voters could have stuck with traditional politicians. Zelensky won more than 70 percent of the vote and this shows that the Ukrainian people couldn't wait any longer to change the current situation.

His celebrity branding helped Zelensky win, so it is hard to comment on his governing capacity right now. Ukraine's dilemma is structural, which cannot be simply resolved by some promises made during an election campaign.

But the Ukrainian people were too desperate to trust traditional politicians anymore. They had no other choice but to vote for Zelensky. Not long after the election result came out, some Russian officials including Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev congratulated Zelensky. The move signals that Moscow's hope to relieve tensions with Kiev, although there was almost no room left to salvage relations between the two sides during Poroshenko's tenure.

Russia's stance on the Crimea issue is hard-line. The Crimea issue and conflicts in eastern Ukraine will not necessarily be solved by a new Ukrainian president taking office, because Zelensky is not likely to make many concessions and neither will the Russians. However, the leadership change of Ukraine will give Moscow a chance to bring Kiev back to the negotiating table.

These contradictions do not just originate from the two countries themselves, they are partly an outcome of some Western countries trying to contain and weaken Russia by supporting Ukraine. If Russia-Ukraine tensions can be relieved, with some disputes restrained or partly resolved, then to some extent Russia could ease strains between it and the West. At present, it is hard to solve all the problems between Russia and Ukraine and restore their ties, as well as comprehensively ease tensions between Russia and the West.

If Russia-Ukraine relations cannot improve, there will be no big changes in the Russia-West standoff and regional security will continue to be a thorny issue. Whether Russia can accomplish its goal by taking advantage of Zelensky's lack of political experience depends on what the new Ukrainian president does as a counter measure. The two countries need to work together to overcome their long-existing problems. After all, opportunities have surged for them to ease the tensions.

Navvab Safavi's life should inspire the Muslim Brotherhood to revolution

By Damir Nazarov

WEST SIBERIA/ TYUMEN — The news about the deportation of a young Egyptian from Turkey to the junta of Egypt proved once again that Ankara uses easily various Islamic organizations for its own purposes, and when the time comes, it parts with them also easily. Turkey is difficult to blame for something as it just plays its role in American game. Turkey is a NATO member, but many Muslims tend to believe the media image according to which "Erdogan is a Muslim defender" and similar nonsense because of their political illiteracy and naivety.

As for Muhammad Abdul Hafiz Hussein's issue, the Egyptian Ikhwan are guilty themselves. They did not become a real revolutionary and political force in time, and now they have to exist on puppet terms in such countries as Turkey and Qatar. These pro-American countries were chosen by Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt as their main allies at the turn of 2011-2013 and they are forced now to serve the local governments of these countries. As the saying goes "blame yourself".

But not all Ikhwan believe Turkish tales. So the member of the Brotherhood, Kamal Al-Helbawi, pointed out a special role of Iran concerning the protection of Ummah from US and Zionist conspiracies. In February 2019, Kamal will write a very interesting article about the necessary progress in relations between Iran and the Muslim Brotherhood, where the martyr Navvab Safavi is presented as an example.

The example of a great revolutionary is not the only one in respect of cooperation between the parties, but it will always be a unique one, since the sacrifice in the name of justice and the spirit of revolution deserve a special attitude. Navvab Safavi was such a revolutionary.



In my opinion, the situation with Muhammad Hussein in Turkey and the words by Kamal Al-Helbawi about the role of Iran for Ummah are a direct hint from the Almighty concerning the path the young confrontationist Ikhwan should follow. That is, we mean those who are ready to rebel against the tyranny of Egypt and at the same time ignite the hearts of all Ummah Muslims who are held captive by the local dictators.

It is time to reconsider our alliances and adopt the Islamic revolutionary ideology. In this scenario, it will become clear that the Islamic Republic of Iran is the only ally for Ikhwan, and therefore it's time to revive the tradition of the revolutionary struggle by Navvab Safavi. By the way, it's a well-known fact that the Iranian revolutionary warned the Egyptian military under the leadership of

Nasser about the terrorization of the Muslim Brotherhood members and the head of the organization, Said Kutb.

Otherwise Safavi promised to lead the armed struggle against the dictatorship of Egypt personally. This fact is enough to realize the power of historical ties between the Islamic elite of Iran and the Egyptian Ikhwan. Accordingly, it is necessary to take an example from the past and try to implement the plans of Said Kutb and Navvab Safavi.

The Iranian example shows that the only way to unite the Ummah within national sovereignties is the Islamic revolution in each individual country. Ikhwan confrontationists need to take the example from the past and realize the realities in order to achieve victory in the future. The past is the strong ties between the leaders of Ikhwan

and Iran, the reality is in the fact that Iran is the only Islamic independent country in the region, and the most important thing in these temporary circumstances is that the factor of the Islamic revolution ideologists on the one hand and the thinkers of Islamic enlightenment played a key role in the collaboration which took place.

It is Islamic thinking, following the tradition of ijthihad through an intellectual approach from the revolutionary scientists of Iran and the progressive thinkers of Egypt, led to the conclusion that the liberation of the Ummah can take place only through the path of unification between Muslims. The bright scientists of the past (Asadabadi, Maududi, Said Nursi, Muhammad Bakir Al-Sadr and others) also discussed this idea. Islamic thinking develops the process of intellectual enlightenment according to which, the only way to establish the Islamic project is the path of revolution. This is necessary to understand by Ikhwan confrontationists and other Islamic forces of Egypt.

Over the past years, one can observe that the junta of Egypt tried to send positive signals about the "cooperation" with Iran. Thus, Iraq and the sphere of theology (Al-Azhar specifically) are used as communication channels. What is the junta for? Sisi and his entourage understand that the economic and social situation is deteriorating. Therefore, new unrest is not far off, which can be turned into a civil war instantly.

In this scenario, those Ikhwan who are ready for an armed struggle against military dictatorship will try to be supported by the IRGC. Such a scenario bothers the generals of Cairo. Hence the attempts to "flirt" with Tehran and prevent full-scale cooperation between the Islamic forces of Egypt and the IRGC.

Khuzestan Floods: Four days, two villages, one aim

By Imran Raza

TEHRAN — In southwestern province of Khuzestan, about six miles from the bustling city of Ahwaz, a middle-aged man sat cross-legged beside his small farm along the coast of River Karun.

The farm was devastated in recent deluge that hit the province and all crops were submerged in water. The man, lost in deep reverie, looked at his farm and seemed to be in a state of unfathomable grief.

I somehow mustered courage to sit beside him. He turned to me and asked: 'Khoobi' (How are you), I said: 'Man khoobam' (I am fine), looking directly into his eyes. I had never been in such a situation before and I struggled for words to console the grief-stricken man.

In my broken Farsi, our conversation picked up and he spoke about his ordeal. "I am here, looking at my farm taken away by water, asking God for His mercy," he said, and I didn't know how to respond.

After a brief pause, I looked at the river and asked: "So, has the water level receded after the floods, any relief now?" Without batting an eyelid, he said it has come an inch up, compounding their woes.

I could only imagine his distress and despondency. I didn't have any more questions to ask so I quietly walked away. I asked myself: should I have asked him these questions? Did my conversation help him?

It was my first day in Khuzestan as part of a group of student volunteers from the holy city of Qom — most of them belonging to Pakistan, India, Nigeria, Yemen and Afghanistan.

We were building a dam using sacks filled with soil and



stayed in Ahwaz for four days. We would go for relief and rehabilitation work to the city outskirts where people were battling floods and during those four days I had the opportunity to talk to many locals about their ordeal and loss. It was a life-changing experience for me.

On day one, we labored strenuously to place sacks of soil to build a dam but it was not as easy as we had thought. It was an uphill task as we discovered on day two.

When we woke up and rushed to resume work, we could see the sacks we had placed the day before were already immersed in water. The water level had increased.

During the lunch break I walked up to a local teacher who was helping us. His name was Azeez. I asked him myriad questions regarding floods and he answered patiently. He used his notebook, which had become wet, to explain things to me.

We went back to work only to find that another layer of

sacks was submerged in water. I could see frustration on Azeez's face as he gathered young men to help. A woman interrupted him. Most of their talk was in Arabic but I could understand that she didn't want her children to get involved in the work.

I asked Azeez why people weren't helping us. He said that the village had two flood-proof structures but they both broke and people lost all hope. Most of them abandoned the village but some stayed back.

Next day we worked in the village of Aluwai. Again, there was no land route leading to the village. We had to go there by motorboats. People used these motorboats to reach the nearest market to buy bread. Ironically, despite water everywhere, people craved for water to drink.

I could see volunteers there from different countries helping people affected by floods. I met volunteers from Lebanon, Syria and Bahrain as well. We spoke different languages but our objective was same.

All the volunteers and aid workers were focused on doing their job to save the lives at risk. Putting humanity first, everyone strived to help people who were affected by floods, who had been rendered homeless, who had lost their belongings, and whose farms were destroyed.

After four days, I realized that these people are extraordinarily brave and resilient. They have withstood both natural and man-made calamities for too long because they are the people of faith and faith keeps hopes in heart alive.

It reminded me of Imam Ali's (as) saying: "Don't let difficulties fill you with anxiety because it is in the darkest night that the stars shine more brightly".

Writer is an Indian student at Ahlulbayt International University, Tehran.

U.S. slaps sanctions on Pakistan over refusal to take back deportees

By Saeid Sobhani

TEHRAN — The standoff between the United States and Pakistan continues with the former leaving no stone unturned to create diplomatic and political hurdles for the latter.

In a latest, the Trump administration has imposed sanctions on Pakistan after it refused to take back its citizens deported from the U.S., warning to withhold visas of Pakistanis including its senior diplomats.

The U.S. State Department on Friday said that the sanction mentioned in a Federal Register notification dated April 22 may result in the U.S. withholding visas of Pakistanis.

Pakistan is the latest to join the list of ten nations that have been slapped with sanctions under a U.S. law under which a country refusing to take back deportees and visa over-stayers are denied U.S. visas.

Eight of these countries have been imposed such visa sanctions under the Trump administration and two of them — Ghana and Pakistan — have been included in the list this year.

Relations between the U.S. and Pakistan have steadily plummeted since the beginning of last year when the megalomaniac U.S. president launched a scathing diatribe at Pakistan for not acting against terrorists.

And under the Imran Khan government in Islamabad, who has been vocal in his opposition to U.S. policy for the region, the distance has grown between the two former allies.



Trump administration stopped financial aid to Pakistan for 'not doing enough to dismantle terror sanctuaries' in the country, which raised many eyebrows in Islamabad. Some people even took to streets to register their protest against the American government.

Experts in Pakistan assert that the economic losses suffered by Pakistan have been far greater than the economic and military



assistance received by it since 2001. More than 60,000 Pakistanis have been killed and millions injured in a war that was imposed on them.

At present, Pakistan-US relationship has sunk to a new low and it seems highly unlikely that relations between them would improve anytime soon.

Punitive actions against Pakistan — sanctioning Pakistani military officials with links

to terror; cancelling Pakistan's non-NATO ally status; increasing drone strikes inside Pakistan; instigating international financial institutions to suspend loans to Pakistan, and now imposing sanctions on sanctions — will only have uglier repercussions for their bilateral relationship, believe experts.

The other countries that have faced U.S. sanctions in recent years include Guyana in 2001, the Gambia in 2016, Cambodia, Eritrea, Guinea, and Sierra Leone in 2017, Burma and Laos in 2018.

While the law has existed since 1996, it is only in last several years that there has been increasing demand from lawmakers for its enforcement against countries that had refused to accept deportees and visa over-stayers.

While section 243 (d) of the Immigration and Nationality Act was used only twice before 2017, the Trump Administration has been effective in using this provision on many countries, including Pakistan.

For some countries, sanctions begin by targeting officials who work in the ministries responsible for accepting the return of that country's nationals with escalation scenarios that target family members of those officials and potentially officials of other ministries and then other categories of applicants if initial sanctions do not prove effective at encouraging greater cooperation on removals by the targeted government, the notification said, quoted in PTI report.

The role of welfare state in Norway

By Hanif Ghaffari

TEHRAN — Norway is located in Northern Europe and is one of the Nordic countries and a member of NATO. The country has long borders with Sweden and in other sides with Finland. 30% of the workforces in Norway are working in the public sector, which rate is highest among the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (Statistics Norway, 2014: 24). The Norwegian government is large owners in key industries such as the strategic petroleum sector (Statoil), hydroelectric power generation (Statkraft), aluminum production (Norsk Hydro), the largest Norwegian bank (DNB), and telecommunications service provider round (Telenor). Through these big companies, government controls about 30% of the shares in the Oslo Stock Exchange.

Although in the two referenda in 1972 and 1994, Norwegian citizens have rejected joining the EU, Norway, along with Liechtenstein and Iceland are actively involved in Europe Free Trade Association (EØS-loven, 27 October 1992). As mentioned, Norway has a population of about 5 million. This is despite the fact that the country has abundant natural resources of oil and gas. Norway's revenue from these sources (in proportion to its population) is very high. Revenues from oil and gas exports is half of total exports and over 20 percent of Norway's gross domestic product. Norway's fifth largest oil exporter and third largest gas producer in the world; However, Norway is not an OPEC member.

As a result, the country's oil policies are not OPEC-compliant (Statistics Norway, 2009: 40). Norway follows model of prosperous countries of Northern Europe (Sweden). These countries provide in return for tax-heavy universal health insurance, welfare and education subsidies to their citizens. In Norway as well as Sweden there is a comprehensive system of social security. Norway has one of the highest human development indicators in the world (United Nations, 2011). Another point is related to oil economy of Norway. Norway's revenues from crude oil sales are not spend as current spending but are reserved in a separate fund. The value of the fund is estimated at \$ 900 billion and is the largest fund in the world (Reed, 24 June 2014).

Norway is now considered one of the richest countries in the world, both in terms of per capita gross domestic product and in terms of capital turnover. In terms of human development indices of the United Nations, Norway is one of the world's best three countries. Benefiting from the natural resources, skilled labor and the use of new technologies and the small population have made the country one of the most successful countries in the world (in terms of economic and welfare). This success has continued consistently in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. From 1830 until now, on average, GDP growth in Norway has continued (Grytten, 2004b: 245) Condition of exports in Norway Norway's exports: in 2015, the value of exports amounted to 105.4 billion dollars in Norway. In the meantime, oil exports accounted for 58.1 percent of total exports of Norway. Fish exports accounted for 8.3% of its exports in 2015.

Industrial machinery, aluminum, electronic equipment, pharmaceutical products, iron and metals, ships and boats, and nickel are other export products to other countries of the world (World's Richest Countries, 30 May 2016). Britain is Norway's main trading partner. Norway 21.8 percent of export income in 2015 was related to the Britain. Norway's second largest export partner is Germany. In 2015, about 18 percent (17.6 percent) of Norway's products were exported to Germany. The third export partner of Norway is the Netherlands and Norway 10 per cent of export products were exported to that country. France is Norway's fourth largest export partner and 6.5 percent of exports in 2015 were made to France. Norway's neighbor Sweden is the country's fifth largest export partner.

Sweden accounted for 5.9 percent of Norway's ex-



ports. Belgium where Europe Union's headquarters are located accounted for 4.9 percent of Norway's exports and placed sixth. Also 4.4 percent of total exports is made to the United States of America. Denmark, the other Nordic Cooperation Council's member, is eighth partner of Norway in exports and 3.7% of Norway's total exports are made to that country. China and South Korea are the ninth and tenth export partners of Norway and Norway respectively account for 2.8 and 1.9 percent of each of these countries' exports (World's Richest Countries, 30 May 2016).

Condition of import in Norway In 2015, Norway's imports from different countries were \$ 76.3 billion. As seen, Norway's import is lower than exports by about \$ 30 billion less. This issue shows concerns of the Norwegian government to create balance between exports and imports is in line with the emphasis on export-led economy. Machinery, electronic equipment, ships and boats, metal products, pharmaceutical products, pharmacy-set equipment, petroleum and gas products, plastics and furniture and decorative products are items imported from other countries to Norway. Sweden has the most import to Norway.

11.5 percent of total imports of Norway are Swedish products. It indicates that the deep bond between the two Scandinavian neighbors in terms of economic and trade relations. In 2015, Germany was the second largest import partner and 11.3% of imports Norway were from Germany. The second important point is that Germany is both the second export and import partner of Norway. China is ninth export partner of Norway, and the country's third largest import partner. 10.4 percent of total imports of Norway are Chinese products. England is the first export partner of Norway, and is the country's fourth largest import partner. 6.4% of imports of Norway are English products.

In other words, Norway exports about 21 percent of its products to Britain and in exchange, it imports about 6 percent of its requirements from England. This represents a huge economic benefit that the Norwegian economy takes from trade relations with London. United States of America in 2015 was Norway's fifth largest import partner. Accordingly, The US accounted for 6.3 percent of the imported products of Norway. Denmark is Norway's sixth largest import partner and its total imports to Norway in 2015 amounted to \$ 4.4 billion or 5.7 percent of Norway's total imports.

South Korea was seventh import partner for Norway in 2015, which accounted for 4.2% of Europe's imports. After South Korea, the Netherlands is the eighth import partner and 3.6 percent of the country's imports are made from Netherlands. France and Poland are the ninth and tenth import partners of Norway, accounting for 3.3 and 3 per-

cent of total imports in 2015 respectively (World's Richest Countries, 22 March 2016).

The Political Economy of Sweden and Norway each is a kind of unique political economy in the world. Such uniqueness is on the one hand the product of special geographic situation and national income and wealth and small population of the two countries. However, the main variables, namely the existence of the welfare state in Sweden and Norway cannot ignore. Any interpretation of foreign policy, domestic politics and the economy of Sweden and Norway should be based on what the government has done relative to the welfare state.

Here, "welfare state" should be considered as an independent variable in the economic, political and security equations of the two countries of Sweden and Norway. Membership in Scandinavia and the Nordic countries strengthens the role of the welfare state in this regard. Promoting social democracy in the 19th and 20th centuries has been productive of a structure that is called the Scandinavian welfare state (the three countries, Sweden, Norway and Denmark) today. Political and economic structural adjustment of Norway and Sweden with new theories in the field of political economy and international relations occur in favor of concepts and elements associated with the welfare state in these two countries.

If we focus on the main concern of the Government of Sweden and Norway to establish and sustain prosperity in both countries, the interpretation of any theory involving domestic and foreign policy in Sweden and Norway should be done based on such main concern. As mentioned, the longterm holding of power by Social Democrats and providing solutions such as Anthony Giddens's Third Way played an important role in the concept of the welfare state in the Nordic countries. On the other hand, rich resources and a small and manageable population in both Sweden and Norway resulting in high levels of GDP to the population, GDP Per Capita of these countries and the consolidation of political and economic model of social democof Norway, and is the country's fourth-largest import partner. 6.4% of imports of Norway are English products.

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sixth largest import partner and its total imports to Norway in 2015 amounted to \$ 4.4 billion or 5.7 percent of Norway's total imports. South Korea was seventh import partner for Norway in 2015, which accounted for 4.2% of Europe's imports. After South Korea, the Netherlands is the eighth import partner and 3.6 percent of the country's imports are made from Netherlands.

France and Poland are the ninth and tenth import partners of Norway, accounting for 3.3 and 3 percent of total imports in 2015 respectively (World's Richest Countries, 22 March 2016). Table 7. Ten import partners of Norway in 2015 (World's Richest Countries, 22 May 2016) No. Country Imports (%) No. Country Imports (%) 1 Sweden 11.5 6 Denmark 5.7 2 Germany 11.3 7 South Korea 4.2 3 China 10.4 8 Norway 3.6 4 England 6.4 9 France 3.3 5 The US 6.3 10 Poland 3 Conclusion The Political Economy of Sweden and Norway each is a kind of unique political economy in the world. Such uniqueness is on the one hand the product of special geographic situation and national income and wealth and small population of the two countries.

However, the main variables, namely the existence of the welfare state in Sweden and Norway cannot ignore. Any interpretation of foreign policy, domestic politics and the economy of Sweden and Norway should be based on what the government has done relative to the welfare state. Here, "welfare state" should be considered as an independent variable in the economic, political and security equations of the two countries of Sweden and Norway. Membership in Scandinavia and the Nordic countries strengthens the role of the welfare state in this regard. Promoting social democracy in the 19th and 20th centuries has been productive of a structure that is called the Scandinavian welfare state (the three countries, Sweden, Norway and Denmark) today. Political and economic structural adjustment of Norway and Sweden with new theories in the field of political economy and international relations occur in favor of concepts and elements associated with the welfare state in these two countries.

The factors of establishment of the welfare state in Sweden and Norway can be divided into three categories: 1- The factors underlying the welfare state 2- Causing factors of the welfare state 3- Stabilizers of the welfare state When it comes to the underlying factors of the welfare state, we mean the factors that strengthen a country's ability to create and deploy the welfare state. Two factors underlying the creation of the welfare state in Sweden and Norway are rich resources and a small population of the two countries.

Factors that facilitate and absence of each of them undermines the structure of the welfare state. Causing factors are factors that are directly involved in the creation of the welfare state. Here, the system of social democracy and its long-term deployment in Scandinavia, especially Sweden is the most important causing factor of welfare state. If the model of social democracy did not exist in Sweden and Norway, a welfare state cannot be formed. The influence of dynamic thoughts like the economic ideas of John Maynard Keynes or Third Way Plan of Anthony Giddens on social-democratic politicians played the main role in the creation of Scandinavian welfare state.

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Call for Prequalification of Contractors No.98-1 The Construction of Livestock Biogas Power Plant



Zagros Kowsar Power Plant Production and Management Company intends to identify the well-experienced and capable contractors in the field of construction of livestock biogas power plant with the production capacity of 1 MW along with all accessories, ancillaries and systems on the basis of EPC.

All necessary activities for the construction of project (including design, procurement, civil construction, installation) shall be borne by the selected contractor. Therefore, contractors who have the terms of rules of classification and qualification of an EPC contractor are invited to participate in the public call of bid of the project.

Interested applicants can receive documents by representing a letter of introduction from their company to the following address:

Zagros Kowsar Power Plant Production and Management Company, Sixth floor, No. 20, Bozorgmehr St., Valiasr Ave., Tehran.

Foreign companies can send their introduction letter to company by email to the address at the end of this announcement.

The deadline for receiving RFQ documents is until May 2, 2019

The deadline for the delivery of filled-in documents is until May 25, 2019

Delivery of the filled-in documents does not create any obligation for the Zagros Kowsar Power Plant Production and Management Company to invite and choose contractor.

After reviewing submitted documents and evaluating prequalification, the employer will embark on providing a shortlist of Bidders, which afterwards, the qualified contractors will be selected through tendering procedure.

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Value of guarantee	202,000,000 Rial / 4,234 Euro		
Type of guarantee	✓ Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran. ✓ Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 4001114006376636 (Shaba No. IR 350100004001114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.		
Duration of credit & quotation	Tender Guarantee & quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration.		
(Foreign Procurement Dept.) More of this & other tenders are accessible by click on: www.nidc.ir http://sapp.ir/nidc-pr			
تهران تایمز نویت اول ۹۸/۲/۷ نویت دوم ۹۸/۲/۸			

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spj, lobby, lobby man
parking spot, **\$2300**
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Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Apt in Fereshteh
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\$1400
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The Tehran Times new pocket-sized glossary is now available on the market. The reader-friendly is a rich source of the most common journalistic terminology collected by the daily's retired staff.

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

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Life may have evolved before Earth finished forming, researchers discover

Planetesimals, the rocky building blocks of planets, likely had all the ingredients necessary for life as we know it way back at the dawn of the Solar System, said Lindy Elkins-Tanton, a planetary scientist at Arizona State University (ASU).

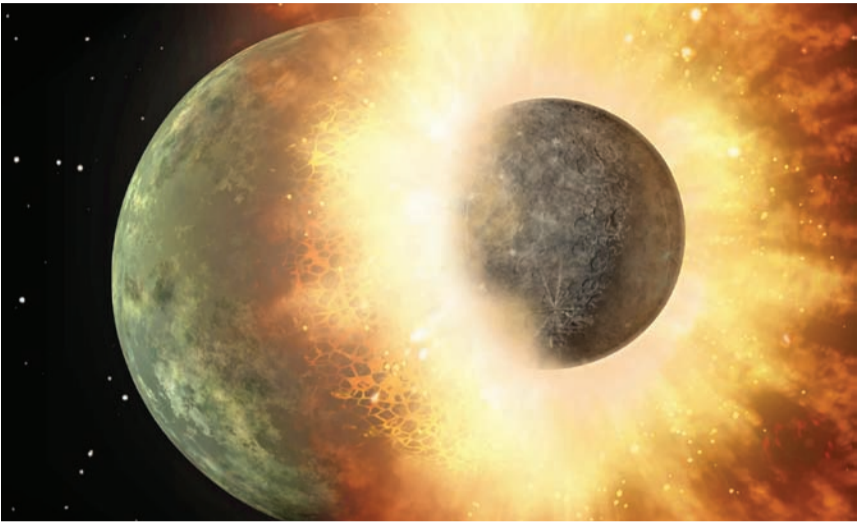
And clement conditions may have persisted inside some planetesimals for tens of millions of years — perhaps long enough for life to emerge, said Elkins-Tanton, the director of ASU’s School of Earth and Space Exploration and the principal investigator of NASA’s upcoming mission to the odd metallic asteroid Psyche.

Some planetesimals survived into and beyond the planet-forming period, raising the possibility that one of these primitive bodies may have seeded Earth with life, she added.

“Not all planetesimals are going to be involved in the kinds of catastrophic collisions that would cause them to go into a plasma or otherwise completely denature anything that was created,” Elkins-Tanton said April 11 at the Breakthrough Discuss conference at the University of California, Berkeley.

■ **A temperate planet**
“Some things are going to fall — like Chelyabinsk, for example — back onto the surface of a temperate planet,” she added, referring to the 65-foot-wide (20 meters) object that exploded over the Russian city of Chelyabinsk in February 2013. “So, there is that possibility in the end.”

Elkins-Tanton said this basic idea grew out of a course she taught at ASU in the fall of 2016. At the beginning of the semester, she asked the students to consider whether life



Some planetesimals survived into and beyond the planet-forming period, raising the possibility that one of these primitive bodies may have seeded Earth with life, she added.

could have arisen on small bodies. Over the next few months, the students, Elkins-Tanton and her co-author on the newly presented work, Stephen West, explored this possibility, as well as a number of other questions that stemmed from that core question.

Life as we know it requires three main ingredients: liquid water, organic molecules

and an energy source. Planetesimals, which formed within 1.5 million years of the solar system’s birth, likely featured all three, Elkins-Tanton said.

For example, more than 35 different amino acids have been identified in the Murchison meteorite, an ancient space rock that fell to Earth in southern Australia in 1969.

Murchison is so full of organics that it “smells like an oil well,” Elkins-Tanton said. “What could be a better place for the advent of life than a nice, warm, wet piece of Murchison? So, that’s the idea that we’re starting with.”

■ **Melted only partially**
The energy source on early planetesimals, such as Murchison’s parent body, came from the radioactive decay of aluminum-26, she explained. The heat flowing through some planetesimals’ interiors was intense enough to melt the objects completely, which is certainly not conducive to the emergence of life.

But other bodies would have melted only partially, from the inside out, so they would eventually sport a metallic core, a magma-ocean mantle and a rocky, primitive crust. Such planetesimals would have had extremely hot interiors but frigid surfaces, Elkins-Tanton said. Waves of heat radiating from the depths would have spurred the release of fluids such as liquid water, driving that material up toward the surface.

Such processes may have created habitable environments beneath the planetesimals’ rocky surfaces. And these environments likely lasted for relatively long stretches.

For example, modeling work performed by Elkins-Tanton and West, who’s now at the California-based company Metis Technology Solutions, suggests that small planetesimals — those up to 30 miles (50 kilometers) wide — could have supported liquid water underground for about 15 million years.

(Source: space.com)

New research finds ocean acidification ‘could have consequences for millions’



Ocean acidification could have serious consequences for the millions of people globally whose lives depend on coastal protection, fisheries and aquaculture, a new publication suggests.

Writing in Emerging Topics in Life Sciences, scientists say that only significant cuts in fossil fuel emissions will prevent the changes already evident in areas with projected future carbon dioxide levels becoming more widespread.

They also call for a binding international agreement that builds on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals to minimize and address the impacts of ocean acidification.

The article was written by Jason Hall-Spencer, Professor of Marine Biology at the University of Plymouth, and Plymouth graduate Dr. Ben Harvey, now Assistant Professor at the University of Tsukuba’s Shimoda Marine Research Center.

They and other collaborators have published several studies over the past decade that show the threats posed by ocean acidification in terms of habitat degradation and a loss of biodiversity.

■ **Impact on marine life**
These have centered around the coast of Japan, where they demonstrated ocean acidification is having a major impact on marine life,

and in the Mediterranean where they showed it was having a negative impact on wild fish.

Both regions have volcanic CO₂ seeps, where the escaping gas dissolves into the sea water and creates conditions similar to that expected to occur worldwide in the coming years.

Their new publication provides a synthesis of the likely effects of ocean acidification on ecosystem properties, functions and services and is based on laboratory experiments and observations along natural gradients in CO₂.

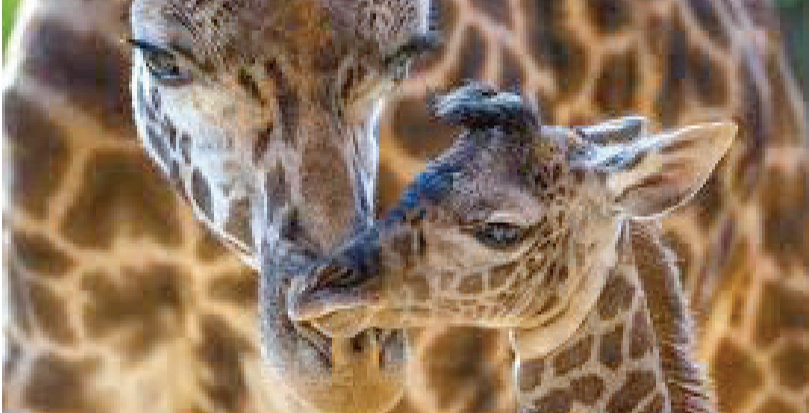
It says that studies at CO₂ seeps worldwide have shown that reefs made by organisms with shells or skeletons, such oysters or corals, are sensitive to ocean acidification and that degraded reefs provide less coastal protection and less habitat for commercially important fish and shellfish.

■ **The habitat degradation**
This amplifies the risks to marine goods and services from climate change causing shifts to seaweed dominance, habitat degradation and a loss of biodiversity in the tropics, the sub-tropics and on temperate coasts.

Dr. Harvey, who graduated from the BSc (Hons) Ocean Science program in 2008, said: “We are releasing around 1 million tons of carbon dioxide per hour into the Earth’s atmosphere.

(Source: eurekaalert.org)

Giraffes on the verge of being considered ‘endangered’ due to steady population decline



Development, agriculture, and mining are some of the top threats to giraffe populations. Poaching, recreational hunting, and commercial trade are also not helping the animal population to recover.

Authorities are now looking into moving giraffes from being categorized as “vulnerable” to being “endangered” under the Endangered Species Act. This is in response to the species’ continuously dwindling numbers.

On April 25, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced that it has reviewed the petition to add four species to the Endangered Species Act. Included in the petition are giraffes, the San Gabriel chestnut snail, and two plant species, the Refugio manzanita and the Arizona eryngo.

According to the announcement, the petitions for the San Gabriel chestnut snail and the Refugio manzanita did not come with substantial information to warrant them to be listed, and therefore no further action will be taken. This is because while both species occur in limited areas, there are adequate protected areas for both species.

■ **The species protection**
However, the petitions for the Arizona eryngo and the giraffes are being considered. As such, the agency will conduct its own investigation, followed by a public

comment period before they will announce whether the species will be protected under the law. This process may take up to 12 months to complete.

Giraffe populations have been steadily dwindling for years, with mining, agriculture, and development as some of the most common threats to the species. They are also threatened by commercial trade, poaching, recreational hunting, disease, smaller populations, and genetic isolation.

According to International Union for Conservation of Nature, since 1985, giraffe populations have dwindled by 36 to 40 percent, and unfortunately, U.S. trade is one of the significant contributors to the decline.

In fact, from 2006 and 2015, nearly 40,000 giraffe specimens, both live and dead, have been brought into the United States. These include thousands of bone carvings, skin pieces, and hunting trophies, and so far there are no restrictions regarding the trade of giraffe parts.

Should giraffes be approved to be listed under the law, even if they are not native to the United States, restrictions may be placed regarding the trade of giraffes and giraffe parts in the country.

(Source: techtimes.com)

You could travel through a wormhole, but it’s slower than space, say scientists

Special Relativity. It’s been the bane of space explorers, futurists and science fiction authors since Albert Einstein first proposed it in 1905. For those of us who dream of humans one-day becoming an interstellar species, this scientific fact is like a wet blanket.

Luckily, there are a few theoretical concepts that have been proposed that indicate that Faster-Than-Light (FTL) travel might still be possible someday.

A popular example is the idea of a wormhole: a speculative structure that links two distant points in space time that would enable interstellar space travel.

Recently, a team of Ivy League scientists conducted a study that indicated how “traversable wormholes” could actually be a reality. The bad news is that their results indicate that these wormholes aren’t exactly shortcuts, and could be the cosmic equivalent of “taking the long way”!

Originally, the theory of wormholes was proposed as a possible solution to the field equations of Einstein’s Theory of General Relativity (GR).

Shortly after Einstein published the theory in 1915, German physicists Karl Schwarzschild found a possible solution that not only predicted the existence of black holes, but of corridors connecting them.

Unfortunately, Schwarzschild found that any wormhole connecting two black holes would collapse too quickly for anything to cross from one end to the other.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

Scientists 3D-print all-liquid ‘lab on a chip’

To make the 3D-printable fluidic device, Berkeley Lab researchers designed a specially patterned glass substrate. When two liquids - one containing nanoscale clay particles, another containing polymer particles - are printed onto the substrate, they come together at the interface of the two liquids and within milliseconds form a very thin channel or tube about 1 millimeter in diameter.

Researchers at DOE’s Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (Berkeley Lab) have 3D-printed an all-liquid device that, with the click of a button, can be repeatedly reconfigured on demand to serve a wide range of applications -- from making battery materials to screening drug candidates.

“What we demonstrated is remarkable. Our 3D-printed device can be programmed to carry out multistep, complex chemical reactions on demand,” said Brett Helms, a staff scientist in Berkeley Lab’s Materials Sciences Division and Molecular Foundry, who led the study. “What’s even more amazing is that this versatile platform can be reconfigured to efficiently and precisely combine molecules to form very specific products, such as organic battery materials.”

The study’s findings, which were reported in the journal Nature Communications, is the latest in a series of experiments at Berkeley Lab that fabricate all-liquid materials with a 3D printer.

Last year, a study co-authored by Helms and Thomas Russell, a visiting researcher from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst who leads the Adaptive Interfacial Assemblies Toward Structured Liquids Program in Berkeley Lab’s Materials Sciences Division, pioneered a new technique for printing various liquid structures -- from droplets to swirling threads of liquid -- within another liquid.

(Source: sciencedaily.com)

Large volcanic eruption in Scotland may have contributed to prehistoric global warming

Around 56 million years ago, global temperatures spiked. Researchers at Uppsala University and in the UK now show that a major explosive eruption from the Red Hills on the Isle of Skye may have been a contributing factor to the massive climate disturbance. Their findings have been published in the journal Scientific Reports.



Large explosive volcanic eruptions can have lasting effects on climate and have been held responsible for severe climate effects in Earth’s history. One such event occurred around 56 million years ago when global temperatures increased by 5-8 °C. This event has been named the Paleocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum (PETM). The warm period was associated with volcanic activity in the North Atlantic region, especially in Greenland, the British Isles and the present day North Sea region. However, until now, no large-scale explosive eruptions had been confirmed in current-day Scotland.

A team of researchers at Uppsala University, Sweden, the Universities of Durham and St Andrews in the UK, and the Scottish Environmental Research Centre in Glasgow, now seem to have found a missing piece of the puzzle. By studying volcanic rocks called pitchstones from islands more than 30 kilometers apart in the Inner Hebrides off the west coast of Scotland, the researchers have found plausible evidence of a major eruption from what is today the Isle of Skye.

The researchers used several different methods to compare the pitchstones recovered from the two sites (Sgùrr of Eigg and Oigh-sgeir) including isotope geochemistry. Samples from the two pitchstone outcrops display identical textures and compositions in all analyses, confirming that the two outcrops represent deposits of a single, massive and explosive volcanic eruption. The researcher’s geochemical data identify the Red Hills on Skye, around 40 kilometers to the North, as the most likely vent area for this large eruption.

(Source: newswise.com)

Scientists explain why the moon is moving away from the Earth

Nearly 50 years since man first walked on the moon, the human race is once more pushing forward with attempts to land on the Earth’s satellite. This year alone, China has landed a robotic spacecraft on the far side of the moon, while India is close to landing a lunar vehicle, and Israel continues its mission to touch down on the surface, despite the crash of its recent venture. NASA meanwhile has announced it wants to send astronauts to the moon’s south pole by 2024.

But while these missions seek to further our knowledge of the moon, we are still working to answer a fundamental question about it: how did it end up where it is?

On July 21, 1969, the Apollo 11 crew installed the first set of mirrors to reflect lasers targeted at the moon from Earth. The subsequent experiments carried out using these arrays have helped scientists to work out the distance between the Earth and moon for the past 50 years.

This distance, and the use of moon rocks to date the moon’s formation to 4.51 billion years ago, are the basis for the giant impact hypothesis (the theory that the moon formed from debris after a collision early in Earth’s history).

■ **Lunar recession**
But if we assume that lunar recession has always been 3.8cm/year, we have to go back 13 billion years to find a time when the Earth and moon were close together (for the moon to form).

This is much too long ago — but the mismatch is not



surprising, and it might be explained by the world’s ancient continents and tides.

The distance to the moon can be linked to the history of Earth’s continental configurations. The loss of tidal energy (due to friction between the moving ocean and the seabed) slows the planet’s spin, which forces the moon to move away from it — the moon recedes.

The tides are largely controlled by the shape and size of the Earth’s ocean basins. When the Earth’s tectonic plates move around, the ocean geometry changes, and so does the tide. This affects the moon’s retreat, so it appears smaller in the sky.

This means that if we know how Earth’s tectonic plates

have changed position, we can work out where the moon was in relation to our planet at a given point in time.

■ **The strength of tide**
We know that the strength of the tide (and so the recession rate) also depends on the distance between Earth and the moon. So we can assume that the tides were stronger when the moon was young and closer to the planet. As the moon rapidly receded early in its history, the tides will have become weaker and the recession slower.

The detailed mathematics that describe this evolution were first developed by George Darwin, son of the great Charles Darwin, in 1880. But his formula produces the opposite problem when we input our modern figures. It predicts that Earth and the moon were close together only 1.5 billion years ago.

Darwin’s formula can only be reconciled with modern estimates of the moon’s age and distance if its typical recent recession rate is reduced to about one centimeter per year.

The implication is that today’s tides must be abnormally large, causing the 3.8cm recession rate. The reason for these large tides is that the present-day North Atlantic Ocean is just the right width and depth to be in resonance with the tide, so the natural period of oscillation is close to that of the tide, allowing them to get very large. This is much like a child on a swing who moves higher if pushed with the right timing.

(Source: Newsweek)

Xiamen fair explores attractions, history and traditions of Iran's Yazd

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — Tens of tourist attractions, d e s k rich history and traditions of Iran's Yazd province were spotlighted during the 15th Strait Travel Fair, which was held in Xiamen, China's Fujian province, IRIB reported on Friday.



The skyline of Yazd, a UNESCO-registered city in central Iran

A number of local travel marketers and eco-tourism associates represented Iran pavilion at the event held at the Xiamen International Convention and Exhibition Center from April 19 to 21.

With its winding lanes, forest of badgirs (wind catchers), mud-brick houses, atmospheric alleyways and centuries of history, Yazd is a delightful place to stay, referred to as a 'don't miss' destination by almost all travel associates in the region.

Exhibitors from 47 countries, 20 Chinese provinces took part in the event, setting up 2,600 stands and pavilions, the report said.

The Strait Travel Fair is organized by the China National Tourism Administration in collaboration with the Fujian Provincial People's Government in a bid to advance common development between the Chinese mainland and Taiwan in the tourism industry.

Are tourists ignoring photo risks at Grand Canyon?

A 69-year-old Arizona tourist recently fell off a ledge at the Grand Canyon, making her the fourth person to die there in the past month.



So what's happening? Park rangers routinely warn tourists of the danger and signs are posted along the edge, but authorities say many are ignoring the risks to snap that perfect photo.

"They are just not processing how dangerous it is. They're more focused on the photo op," author and canyon expert Michael P. Ghiglieri told Inside Edition.

(Source: MSN)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Lakes of Ounianga

Located in northeast of Chad, in a hot and hyper-arid desert setting with less than 2mm rainfall per year, the Lakes of Ounianga comprises a total of 18 lakes, in two groups, displaying a variety of sizes, depths, colorations and chemical compositions.

The property, inscribed on UNESCO World Heritage list, covers 62,808 ha and has a 4,869 ha buffer zone.



One of the few remaining lakes of Ounianga, northeast Chad

The Lakes of Ounianga ensemble is located in a basin which, less than 10,000 years ago, was occupied by a much larger lake and has a globally unique hydrological system, sustaining the largest permanent freshwater lakes system in the heart of a hyperarid environment.

The property also displays a range of striking aesthetic features, with varied coloration associated with the different lakes and their vegetation, and the presence of dramatic natural desert landforms that all contribute to the exceptional natural beauty of the landscape of the property.

The shape and distribution of the lakes, combined with the effect of the wind moving the floating vegetation in the lakes, gives the impression of 'waves of water flowing in the desert'.

(Source: UNESCO)

Masjed-e Vakil: A bustling tourist destination in Shiraz

1 → Karim Khan Zand, the founder of the Zand Dynasty who ruled from 1751 to 1779, ordered the construction of the ensemble in the 18th century, as part of his grand development projects in the heart of his capital city.

The mosque is connected to the bazaar and almost attached to the bathhouse with a lane in between. As one enters the mosque, they can see a corridor leading to the Vakil Bazaar on the left-hand side.

The mosque has a recessed entrance decorated with Shirazi rose-pink tiles, a splendid inner courtyard surrounded by beautifully tiled alcoves and porches, two vast iwans (porticos), and a pleasingly proportioned 75m-by-36m vaulted prayer hall. A distinguishing feature of the mosque, however, is the forest of 48 diagonally fluted columns that support the prayer hall, displaying a hypnotic rhythm of verticals and arabesques.

There is also a vast courtyard with a relatively long pool in the middle. Around the courtyard, stand two iwans in a symmetric way in the northern and southern sides.

According to Destination Iran, at the southern iwan, there is an entrance leading to a roofed columned hall (shabestan) with 48 monolithic pillars joining one another on top through vaulted brickworks. The pillar shafts are carved in a spiral way and decorated in form of acanthus leaves at their capitals. Color of the stone pillars and those of brick-formed ceiling match.

All ceiling decoration has been made by plain bricks except the one line coming from the southern iwan directly toward the mihrab of the mosque. This part is an amazingly splendid corridor-like pathway set by its ceiling tile decoration embellished by Shirazi "haft rang" (seven-color) tiles.

The builders of the mosque have made a minbar (preacher's seat) out of a piece of green marble with a flight of 14 steps leading to the seat on top. This minbar is an exemplary work at Zand-period mosques.

Some visitors refer to Iranian bazaars as "a city within another" because most of them embrace mosques, madrasas, bathhouses, guesthouses, banks, once thriving caravansaries and residential neighborhoods.

Today the bazaar is home to almost 200 stores selling carpets, handicrafts, spices, antiques, leatherwork and clothes amongst others. Its broad vaulted passageways are designed in such a way that ensures the interior remains cool in summer and warm in wintertime.

Shiraz is home to some of the country's most magnificent buildings and sights. Increasingly, it draws more and more foreign and domestic sightseers flocking into this provincial capital which was the literary capital of Persia during the Zand dynasty from 1751 to 1794.

■ Under tourists' eyes

Here is a select of comments that visitors to the mosque have posted to TripAdvisor, one of the most popular travel websites in the world:

■ "One of most beautiful mosques"

Not so crowded. Really nice interior and right next to Vakil bazaar. Go there in the late afternoon to have a nice sunlight enlightening the pillars. (44bat from Las Rosas, Spain; Reviewed April 2019)

■ "Another fantastic mosque"

If you have been to other mosques like in Isfahan this one looks like the others. However, this is still a nice one to visit if you like the tiles and decorations. Many options for good photos. Allow between half an hour to an hour. (LarsSoholm from Skanderborg,



Some visitors refer to Iranian bazaars as "a city within another" because most of them embrace mosques, madrasas, bathhouses, guesthouses, amongst others.

Denmark; Reviewed February 2019)

■ "Worth to be seen"

In general, most major mosques in Iran are worth to be seen. Impressive structures with amazing tile works. Some of them several hundred years old.

■ "Nice Mosque in the heart of the city"

The Mosque architecture is fantastic, one of the oldest in Shiraz, the area around is full of shops and cafes. Great at night for view and photography (mohsens2002 from Istanbul, Turkey; Reviewed October 2018)

■ "Style and substance"

The Portico sets the tone, with a riot of Shiraz tile work. The gem for me was the night prayer hall and minbar. Go and see it! (SeeWhatDSees from Ireland; Reviewed October 2018)

■ "What a jewel!"

This mosque is really beautiful.... Several pillars in the mosque makes this mosque other then all the others. Mosaics are mostly original, which is special to see. (Mariska B. from Rotterdam, The Netherlands; Reviewed September 2018)

Sri Lanka fears up to \$2 billion tourism losses



Sri Lanka fears its lucrative tourism industry could see arrivals drop by up to 30 percent, with losses of \$1.5 billion (\$2.05 billion) this year, after deadly Easter attacks, the finance minister said on Friday (April 26).

"Tourism will be the worst affected," Finance Minister Mangala Samaraweera told reporters.

"We expect a 30 percent drop in arrivals and that means a loss of about \$1.5 billion in foreign exchange."

Samaraweera said the country could take up to two years to fully recover from Sunday's attacks, which devastated three luxury hotels and three Christian churches and killed 253 people, among them many foreigners.

The government has blamed local Islamist extremists for the coordinated suicide bombings that shocked a nation recovering from a 37-year ethnic war that ended a decade ago.

The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) group said it carried out the attack and the government says it believes local extremists were at least inspired by ISIS militants.

"Typically, countries that suffer isolated ISIS-style attacks see tourism recovering within one-to-two years, as long as root causes are addressed and

security measures taken are well communicated," the minister said.

He pointed to Belgium, France, Spain and Tunisia as countries which recovered their tourism markets within a short time.

Samaraweera said tourism was emerging as Sri Lanka's success story when Sunday's blast shattered hopes of reaching a revenue of \$5 billion, up from last year's \$4.4 billion.

Official figures show that tourist arrivals in the first quarter of this year jumped 4.6 percent to 740,600 from a year earlier.

India, Britain, and China were the biggest tourism generating markets for the island, which is known for its tropical beaches and picturesque tea-growing mountains.

The industry was recovering from a severe battering during the 37-year Tamil separatist war that claimed 100,000 lives, but there had been no violence affecting tourists in the past decade.

Samaraweera said he was hoping to unveil a package of concessions to help the tourism sector weather the impact of the suicide bombings.

Most of the deluxe hotels in Colombo have stepped up security and curtailed bookings amid fears of more attacks.

(Source: The Straits Times)

British girl sends €3 to Notre Dame appeal



It's not just the rich and powerful who are donating money to the reconstruction of Notre Dame after fire ravaged the Paris cathedral earlier this month.

One tiny part of the almost €850 million (\$947 million) donated so far comes from a much more modest source.

A 9-year-old British girl sent €3.38 to the Fondation du Patrimoine, one of the four organizations tasked by the French government with collecting donations for the rebuilding.

"Dear people of France and Paris. My name is Caitlyn, and I am 9 years old, I live in England," Caitlyn Handley wrote in a letter to the foundation seen by CNN.

"I heard about the Notre Dame fire on the radio and wanted to help, I know it's not much, but every bit helps. Hopefully it won't take too long to build. Thanks, Caitlyn."

Simon Handley, Caitlyn's father, told CNN that his daughter was "very upset" by the crisis after discovering how old the cathedral was.

"She felt she had to do something about it -- she said that she couldn't give hundreds or thousands, but would give what she could," he said.

Handley described his daughter as a "very bright girl" who cares deeply about "helping people and animals."

Laurence Lévy, a spokeswoman for the Fondation du Patrimoine, told CNN that the organization is receiving thousands of checks a day.

"Our whole team has been mobilized and many volunteers have come to help us, because we are not accustomed to receiving such an influx of donations in such a short space of time in our normal work," she said.

"Of course, when this crisis is over, we will take the time to respond to the thousands of donors -- there are 219,000 of them today."

Caitlyn was not alone in sending her money by post: Another Briton sent an envelope containing six £50 notes (\$387) to the foundation.

These two British donations are among thousands from abroad. The Fondation du Patrimoine said in a statement that it had received 17,300 donations totaling €1.6 million from more than 160 foreign countries.

Lévy told CNN that the organization has collected a total of €164 million since the launch of its campaign.

(Source: CNN)

How digital shift of the traditional handicraft business can restore its fading identity?

Everything that goes up must come down. This is a dastardly law of nature and it applies well on everything prevailing on this planet, whether it is a human being, a machine, or a multi-billion dollar business.

There was a time when the realm of traditional handicraft business was thriving at a blazing speed, but now it is on the brink of extinction. So what just happened in between? What forces came into play which leads to such drastic downfall of a multi-million dollars industry? The key reasons behind the debilitation of traditional handicraft business are the rapid increase of the industrialization and the emergence of cutting-edge technology.

Currently, the handicraft business is facing heaps of challenges and perhaps going through it's worst phase.

We all are well aware of the potency and efficacy of digital tools. With the digital platform at artisans disposal, they can revamp the deteriorating condition of traditional handicraft realm without much of a hitch.

Currently, Indian has more than 70 lakh adroit artisans

who don't require any professional training of producing handicrafts. These proficient artisans can harness the digital tools like SEO, social media channels, or Google paid campaigns to connect directly with the online patrons and generate funds at affordable credits to revive their dying business.

The expeditious growth of the e-commerce platforms has led to the development of a massive ecosystem of online marketplaces, consumer communities, entrepreneurial programmers, crowd-funding programs that can help artisans in bringing a noteworthy change is prevailing condition of handicraft business.

Digital tools allow the local artisans to connect with the global audience to create awareness about their businesses and bring lost recognition to the handicraft industry.

Through the means of digital platforms, needy artisans can easily get the fund by philanthropy organizations and provide a thrust to their business. Not only digitization of the handicraft business gives artisans ample avenues to connect with the patrons but also allow them to share new ideas and

work in progress with the patrons. The artisans are exposed to the different people, cultures, designs, colors and trends, which could help them in creating for the current market need as well as innovate in their technique.

Artisans can use digital platforms to spearhead their business and also connect with the fellow artisans of different states to exchange ingenious ideas. By collaborating with supremely talented designers and artisans, they can evangelize their brand name and give local handicraft products a global appeal.

Local artisans can use the digital platform to evoke the sense of social responsibility among the fellow artisans and patrons to create a sustainable livelihood.

■ Conclusion

One thing is for sure that there is no stopping of the expansion of the digital world, sooner or later. And with the expansion, a myriad of new opportunities will also generate that artisans can use to their advantage to take their business notches higher.

(Source: entrepreneur.com)

Two new e-services available next month

TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** – Iran plans to start two new e-services in the field of e-government and e-health in the next month, the head of the Information Technology Organization of Iran, Amir Nazemi, announced, IRNA reported on Friday.

The emergency services get location information in one month and in this way the trouble of emergency services in pinning down the location of callers would be solved, he said.

Another service would be e-campaigning, through which people can ask their questions with specified identity and the official should

answer it if the campaign reach a certain number, he explained.

Implementing e-governance, electronic health record, and electronic prescribing system can lead to transparency in the government and medical society.

In early March, the electronic prescribing system - a technology framework that allows physicians to write and send prescriptions to a participating pharmacy electronically - has become operational in Iran.

■ E-government is Iran

In July 2018, Iran moved 20 notches up to rank 86 among 193 countries in the United Nations E-Government Development Index

Iran provides two services, e-campaigning and accessing of emergency services to the location information of callers, in coming months



(EGDI 2018) in comparison with EGDI 2017, UN website reported.

The first phase of e-government services project in Iran officially came on stream under

the title of 'Mobile Government' in May 2018.

In December 2018, the country started issuing smart cards for purchasing gasoline through "Mobile Government".

'Startups are key to deal with national challenges'



TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** – Startups are key elements to deal with national challenges, an official with the Islamic Azad University said, IRNA reported on Friday.

In recent years, the startups have played a great role in development and modernization of the country, Ali Shahabi said.

Today, startup ecosystem and IT are considered as important development factors worldwide, he said.

Entrepreneurship and startup events are based on negotiation and dynamism, which lead to sharing experiences, he said.

Startups facilitate everyday living for all the people and a good startup ecosystem accelerate this procedure, he added.

He said that the Islamic Azad University also tries to highlight negotiation and entrepreneurship instead of focusing on output and solution.

Knowledge-based companies to attend brain mapping symposium



TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** – Nine knowledge-based companies will introduce their latest achievements during the 3rd Iranian Symposium on Brain Mapping Updates on May 1 and 2 at Tehran University of Medical Sciences, ISNA reported on Saturday.

The symposium aims to create a synergy in science and technology development in the field of brain mapping, the executive director Hossein Qadiri announced.

Three panels on the clinical and research

application of brain stimulation, clinical and research application Electroencephalography (EEG) signals and the brain mapping application in presurgical planning will be held during the event, he said.

The National Brain Mapping Laboratory (NBML) was established to facilitate the development and growth of neuroimaging and brain modulation fields, fulfillment of (at least a part of) research and technical requirements in these fields in the country and provide related knowledge-based and up-to-date services.

The future of dental cleaning? Biofilm-busting micro-robots impress in precision cleaning trials

An army of tiny robots scuttling about inside your mouth cleaning your teeth. It's a disquieting thought, and yet it might be one of the most effective ways to deal with the sticky bacterial biofilms that coat our choppers – as well as water pipes, catheters and other tough-to-clean items.

Run your tongue around your teeth and enjoy the feeling of the biofilms that are pretty much always coating them. Biofilms are little communities of micro-organisms, bacterial and otherwise, that gather together, sticking their cell walls together and bonding themselves to surfaces in three-dimensional structures, scaffolded together with all sorts of claggy polymers. They've been described as little microbe cities, functioning as tiny co-ordinated communities.

They form all over the place – not just in our mouths as dental plaque, but on your dirty dishes, on rocks, in pipes, surgical equipment, anywhere liquid and microbes meet – and when bacteria gang up in these gloopy films, they can become far more resistant to antibiotics than usual.

And they're tough to break – hence why dentists have to spend so much time scraping away at plaque deposits on your teeth in a fiddly and uncomfortable process that's probably about as much fun for the dentist as it is for the patient.

Send in the micro-robots, then! Researchers from the University of Pennsylvania's School of Dental Medicine and School of Engineering and Applied Science have teamed up in an inter-disciplinary study to investigate how tiny plough-like robots can be used to break up biofilms and clean a range of different surfaces.



The uPenn solution uses iron-oxide nanoparticles, and is the result of engineering and dental teams serendipitously bumping into each other and finding out they were working on complementary projects. The engineers had been using iron-oxide nanoparticles to build tiny micro-robots they could control remotely using magnetic fields, and the dental team had figured out that iron-oxide particles can catalyze a reaction that activates hydrogen peroxide, releases free radicals, kills even the most antibiotic-resistant bacteria and breaks up biofilms.

One team had the robotics, then, and the other had a job perfectly suited to that type of robot, so a collaborative study ensued in which this curious combination of engineers and scientists developed what they called

Catalytic Antimicrobial Robots, or CARs – little iron-oxide nanoparticles molded into helicoid shapes – and tested how well they worked in biofilm-busting applications.

Timelapse image shows a helicoid-shaped iron-oxide microrobot as it moves through a tooth canal

In short, they worked very well. The team suspended their CARs in a solution and steered them around magnetically to precision-clean both flat glass surfaces and enclosed glass tubes. The micro-robots not only degraded and broke up the biofilm, they also dragged the degraded gunk out with them, leaving no trace of biofilm behind.

Emboldened by success, the team moved on to a human tooth, and found that not only were they able to effectively clean the out-

side surface very effectively, but they could also clean out tough-to-access areas like the isthmus of the tooth – a channel in between root canals that biofilms love, and which is very hard to clean using traditional methods. What's more, when you break these biofilms right down and clear out all their building materials, it makes it substantially harder for new biofilms to begin forming.

"Existing treatments for biofilms are ineffective because they are incapable of simultaneously degrading the protective matrix, killing the embedded bacteria, and physically removing the biodegraded products," says Hyun (Michel) Koo, of uPenn's School of Dental Medicine. "These robots can do all three at once very effectively, leaving no trace of biofilm whatsoever."

Where to from here? In order to get these things into clinical use, the team has begun working with the Penn Center for Health, Devices and Technology, which is designed to help bring new health technologies into clinical applications with business mentorship and resource support. The team also says their system could find applications in reducing the risk of contamination of implants and keeping water pipes and catheters clean.

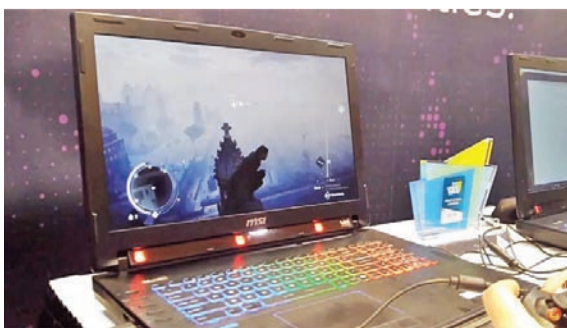
So it may not be too long before dentists can put away the scraping tools and start deep-cleaning your teeth just by filling your mouth up with liquid and steering a team of CARs around the place magnetically. It'll be a longer-lasting, more effective clean, and if they miss the fun of asking you questions when you've got your mouth held open, I guess they can just ask you while your mouth's full of robot water instead.

(Source: New Atlas)

Tobii's eye-tracking tech will make it harder for people to peek at your computer screen

No one likes it when someone else is looking over their shoulder, especially when working on the computer where privacy and sensitive information might be on display. The good news is that it looks like Tobii, who specializes in eye-tracking tech, is hoping to make snooping a thing of the past.

The company has announced their next-gen update to its Aware software that will leverage its eye-tracking technology to prevent people from peeking at your screen. This new software will take advantage of computers that have Windows Hello-capable cameras which when it detects that you are no longer looking at your screen, will blur or lock your computer to prevent someone else from peeking at it.



It can also help to dim your computer screen when you walk away, thus helping you save some energy in the process. As we said, this tech seems to be applicable to any computer that comes with a Windows Hello-capable camera installed in it. Tobii has used the Lenovo Yoga A940 as an example of that, but we imagine that any machine with a Windows Hello camera should be more than capable.

The company's software can also be used for other purposes, not just privacy, where it can help send your mouse cursor over to another screen, so if you're working with dual or triple monitor setups, you will no longer need to track the location of your cursor from screen to screen.

(Source: ubergizmo.com)

Pardis Technology Park to incentivize ESCAP members

TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** – The member countries of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), which sign agreements with Iranian companies will receive incentive packages, the Pardis technology park director said, IRNA reported.

Mehdi Saffarinia said that the 8th International Innovation and Technology Exhibition (INOTEX 2019) aims to attract foreign investors and cooperation.

The Pardis Science and Technology Park organizes INOTEX 2019, which will be held from June 9 to 12 at the Tehran international permanent fairground with the theme of "Innovation Ecosystem under One Roof".

One-year free residency at the Pardis Science and Technology Park, 20 years of tax exemption, obtaining work permit for foreign subjects and supporting the Iranian company that cooperate with the foreign counterpart as the third party are included in the incentive package, he explained.

He also pointed to the ESCAP's Asia-Pacific Innovation Forum 2019: Technology Start-ups for Sustainable Development, which will be held on the sidelines of the INOTEX from June 10 to 12, as one of the achievements of the exhibition.

The theme of the forum is "Technology Start-ups for Sustainable Development" in recognition of technology being a key means of implementation for the Sustainable Development Goals.

Innovators from 63 countries will attend the event, he said.

The INOTEX hosted several startups and tech companies from different parts of the world during past seven editions, he said.

Over 140 agreements were signed between companies, some of them from other countries, during past editions, he said.

Over 400 startups, startup accelerators, technology parks, innovators, incubator centers, venture capitals, and mentors will attend the INOTEX 2019.

The INOTEX, one of the leading events for professional engaged in technology and innovation, hosted over 1000 participants from 25 countries during the past seven editions.

The event is held by the vice presidency for science and technology and is supported by the innovation and prosperity fund.

ICT platform can expand market for entrepreneurs: official

TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** – The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) platforms can pave the way for distribution network for entrepreneurs in every part of the country, the head of the Information Technology Organization of Iran, Amir Nazemi, said, Mehr reported on Thursday.

The ICT infrastructure can solve the problems for society challenges like education, which may not have the same quality in all parts of the country, he said.

The ICT infrastructure can provide systems for education, testing and assessment, he explained.

He said that ICT can also help the entrepreneurs as well as those who manufacture a product but cannot develop their distribution market like rural women produces handicrafts, he said.

He also pointed to e-health as an important factor through which, the society can develop the information about hygiene and public health.

In March, ICT Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi announced that the ICT development in villages has improved job creation and quality of life and has led to a halt in migration from villages to cities and even to voluntary return from cities to villages.

He named the village of Kalpourgan in Sistan-Baluchestan province, which is renowned for hand-made pottery in which, after the internet coverage and dispatching a group of experts to teach the rural women about using cellphone, internet and social networks for marketing their handicraft, the average income of the families increased four times.

China's rocket startups go small in age of 'shoebox' satellites

During initial tests of their 8.1-metre (27-foot) tall reusable rocket, Chinese engineers from LinkSpace, a start-up led by China's youngest space entrepreneur, used a Kevlar tether to ensure its safe return. Just in case.

But when the Beijing-based company's prototype, called NewLine Baby, successfully took off and landed last week for the second time in two months, no tether was needed.

The 1.5-tonne rocket hovered 40 meters above the ground before descending back to its concrete launch pad after 30 seconds, to the relief of 26-year-old chief executive Hu Zhenyu and his engineers - one of whom cartwheeled his way to the launch pad in delight.

LinkSpace, one of China's 15-plus private rocket manufacturers, sees these short hops as the first steps towards a new business model: sending tiny, inexpensive satellites into orbit at affordable prices.

Demand for these so-called nanosatellites - which weigh less than 10 kilograms (22 pounds) and are in some cases as small as a shoebox - is expected to explode in the next few years. And China's rocket entrepreneurs reckon there is no better place to develop inexpensive launch vehicles than their home country.

"For suborbital clients, their focus will be on scientific research and some commercial uses. After entering orbit, the near-term focus (of clients) will certainly be on satellites," Hu said.

In the near term, China envisions massive constellations of commercial satellites that can offer services ranging from high-speed internet for aircraft to tracking coal shipments. Universities conducting experiments and companies looking to offer remote-sensing and communication services are among the potential domestic customers for nanosatellites.

A handful of U.S. small-rocket companies are also developing launchers ahead of the expected boom. One of the biggest, Rocket Lab, has already put 25 satellites in orbit.

No private company in China has done that yet. Since October, two - LandSpace and OneSpace - have tried but failed, illustrating the difficulties facing space start-ups everywhere.

The Chinese companies are approaching inexpensive launches in different ways. Some, like OneSpace, are designing cheap, disposable boosters. LinkSpace's Hu aspires to build reusable rockets that return to Earth after delivering their payload, much like the Falcon 9 rockets of Elon Musk's SpaceX.

(Source: Reuters)

Temperature drop across Iran within a month

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran has experienced an average 0.4 degrees on the Celsius scale temperature decline during the first month of the current Iranian calendar year (starting on March, 21) compared to the long-term means, the director of National Drought Warning and Monitoring Center, affiliated to Iran’s Meteorological Organization, has said.

Over the same period, provinces of Hamedan and Markazi set the record high for the coolest provinces, as experienced 1.6°C temperature drop compared to their long-term mean, Sadeq Ziaean said.

He also stated that compared to the long run, temperature in Kordestan and Lorestan provinces also decreased by 1.5°C and 1.4°C, respectively, which ranked third and forth as the coolest provinces.

Ziaean explained that last month, South Khorasan province with 0.6 °C temperature rise and province of Khorasan Razavi with 0.3°C increase in temperature saw the highest temperature rise nationwide, ISNA reported on Saturday.

Provinces of Yazd, Sistan-Baluchestan and Bushehr with temperature rise of 3, 2 and 0.1 degrees on the Celsius scale, respectively, have experienced the highest temperatures compared to their long-term averages.

2 rare bird species spotted in southern Iran

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — Two rare species of rock bunting and masked booby have been spotted for the first time in Bandar Genaveh, southern Bushehr province, Mohammad Tolideh, chief of Bushehr department of environment has announced.

The rock bunting is a passerine bird in the bunting family Emberizidae, which breeds in northwest Africa, southern Europe east to central Asia, and the Himalayas. It is partially migratory, with northern populations wintering further south, mainly within the breeding range of the resident southern populations. It is a rare wanderer to western Europe.



The masked booby is a large seabird of the booby family, Sulidae. They breed on islands in tropical oceans, except in the eastern Atlantic. The masked booby is a fairly sedentary bird, wintering at sea, but rarely seen far away from the breeding colonies.

These birds have been identified by two groups of environmentalists and nature photographers, who have captured photos of them and published on Iran Bird Records Committee website, he further explained.

Rock bunting and masked booby had been seen before only in the provinces of Hormozgan and Sistan-Baluchestan, he added.

WORDS IN THE NEWS

The handover of the Lockerbie bombing suspects

April 1999
Libya handed over two men accused of planting a bomb on the flight which exploded over the Scottish town of Lockerbie. We heard from British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook and from the BBC’s UN Correspondent, Mark Devenport. This is a historic moment. It is the end of a ten year diplomatic **stalemate** and it justifies the initiatives that we launched last year for a trial in a **third country**. We’ve had over a year of hard **diplomatic effort** and tough **legal negotiations** to get here, but the news I have just received makes all that effort worthwhile. There will now be a criminal trial for that act of mass murder.

Kofi Annan says he’s **gratified** and relieved by the successful handover of the two **suspects** which he describes as a vital step forward in the long ordeal which has faced all those involved with the Lockerbie bombing. As soon as the UN Security Council was informed of the handover, a range of **sanctions** were suspended. They had included a **ban** on air-links, an arms **embargo**, and **restrictions** on the sale of oil producing equipment. Mr Annan acknowledged that the pressure provided by seven years of sanctions had played a role in persuading the Libyan leader, Colonel Gadaffi, to agree to the Lockerbie compromise.

■ **Words**
stalemate: a situation in which neither side in an argument can win and in which no progress can be made
third country: a country which is neither the United Kingdom nor the USA
most victims were British or American
diplomatic effort: work by diplomats
legal negotiations: discussions by lawyers trying to teach an agreement
gratified: it gives him pleasure or satisfaction (a formal word)
suspects: the people who, it is thought likely, caused the crash
sanctions: measures taken by countries to restrict trade and official contacts with countries that have broken international law
ban: airlines were not allowed to fly to Libya
embargo: an order made by a government to stop trade with another country
restrictions: an official rule that limits what you can do
(Source: BBC)

Iran’s precious crown imperial on the brink of extinction

By Faranak Bakhtiari

TEHRAN — The fascinating crown imperial (fritillaria imperialis), precious part of Iran’s botanical richness, is being pushed to the brink of extinction due to inappropriate herbivory, overgrazing, land use changes, illegal bulb and flower harvest, road construction, mining activities and drought.

Endemic to a wide stretch from Anatolia across the plateau of Iran, southwestern province of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, to Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Himalayan foothills, crown imperial is a species of flowering plant in the lily family.

Fritillaria imperialis grows to about 1 meter in height, and bears lance-shaped, glossy leaves at intervals along the stem. It bears a prominent whorl of downward facing flowers at the top of the stem, topped by a ‘crown’ of small leaves, hence the name. While the wild form is usually orange-red, various colors are found in cultivation, ranging from nearly a true scarlet through oranges to yellow.

Iran shares a genetic diversity of important species, like Fritillaria genus which includes 100 species, of which 14 species are native to the country, unfortunately, many of the bulb flowers across the country are put at the risk of eradication in recent years.

Although, climatic conditions and overgrazing are two important factors affecting species composition and biodiversity in semi-arid ecosystems, destructive human activities are not deniable in putting the species at risk or pacing up the extinction.

Despite the importance of this plant in various scientific, environmental and tourism terms, in recent years a large part of the fritillaria imperialis plain in Koohrang



city located in Chaharmahal Bakhtiari province has been largely damaged.

Lotfali Cheraqpour, head of the provincial forests, range and watershed management organization said that the fritillaria imperialis plain in Koohrang city which once stretched to 3,600 hectares, is decreased to less than a thousand hectares.

Referring to human activities as the leading cause of the species eradication, he noted that Koohrang plains covered with this fabulous flower bulb attract many nature lovers, while tourist’s enthusiastic pickings and locals taking the invaluable specie for granted put the species in an escalator to extinction.

Koohrang plain hosts 50,000 to 100,000 environment enthusiasts annually, while this capacity could be used to

flourish tourism in the region, not only no plans are drawn up in this regard, but the widespread presence of tourists has made it harder to protect the flowers, he lamented.

Some people pick the flowering stems just for their fleeting beauty and take them to their homes, but due to the bad smell released by the plant after being picked, it cannot be kept at home, he said, regretting, therefore, this kind of harvesting has no benefit for the gatherer, and adversely affects plant growth cycle.

Animal crossing the plains directly damages blooming plants and prevents fruit and seed formation as well, as the flowering season of some bulbous plants coincides with early spring throughout the country and this time of the year is suitable

for the regular migration of nomads from subtropical and tropical regions to temperate ones, so the plants are eaten by animals or trampled.

Promoting the protection culture and making people aware of the species importance can play a significant role in environment conservation, so imminent measures must be taken in this regard and training the locals not to harvest the flowers as a way of income generation, Cheraqpour highlighted.

Morteza Zamanpour, Koohrang city governor also said that it is planned to ban any entrance to the area by the next year for 4 years in order to preserve the crown imperial from extinction.

It will be soon addressed with a special working group and will be implemented in case of approval, he added.

Excessive grazing of the species, changing the habitat to agricultural lands and pest overflows and not having protecting rule or preservation plan, have compounded the situation for this valuable bulb plants, he regretted.

Preventing this tragedy and conservation of Fritillaria require urgent attention, otherwise, it will be removed rapidly from their place of origin, he concluded.

Increasing protected areas, preparing preservation plans, efficient propagation methods such as micro propagation, highlighting the role of non-governmental organizations, gathering the endangered species in research centers, promoting tourism and using its income in line with conservation measures, are among the solutions for better conservation.

Meanwhile, rules and regulations to protect the plant species on national and international scale must be issued to save this invaluable natural heritage.

World’s second largest emperor penguin colony ‘disappeared overnight’ with thousands of chicks wiped out

The world’s second largest emperor penguin colony is believed to have been effectively wiped out overnight, with thousands of chicks drowning after an ice shelf in Antarctica collapsed.

Since the catastrophic collapse of the ice sheet at Halley Bay in 2016, no breeding has been detected in the area, scientists say.

Usually 15,000 to 24,000 breeding pairs of emperor penguins flock each year to the breeding site – around 5-9 per cent of the entire global emperor penguin population.

The bay in the Weddell Sea was previously considered a refuge for penguins in one of the coldest parts of the continent, and was expected to remain suitable for penguins this century despite climate change affecting Antarctic sea ice.

Yet almost no emperor penguins have been there since, according to a team from the British Antarctic Survey, who used high-resolution satellite photographs of the birds’ guano over time, to reveal the findings.

“We haven’t seen a breeding failure on a scale like this in 60 years,” says one of the study’s authors Phil Trathan, who is head of conservation biology at the British Antarctic Survey.

Emperor penguins need stable sea ice on which to breed, and this icy platform must last from April, when the birds arrive, until December, when their chicks fledge.

They are the largest penguin species, weighing up to 40kg and living for roughly 20 years. They incubate their eggs and tend to their chicks – one per pair – on the sea ice. After breeding and tending to the chicks,



they move to the open sea.

For the last 60 years, the sea ice conditions in the Halley Bay site have been stable and reliable. But in 2016, after a period of abnormally stormy weather, the ice broke up in October, well before any emperor chicks would have fledged.

The impact and subsequent state of the ice means the colony has been almost entirely wiped out.

While the Halley Bay colony has now all but disappeared, the nearby Dawson-Lambton colony has markedly increased in size, indicating that many of the adult emperors have moved there, seeking better breeding grounds as environmental conditions continue to change.

The birds’ rapid relocation to a more stable breeding ground is significant and is encouraging, the scientists say, as until now it was not known whether the penguins would seek alternative sites in response to significant changes in their local environment.

But the rise in numbers at Dawson-Lambton does not account for all the numbers lost at Halley Bay, Dr Trathan says. “Not everybody has gone to Dawson-Lambton yet,” he says.

Lead author and BAS remote sensing specialist, Dr Peter Fretwell, says: “We have been tracking the population of this, and other colonies in the region, for the last decade using very high resolution satellite imagery.

“These images have clearly shown the catastrophic breeding failure at this site over the last three years. Our specialised satellite image analysis can detect individuals and penguin huddles, so we can estimate the population based on the known density of the groups to give reliable estimate of colony size.”

Dr Trathan says: “It is impossible to say whether the changes in sea-ice conditions at Halley Bay are specifically related to climate change, but such a complete failure to breed successfully is unprecedented at this site.

“Even taking into account levels of ecological uncertainty, published models suggest that emperor penguins numbers are set to fall dramatically, losing 50-70 per cent of their numbers before the end of this century as sea-ice conditions change as a result of climate change.”

The team’s findings are published in the journal Antarctic Science.

(Source: The Independent)

ENGLISH IN USE

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\$1.2m donated to provide the underprivileged with warm clothing

Iran’s Welfare Organization has managed to collect a contribution of 50 billion rials (nearly \$1.2 million) to provide the underprivileged with warm clothing, Tasnim news agency reported on Thursday.

Within the framework of a campaign dubbed “kindness smile” from December 10, 2018 to January 9 some \$1.2 million was solicited from the public for procuring warm clothing for the financially struggling children in underprivileged areas, an official with the Organization has said.

Mohammad Ali Kozehgar explained that some 50,000 packages of warm clothing were obtained by the money and distributed among the children.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-oid”

- **Meaning**: a word ending that indicates resembling
- **For example**: The robot was **humanoid** in appearance.

PHRASAL VERB

Tear at somebody/something

- **Meaning**: to pull violently at someone or something
- **For example**: The children were screaming and tearing at each other’s hair.

IDIOM

See eye to eye

- **Explanation**: if two people see eye to eye, they agree with each other
- **For example**: I don’t always see eye to eye with my father.

کمک ۵ میلیاردی برای تامین لباس زمستانی کودکان در مناطق کم برخوردار

به گزارش خبرگزاری تسنیم سازمان بهزیستی کشور با هدف تامین تهیه لباس گرم برای کودکان مناطق کم برخوردار مبلغ ۵ میلیارد تومان جمع آوری کرده است.

رئیس مرکز مشارکتهای مردمی و توانمندسازی سازمان بهزیستی کشور با اشاره به اتمام پویش لبخند مهربانی با هدف تامین تهیه لباس گرم برای کودکان مناطق کم برخوردار اظهار کرد: این پویش از ۱۹ آذر با مشارکت خیرین و نیکوکاران آغاز شد و تا ۱۹ دی ماه ادامه داشت و در این طرح یک ماه ۵ میلیارد تومان جمع آوری شده است.

محمد علی کوزه گر گفت: ۵۰ هزار بسته لباس گرم به ارزش ۵ میلیارد تومان تهیه شده است و در اختیار کودکان قرار گرفت.

Twenty-fourth week of protest in France

Macron at political deadlock

By Hanif Ghaffari

TEHRAN — Yesterday, French protesters came to the streets again and challenged the capitalist system. The protests continue as Emmanuel Macron, the weak and failed president of France, has failed to take action to contain the protests and satisfy the protesters. French protest rallies are on the 24th week.

French President Emmanuel Macron has given a long-awaited response to the yellow vest protest movement with promises of tax cuts, higher pensions and a reform of the civil service. Despite insisting that order must return, he acknowledged a "lack of trust" in the establishment. Protests, sometimes violent, started in November over rises in fuel costs but widened to cover a range of grievances over economic inequality. Macron said he stood by his reforms.

His speech was originally scheduled for 15 April but was postponed after the devastating fire at Notre-Dame cathedral in Paris.

As RFI reported, President Macron's speech on Thursday addressed many concerns of the Yellow Vest movement. But some are still dissatisfied, and had called for demonstrations on Saturday.



Militants on social media networks called for street protests in Paris, Strasbourg and Toulouse. In Paris, some protesters called for a 'Media March', and plan to do a tour of South-Eastern Paris, where the headquarters of France's main media companies are based. Interior Minister Christophe Castaner remarked that "the

Yellow Vests' statements had been written before the President spoke on Thursday."

"The President was addressing the French people and not the 30,000 who demonstrate on Saturdays", Castaner added. Thursday evening, President Macron announced long-awaited reforms in a televised press conference. This may be seen as the Presi-

dent's final answer to the Yellow Vest protests that began six months ago. Local paper Ouest France spoke to Yellow Vest protesters about Macron's proposed changes. In Saint-Lô, Normandy, a few of them concluded that the French President had said nothing to reassure them. "Nothing's moving," they said, unconvinced.

However, Macron did announce measures to improve purchasing power for France's low-income population, and lower tax rates from next year. He also admitted that he may have been arrogant, unjust or tough at times when faced with the people's claims or reservations. According to AFP, who spoke to a dozen Yellow Vests in the south of France, those reservations have not gone away their reactions were summed up in one word - "rubbish" as they described Macron's attitude as condescending.

More measured, Jérémy Clément, regularly cited as a spokesperson for the movement, said that "the President has understood our claims, but he hasn't provided the answers to them."

He added that some of the measures had already been announced, and others didn't go far enough.

Pakistan, China announce next phase of CPEC

TEHRAN — Taking their partnership to the next level, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday announced plans to launch the next phase of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The next phase of the ambitious project will be launched at the high-profile 2nd Belt and Road Forum (BRF), despite India's protests over sovereignty concerns.

Khan was the main speaker at the BRF meeting aimed at highlighting China's multi-billion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in which the USD 60 billion CPEC is officially designated as the flagship project.

The BRF, in which 37 heads of states and governments are taking part, was skipped by India over its objections to the CPEC. The U.S., which has bitter rivalry with China and has fallen out with Pakistan recently, also stayed out of it.

Addressing the BRF, Khan said in a world of geopolitical uncertainty, rising inequality and barriers to trade, the BRI offers a model of collaboration, partnership, connectivity and shared prosperity.

Pakistan has been among one of the BRI's earliest and most enthusiastic proponents, and CPEC is one of the major components



and one of its earliest manifestations, the populist premier stressed.

Dismissing India's objections to the CPEC, Khan said that the CPEC has helped in Pakistan's progress specially filling the critical infrastructure gaps.

"Together, Pakistan and China are entering the next phase of the CPEC, with greater emphasis on socioeconomic uplift, poverty alleviation, agricultural cooperation and industrial development," he said.

Both the countries are signing an expanded Pakistan-China Free Trade Agreement, he said.

India, Pakistan close airspace for aircrafts

TEHRAN — The hostility between arch rivals India and Pakistan has extended to skies now with both countries closing their respective airspace to each other's aircrafts.

As per a report in Economic Times, after Pakistan closed its airspace to Indian aircrafts, international flights to and from India have to take longer routes to reach their destination, increasing the costs.

The latest tussle has been over Sharjah-Kabul SpiceJet cargo flight. On April 3, a Sharjah-Kabul SpiceJet cargo flight was turned back by Pakistani air traffic controllers despite requisite permission.

Thereafter SpiceJet sent a complaint to India's civil aviation ministry and the ministry forwarded it to the ministry of external affairs. And India decided to take action.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has stopped giving permission for non-scheduled flights by Pakistan-registered aircraft.

"There is no written order but we are not allowing any Pakistan-registered aircraft to use the Indian airspace since the day (April 3) Islamabad did not allow an India-registered aircraft despite clearances," a senior DGCA official was quoted as saying



in ET report. Pakistan closed its airspace after an aerial confrontation with India following February 26 airstrike in Balakot.

All non-scheduled aircraft not registered in India need DGCA approval for using Indian airspace. These approvals are granted on a reciprocal basis as Indian-registered aircraft also require such clearances while flying over other countries, the report noted.

"Some approval requests from Pakistan-registered aircraft flying over India were received by us. We rejected these requests," the DGCA official was quoted saying.

Nephew: UNSC highly unlikely to comply with Trump's IRGC designation

I → But, this does not mean they don't get to make a choice or that they do not, in turn, have the right to break US sanctions if they wish. They just merely need to pay the consequences for that decision.

■ How are the chances for the next US administration to continue labeling the IRGC as a terrorist entity?

A: The US designation of the IRGC as a foreign terrorist organization will remain in place until either A) a new Administration decides to remove the designation; or, B) the IRGC no longer qualifies for the designation according to US law.

This means that it is less a matter of the upcoming election for president and more an issue for whether there is a good reason for the next Administration -- whenever it takes over -- to reconsider the matter.

■ The US has dropped its waivers on Iran oil sanctions to block the country's crude supplies from next week. Is this move by Washington not a violation of the nuclear deal?

A: Yes. But, then again, so was the decision to reimpose the sanctions in the first place in November 2018.

■ How are the chances for increasing sanctions on Iran

in President Trump's line of policy?

A: Almost certainly. What is unclear is how and when.

■ How could it be justified for the US to unilaterally designate the IRGC as a foreign terrorist organization at international level? Are there any legitimate mechanisms for such a move to drive it on the international scene?

A: Well, the authority is a US domestic one. So, the only mechanism that exists has been utilized.

The larger question is whether there is an international authority that could be used to get other countries to implement the same decision.

Arguably, the UN Security Council could elect to do so. But, it is highly unlikely to do so.

■ How likely do you believe it would be for the 2020 presidential election hopefuls to get back to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with no change, if elected?

A: Really, this is a matter for the next president to decide. A few candidates have suggested as much while others have been more cautious.

The larger question is whether the JCPOA as it stands will still provide value to the United States and Iran or



whether there are changes that both would agree need to be made. Changes to the JCPOA should not be considered somehow sacrilegious or wrong on their face. I'm sure Iran would also like to make changes.

Ideally, what will happen after 2020 is a restart in real diplomacy in which substantive issues between the two countries (and with others) can be worked out with talks.

'NATO, Afghan forces kill more civilians than Taliban'

TEHRAN — Afghan and NATO forces in Afghanistan killed more civilians in the first part of 2019 than the terrorist groups like Taliban, according to a new UN study.

It's the first time that fatalities caused by U.S.-led NATO forces and Afghan security forces in Afghanistan have exceeded those caused by the dreaded insurgent groups like Taliban.

In the first quarter of 2019, pro-government forces were responsible for the deaths of 305 civilians, while insurgents killed 227, according to the UN study.

The leading causes of civilian deaths were air strikes (145 fatalities) and ground search operations primarily carried out by US-backed Afghan forces (72), the report stated.

Women and children comprised half of civilian casualties from aerial operations, with international forces responsible for the vast majority of these.

Overall, 581 civilians were killed and 1,192 wounded, representing a 23 percent decrease in overall casualties on the same quarter last year, it added.

The United Nations Assistance Mission



in Afghanistan (UNAMA), which released its report on earlier this week, urged all the parties involved to investigate the casualties.

"UNAMA urges both the Afghan national security forces and international military forces to conduct investigations into allegations of civilian casualties, to publish the results of their findings, and to provide compensation to victims as appropriate," the report stated.

The U.S. imposed war in Afghanistan has stretched into its 18th year now, the longest war in the history of U.S. Despite the series of 'talks' between the U.S. officials and the Taliban in recent months, there has been no breakthrough.

Turkey, India on 'same page' over Iranian oil imports

TEHRAN — India and Turkey are holding discussions on working together to counter terrorism and common challenges such as the U.S. decision to end waivers on Iranian oil imports.

According to Ibrahim Kalin, senior advisor to the Turkish president, Turkey and India find themselves on the "same page" on several issues, including U.S. sanctions on Iranian oil imports and Russian military equipment and the American plan to end the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) for preferential duty-free imports.

Kalin, who held talks with senior officials in New Delhi on Friday, said Turkey has also been threatened with U.S. sanctions under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act for procuring the S-400 air defence system from Russia.

Kalin said U.S. sanctions "don't work and hurt everybody", and Turkey is on the same page with European nations on the issue of U.S. ending exemptions to sanctions on Iranian oil imports, which are set to take effect from May 2.



Despite the threat of sanctions, he said Turkey had no plans to cut oil imports to zero or to stop trade with Iran "for the time being".

"We are talking to the Europeans (to see) how we can find ways and mechanisms by which we continue to trade with Iran without affecting our economy and without violating the sanctions and having another confrontation with the US over this issue," he said.

He further said that the U.S. unilateralism and trade wars will cost everyone and the raising of tariffs and taxes in the name of protecting the American economy will "certainly backfire".

No legal or moral justification for Yemen suffering

TEHRAN (FNA) — Bad news just keeps coming about Yemen and that's not what its besieged people like to hear right now.

After US President Donald Trump's veto of the War Powers Act demand by Congress to end the illegal Yemen war, a new report from the UN Development Program now says the US-backed, Saudi-led war has set back the poorest country in the Middle East more than 20 years.

According to the UN's new report, the economic losses caused so far are around \$88.8 billion, and that's just assuming the war ends now. If it lasts until 2030, the report estimates losses of \$657 billion, and 84 percent of the population chronically malnourished. The report concludes that even with immediate peace, it would take decades just to get Yemen back to the impoverished ex-ante situation.

Of course, this is still good news for the American military-industrial complex — the reason Trump vetoed the War Powers Act by the Congress. More specifically, war profiteers: The five largest US arms makers - Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Raytheon, Northrop Grumman, and General Dynamics - and their dealings with Saudi Arabia worth over \$110 billion dollars and counting. By their own account, of all the wars underway from which they are profiting, "none is greater than the Saudi war on Yemen."

The criminal Saudi air campaign, fueled by the US war profiteers, has hit endless civilian targets, using American smart bombs and missiles, without any protest or complaint from the War Party in Washington. Even though the UN Security Council has appointed a group of experts to detail US-backed Saudi war crimes and egregious attacks on Yemeni civilians, including people attending weddings and funerals, nothing has so far come out of the UN headquarters in New York to suggest that the war and the blockade are coming to a decisive end anytime soon.

This is while the naval blockade of the country by Saudi Arabia and the UAE has also cut humanitarian aid ships docking in the port city of Hodeida. The result: far less food and medicine entering the country, creating a disaster for Yemenis, a deliberate disaster that according to the World Bank, has put "some 8.4 million people on the brink of famine."

It gets worse. According to a new World Health Organization report, in 2018, there were more than 1.1 million cholera cases in Yemen. At least 2,310 people died from the disease, most of them children.

It goes without saying that as per the Charter of United Nations, wartime economic blockades that starve and sicken civilians and soldiers alike amount to a war crime. The Saudi-Emirati claim that the blockade's sole purpose is to stanch the flow of Iranian arms to the Houthi Ansarullah has never been substantiated with even a shred of evidence, meaning that there are no Iranian arms in Hodeida. But US and European arms are flowing to Saudi Arabia unabated. By the standards of international humanitarian law, blockading Yemen's imports is a disproportionate response and therefore illegal.

True to form, American-supplied weapons have included cluster munitions as well, which pose a particular hazard to civilians because, when dropped from a plane, their devastating bomblets often disperse over enormous areas. These arms continue to flow to Saudi Arabia despite Washington's denials, while Saudi warplanes rely on US Air Force tankers for mid-air refueling, as the Saudi military receives regular intelligence information and targeting advice from the Pentagon.

Which is to say that with Trump's recent veto, such military involvement will only deepen, hence making the US government complicit in Saudi war crimes in Yemen.

One thing is obvious though: The US policy in Yemen won't achieve its declared goals of defeating Ansarullah and retaking Yemen. After all, the War Party's drone strikes began there in 2002 under George W. Bush. Under Obama, as in Pakistan and in Afghanistan, drones became Washington's weapon of choice. Yet they never managed to change the situation in Washington's favor.

Likewise, the US-backed, Saudi-led war on Yemen will prove not just self-defeating but self-prophetic, as well. The criminal campaign has no justification, legal or moral. That's why it is cementing an alliance at the United Nations against the Americans, the Saudis and their lackeys. The international community is now more than ever determined and demanding for an end to the illegal war and blockade so that peace and flow of humanitarian aid into the country could begin immediately.

Sri Lanka gun battle with militants kills 15, U.S. pulls citizens out

A gun battle between troops and suspected militants on Sri Lanka's east coast left 15 dead, including six children, a military spokesman said on Saturday, six days after suicide bombers killed more than 250 people on the island.

The shootout at a safe house erupted on Friday in Sainthamaruthu in Ampara district, to the south of the Sri Lankan town of Batticaloa, site of one of the Easter Sunday blasts which have been claimed by ISIL.

The government has said that the attacks on three churches and four hotels, most of which were in the capital Colombo, were carried out by nine well-educated Sri Lankans, eight of whom have been identified.

A police spokesman said three suspected suicide bombers were among the dead following Friday's gun battle.

Authorities have warned there could be more attacks against religious centers following the bombings, which shattered the relative calm in Buddhist-majority Sri Lanka since a conflict with mostly-Hindu ethnic Tamil separatists ended a decade ago.

President Maithripala Sirisena and the government headed by Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe have faced criticism over the attacks about which there were repeated warnings from India.

Both have said intelligence was not shared with them, exposing rifts at the top of the government and raising questions about its ability to deal with the security crisis.

Two sources told Reuters on Saturday that Sri Lanka's police chief had refused to accept Sirisena's request to step down, in a further embarrassment for the president.

The U.S. State Department, warning that terrorist groups were continuing to plot attacks, urged citizens to reconsider travel to Sri Lanka and ordered the departure of all school-age family members of U.S. government employees. It also authorized non-emergency employees to leave.

Britain has also warned its nationals to avoid traveling to Sri Lanka unless absolutely necessary.

(Source: Reuters)

Swiss prosecutor, under fire, defends handling of soccer probe

Switzerland’s top prosecutor defended his handling of a high-profile investigation into soccer corruption on Saturday amid scrutiny of closed-door meetings he has held with FIFA President Gianni Infantino.

Michael Lauber, who faces re-election by parliament in June as attorney general, has described two meetings with Infantino as ways to help coordinate his investigation, which treats the global soccer body as a victim rather than a suspect.

But media reports of a third confidential meeting prompted a preliminary investigation by the watchdog that oversees Lauber’s agency. The head of the watchdog said this week that Lauber had denied any other such meetings as attorney general.

In an interview with SRF radio, Lauber conceded that there must have been a third meeting that he could not recall.

“We assume based on internal documents we have seen — diary entries and SMS texts — that it took place,” he said, but insisted this would not derail his bid for re-election.

“I reject accusations of lying or keeping silent and I see no reason to withdraw my candidacy,” he said, noting that Infantino was at no time a target of the FIFA probe.

The watchdog had found no fault with Lauber for meeting Infantino in what it calls a complex case, but criticised him for not properly documenting meetings that could one day become subject of lawsuits. Its probe could lead to disciplinary proceedings against Lauber.

(Source: Reuters)

Teams will need 100 points to beat Man City next season - Guardiola

Manchester City have raised Premier League standards and any team looking to beat them to the title next season will have to target 100 points, manager Pep Guardiola has said.

City were the first team to win the Premier League title with a record 100 points last season and would finish with 98 this season if they win their three remaining games.

Title contenders Liverpool will finish with 97 if they win their two remaining matches, a tally that would have been enough to win the title in any other Premier League season apart from the 2017-18 campaign.

“The standards we created last year at Manchester City, people know that you have to be close to 100 (to win the league),” Guardiola told reporters. “Before it was 90.

“This standard was last season, we helped Liverpool to achieve it and Liverpool helped us to keep going (this season). It is thanks to Liverpool that we are competing.

“Liverpool know that to win you have to make a lot of points. That’s what we communicate to anyone.”

Guardiola never reached 100 points with former teams Barcelona or Bayern Munich. Last season, City suffered only two defeats to win the league title by 19 points over second-placed Manchester United.

“One hundred points in a season — if you want to compete, you have to do that,” Guardiola added.

(Source: Mirror)

Man United game is ‘like a final’, says Chelsea’s Pedro

Chelsea’s crucial Premier League clash at Manchester United on Sunday is “like a final” for the London club as both sides seek a top-four finish, winger Pedro has said.

Chelsea are currently fourth in the standings with 67 points, three points ahead of Manchester United. With Arsenal separating the two clubs in fifth place with 66 points, neither side can afford to drop points with three league games to go.

“It is like a final for us,” Pedro told Sky Sports. “It is so important to reach the top four. We need to win in Manchester but we know it is difficult to play there.

“They have very good players and are a very good team. Maybe they are not in a very good moment, or in very good form, but we need to fight together to win this game.”

However, Chelsea are yet to win away at a top six club this season. They have lost four games, conceding 13 goals and scoring only one, and face a United side hurting from a 2-0 midweek humbling at the hands of Manchester City.

(Source: Goal)

West Ham inflict first defeat on Spurs at new home

Tottenham Hotspur suffered their first defeat at their new stadium after Michail Antonio gave West Ham United a 1-0 win in the Premier League on Saturday.

Tottenham made a number of changes to their side as they prepared for their Champions League semi-final first leg against Ajax Amsterdam on Tuesday but Mauricio Pochettino’s gamble backfired against a resolute West Ham side.

Spurs dominated the first half and could have been ahead after 11 minutes when Son Heung-min was played through by Dele Alli but his shot from the left was too close to the near post of Lukasz Fabianski who got down to save.

The Pole also did well to deny Christian Eriksen who shot from close range after good work down the right from Lucas Moura.

Tottenham were made to pay for those missed chances as West Ham took the lead after halftime. A lofted cross from Marko Arnautovic in the 67th minute found Antonio who lashed it in past goalkeeper Hugo Lloris.

Spurs brought on Fernando Llorente and Vincent Janssen in the hope of getting an equaliser but could not find a way past. They remain third but will be under pressure from their top-four rivals, while West Ham stay in 11th position.

(Source: Eurosport)

Bolton players to boycott rest of season over unpaid wages; Brentford match called off

Bolton Wanderers’ match against Brentford on Saturday has been called off after players decided to boycott their remaining Championship fixtures over unpaid wages at the second-tier English club, although the English Football League (EFL) has instructed the club to rearrange the match “at the earliest opportunity” and complete its fixture list for the season.

The squad went on strike this month and refused to report for training until players, coaches and the club’s non-football staff were paid March’s wages.

Bolton, 23rd in the Championship and already relegated, have just two games remaining on the schedule. However, both the club and the EFL confirmed on Friday that Saturday’s match against Brentford will not be played.

“Bolton Wanderers Football Club regrettably confirms that Saturday’s Sky Bet Championship fixture against Brentford has been called off,” Bolton said in a statement. “The club would like to apologize for the inconvenience this will cause. A further update will be released in due course.”

The EFL added further details in its statement, saying: “Following the failure of Bolton Wanderers to provide formal confirmation of its ability to meet its obligation to fulfil its Championship fixture against Brentford FC on Saturday [27 April], the game will not go



ahead as planned.

“Earlier on Friday, the playing staff at the Club issued a collective statement confirming that they had decided not to fulfil the remaining fixtures of the season unless they received monies owed to them.

“As a result of these disappointing developments, the League has been forced to suspend Saturday’s fixture and under EFL Regulations, the Club is now deemed to be guilty of misconduct and will be referred to an Independent Disciplinary



Commission.”

In a further statement released on Saturday, the EFL added: “Following the decision to suspend the fixture between Bolton Wanderers and Brentford late on Friday evening, the EFL Board has determined that Bolton Wanderers must complete their two outstanding matches in the Sky Bet Championship.

“The Club has been instructed to now make the appropriate arrangements for the rearrangement of Saturday’s game at the

Durant nets 50 as Warriors advance to NBA second round



Kevin Durant scored a playoff career high 50 points as the Golden State Warriors blasted their way into the second round of the NBA playoffs by clobbering the Los Angeles Clippers 129-110 on Friday.

Durant made history by equalling the most points scored in the first half of a playoff game with 38 of his 50 coming in the opening half. He tied former Phoenix Sun star Charles Barkley who scored 38 of his 56 points in the first half of a series clinching win over Golden State 25 years ago.

“That was one of the great performances I’ve ever seen in my life,” Warriors coach Steve Kerr said. “He’s the ultimate weapon because there’s no defense for Kevin.”

Durant was at a loss to explain his masterful performance on Friday.

“I am just out there playing. I was so lost in the game I am not really thinking about anything else but winning the possession. It is tough to explain. I am just in it,” he said.

The Warriors advance to face the Houston Rockets, beginning on Sunday in Oakland. Houston was already in Oakland waiting for the Warriors to finish the series so they can start the second round on Sunday.

Durant said the Rockets are going to

be a whole new challenge.

“They are a talented ball club with a lot of high IQ players that shoot well and penetrate well so we got our work cut out for us,” he said.

Draymond Green had 16 points, 14 rebounds and 10 assists, Stephen Curry scored 24 points and Andre Iguodala contributed 15 points off the bench for the Warriors, who won three road playoff games in the same series for first time in franchise history.

The Warriors put the brakes on Clipper reserves Lou Williams and Montrezl Harrell, who had done so much damage against them in the two Clippers victories. The pair came in leading Los Angeles in scoring during the series at 24.4 and 20 points, respectively.

Williams scored eight points on a horrific three-for-21 shooting, and Harrell was limited to just 10 points.

“He’s Kevin Durant. We didn’t roll over. We didn’t just say, come on, just give us 50 tonight,” said Clippers Patrick Beverley. “He’s a hell of a player. The shots he took, he made some tough shots.”

Williams described Durant as “a special” player who is unguardable when he is on his game.

(Source: AFP)

‘I don’t think it’s harsh enough’ – Rose on Montenegro’s punishment



Danny Rose says he is “lost for words” after Montenegro were ordered to play their next home match behind closed doors following the racist abuse of England players by supporters in March.

England won the Euro 2020 qualifier 5-1 in Podgorica but the match was overshadowed by racist chanting aimed at several players, including Rose.

Montenegro have also received a fine of 20,000 euros (£17,253) from Uefa.

“I don’t think it’s a harsh enough punishment,” Rose told Sky Sports.

“I’m not surprised. It’s obviously a bit of a shame this is where we’re at now and I just have to get on with it,” the England left-back added.

“It’s a bit shocking but there’s not much I can do now. I just hope I don’t ever have to play there again and we just have to move on now.”

Montenegro’s fine includes different charges of setting off fireworks, throwing objects, crowd disturbances and blocking stairways. In a statement the Football Association said: “We hope that their next home match being played behind closed doors sends out a message that racism has no place in football or in wider society.”

Anti-discrimination charity Kick It Out

earliest opportunity.

“In issuing this directive, the Board is aware that a number of the Clubs’ Professional Players may not make themselves available but is satisfied that a team can be selected from the players they have registered and available to them.”

The players stated their case to quit the season earlier on Friday, characterizing the situation as a strain on the players’ families and having “no resolution in sight.”

“The long-running financial crisis at our club has been well documented. As has the fact that we, the playing staff have yet to receive our March salaries,” a players’ statement read as quoted by BBC.

“We have endeavored to continue our training and playing commitments during this extremely difficult time, with seemingly no resolution in sight.

“This situation is creating mounting mental, emotional and financial burdens for people through no fault of their own. These are unprecedented circumstances and are affecting every aspect of our lives, placing great strain on ourselves and our families.

“With deep regret we have decided not to fulfil our remaining fixtures unless we are paid. We understand that this will disappoint our fans and for this we sincerely apologize.”

(Source: ESPN)

Pogba, Hazard futures cast cloud over Champions League chase for Man Utd, Chelsea

Manchester United and Chelsea’s chances of a top four Premier League finish will depend largely on Paul Pogba or Eden Hazard inspiring their faltering sides over the finish line.

French midfielder Pogba and Belgian captain Hazard will line up on opposite sides on Sunday as United try to arrest a run of seven defeats in nine games.

Fourth-place Chelsea, three points ahead of United in sixth, can realistically end the Red Devils’ chances of Champions League football next season but must end their own run of seven straight away league defeats to top six opposition to do so.

However, whether Pogba and Hazard will be around next season no matter their clubs’ fate in the next three games is very much in doubt.

The two could be teammates next season with speculation linking both with a move to Real Madrid. Both have voiced their appreciation for Real boss Zinedine Zidane and publicly flirted with the idea of a move to the Spanish giants.

Eleven years on from contesting the Champions League final, the prospect of losing their landmark talent is a sign of the times for both clubs.

Defeat to Manchester City in midweek saw United fall 25 points behind the league leaders.

“That’s the reality that we are in. We are now round about where we have been the last five seasons and that’s not good enough,” said United boss Ole Gunnar Solskjaer on Friday.

■ Patience with Pogba running low

Pogba was the only player not from City or title challengers Liverpool to make the PFA team of the year this week, but



for such a precocious talent and a world cup winner much more is demanded.

His last goal from open play came the last time United and Chelsea met in the FA Cup back in February. After exploding into life early in Solskjaer’s caretaker reign, Pogba has returned to the peripheral force he was for much of Jose Mourinho’s time in charge at Old Trafford.

However, it is emblematic of the huge challenge that lies ahead of Solskjaer that the players he is keen to keep hold of such as Pogba and David de Gea are running down their contracts, opening up the possibility of a move.

Meanwhile, plenty of players in United’s bloated squad cannot be moved on due to their lavish wages.

“Paul has done fantastic for us,” insisted Solskjaer.

“The standards he has set when he is creating chances, scoring goals, doing loads of work, that’s just media, supporters, everyone, we look to Paul. Could you have done better?”

“He’s a human being as well, we are all the same. We want him to do well, he’s a leader in that dressing room and on the pitch for us.”

Many in Manchester, though, would not be heartbroken to lose Pogba should United recoup the then world record £89 million they paid Juventus for him in 2016.

By contrast, losing Hazard could be ruinous for Chelsea and unfortunately for the Londoners, of the two, he looks more likely to move to Madrid.

Hazard has just one year left on his contract meaning Chelsea risk losing him for free if they do not let him leave this summer and will be unable to recruit a replacement unless they can get a FIFA transfer ban either overturned or suspended.

Chelsea boss Maurizio Sarri has repeatedly called for more from Hazard, but his 19 goals and 13 assists are what have kept a side short on creativity still in the running for Champions League football next season, either via the top four or winning the Europa League.

In the prime of their careers, Pogba and Hazard believe the Champions League stage is where they belong.

But the current states of United and Chelsea mean that while moving to Madrid offers a guarantee of top-level European football, sticking around in Manchester of west London does not.

(Source: AFP)

Ex-Iran coach Carlos Queiroz fires back at his critics

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Former Iran coach Carlos Queiroz has fired back at his critics with the message: “I don’t care what they think about me.”

The Portuguese tactician spent eight years as Iran trainer and coached 100th match in 3-0 defeat by Japan in the 2019 AFC Asian Cup semis.

After eight years in charge of the Iran national team, Queiroz called time on his career, following a 3-0 defeat by Japan at the competition’s semis.

The Portuguese manager’s highlights during his time with Iran include two trips to the FIFA World Cup, becoming the first coach of the Iranian national team to lead the nation to consecutive world finals. On both occasions, Team Melli failed to progress past the group stage.

The former Real Madrid coach took charge of Colombia national football team after parting ways with Team Melli.

About three months after parting company with Iran, the 66-year-old coach has talked about a variety of topics in an exclusive interview with Tehran Times.

■ First of all, Colombia prepare for the 2019 Copa America, where they will open the campaign with a match against Lionel Messi’s Argentina in Group B. Do you think Colombia have any chance of winning the competition for the second time?

- I do believe Colombia take advantage of good players with good experience. I trust Colombia and they always have a good chance to win the next game.

■ You led Iran to back-to-back appearances at the World Cup. Do you think there is a chance for you to stay with the South American football team for many years?

- In my coaching life I only care about quality delivery not quantity delivery.

■ You have lodged a complaint to FIFA against the Iranian Football Federation (FFIRI) for your unpaid wages. Iran chief President Mehdi Taj has said that the non-payment was due to sanctions which restrict bank transfers. Is there a better way to solve the problem?

- Mr. Taj is misleading the public opinion in order to hide and scape from his responsibilities and faults. It has nothing to do with restrict bank transfers. It only happened because the president of football federation failed to honor his word and dignity. It happened because he failed to do his promises and guaranties.

FFIRI vice President Dr. Eslamian, Team Melli players and staff are witnesses of all these things. In one single word, Mr. Taj lies to everyone.

■ Many Iranian fans like you as a coach who has given their team a chance to play in two successive World Cups. On contrary, there is a lot of people who were not satisfied with the way your team played in the competitions. How is your message for both of them now?

- As you said, Iranian fans like me!! Who cares about the others? We worked and played for the Iranian fans, for the people. So, my answer to Iranian fans is I’m filled with pride and gratitude for that. I’m indifference



to the others and the fact that I feel really sorry to make them jealous of me.

■ Iran showed a series of good eye-catching matches in Brazil and Russia but Team Melli failed to do well in the 2015 and 2019 AFC Asian Cups. 10-man Iran lost to Iraq on penalties despite showing an attacking football. But in the UAE, your team – the critics say – had so many technical problems and you didn’t select the best players for some reasons you know. You lost to Japan 3-0, while Iran could have won the match. Honestly, what was the problem?

- You ask me about japan game. On behalf of Team Melli, I have the right to ask who was there in the UAE to support Team Melli? Nobody was there unless the people, the players and staff and AFC vice president Mr. Ali Kafashian. Not even the president of Iran football federation was there to support Team Melli. I wish all Iranian nation the best and I wish all Team Melli fans happiness and peace.

■ Carlos Queiroz looked different after the 2018 World Cup. Your assistants also made controversial comments, maybe in support of you. The reality is it was disturbing the peace. You also made comments ahead and during the competition against some teams, coaches and officials. If you turn back the clock a few months you could have changed the way you did.

- With all due respect, I totally disagree with your opinion. It was exactly the opposite. We were attacked

by some propel with a dirty, fake and false accusations and the federation board did nothing to stop it or protect Team Melli head coach, staff and even Team Melli players.

The question is, you know who they are and how they did it. Unfortunately, some press in Iran do not have the courage to put their masks down and they also support them. They keep spreading fake propaganda. But the Iranian fans show that they’re not stupid and know the truth, no matter what.

■ Carlos Queiroz made the Iranian nation proud by leading Team Melli to two World Cups in a row. Also, Branko Ivankovic made history by leading Persepolis to their first-ever AFC Champions League final. You and Branko helped the Iranian football shine in the world and Asia. Both of you fight for your teams as well. Honestly tell us how do you feel about Ivankovic and Persepolis fans at the moment?

- Thank you very much for your comment “Carlos Queiroz made the Iranian nation proud.” There is no better reward I could have received in my life for the services to Team Melli.

And again, who cares about those critics? Confused about what was happening. There is a difference between the critics and Team Melli’s enemies. Where had they been when we needed support? Where had they been when we needed financial support, equipment, friendly games, training camp? And you want me to talk and give importance to this people?

U.S. pioneer Banks dies aged 54 after cancer battle



American soccer pioneer Jimmy Banks died on Friday at the age of 54 after a battle with pancreatic cancer, U.S. Soccer said.

Milwaukee-born Banks and team mate Desmond Armstrong became the first two African-Americans named on a U.S. World Cup squad when they were included on the roster for the 1990 tournament.

Banks made two appearances at that World Cup, playing in a 1-0 defeat to host Italy and a 2-1 loss to Austria.

The defender made 36 national team appearances in all.

“The entire U.S. soccer family is deeply

saddened by the passing of Jimmy Banks,” U.S. Soccer Federation President Carlos Cordeiro said in a statement.

“At a time when few African-American players were reaching the elite level of the sport, Jimmy’s rise to play for the U.S. men’s national team at the 1990 World Cup inspired a new generation to reach the same level.

“His time as a player, coach and mentor will leave a lasting impact on the sport in this country, particularly his tireless efforts to grow the game through his inner city soccer programs.”

(source: Reuters)

Solskjaer will not drop De Gea despite mistakes



Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer has said he has no intention of dropping goalkeeper David De Gea.

De Gea, yet to sign a new deal at Old Trafford, has made key mistakes in the last four games as United have lost seven of their last nine matches, but Solskjaer said he would start against Chelsea on Sunday.

Asked whether he has considered dropping De Gea, the manager said: “No, not at all, because I trust David and he’s, for me, been the best player United have had in last six or seven

years, absolutely outstanding.

“Going through tough patches is part of a footballer’s career, and David will be fine.”

De Gea has not kept a clean sheet for two months, and the 2-0 home defeat to Manchester City on Wednesday saw him become the first United goalkeeper to concede 50 goals in a league season for 40 years.

The 28-year-old, Player of the Year in four of the last five seasons, is in a contract stand-off with the club, but Solskjaer said that was not a reason for a loss of form.

(Source: ESPN)

ACL2019 MD4 Player of the Week: Leonardo



created three chances and 69 touches as he picked up an impressive 9.8 rating to take second spot.

We turn to the West Zone to round out the top three with Al Rayyan’s Gelmin Rivas (below) taking third spot thanks to his performance in the rollercoaster at Al Wahda.

Al Wahda’s attacking midfielder Leonardo netted four times in his side’s sensational 4-3 win at home over Qatar’s Al Rayyan in their Group B Matchday Four clash on Monday to earn this week’s top accolade.

The Brazilian’s quadruple helped the Emirati club come back from 2-0 and then 3-1 deficits, with his match-winner coming in the 89th minute. The former Al Ahli Saudi star showed tremendous precision with his finishing, with his four goals coming from five shots on target.

Leonardo also made two key passes, registered 61 touches and won three fouls as he was awarded a 9.9 rating to lead the Toyota Player of the Week standings.

Countryman Ricardo Lopes (below) likewise shone on Matchday Four with the Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors winger scoring a stunning opener for the Korean side in their 2-1 win over Japan’s Urawa Red Diamonds.

The Brazilian’s wonderful 12th minute strike was his first of the 2019 Continental campaign and was nominated for this Matchday’s Goal of the Week.

Lopes displayed his all-round game at Jeonju World Cup Stadium as he also claimed the assist for Jeonbuk’s second,

The Venezuelan netted a brace for the visitors to take his tally to three for the campaign, having previously netted in the 2-1 win over Uzbekistan’s Lokomotiv on Matchday Two, but somehow still ended on the losing side thanks to Leonardo’s stunning display.

Nevertheless, for his efforts, the 30-year-old received a 9.7 rating in this week’s Toyota standings.

Guangzhou Evergrande’s Huang Bowen enters the list at number four with a 9.6 rating. The China PR midfielder was in fine form in the 1-1 draw with Melbourne Victory not only scoring the opener but also creating the highest number of chances in the tie and boasting a 92.1% passing accuracy.

Completing the top five is Shandong Luneng striker Graziano Pelle who netted his sixth goal of the campaign to register a 9.5 in the Chinese Super League side’s 1-0 win away at Malaysia’s Johor Darul Ta’zim.

Spanish legend Xavi is next with a 9.5 after an impressive performance for Al Sadd in the side’s win over Pakhtakor, followed by Al Hilal’s Sebastian Giovinco and Al Ahli striker Omar Al Soma who tallied 9.4 and 9.3 ratings respectively.

(Source: the-afc)

Beiraland takes gold at Asian Weightlifting Championships

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Reza Beiraland of Iran won gold medal at the Asian Weightlifting Championships in Ningbo, China on Friday.

The World Championships bronze medalist struck gold in the men’s 102kg event, topping the standings in the snatch, clean and jerk and overall.



Beiraland lifted 173kg in the snatch and 216kg to end on a total of 389kg.

Beiraland’s countryman Amir Haghoughi won a silver medal overall on 384kg and the bronze medal went to Japan’s Taro Tanaka on 364kg.

Iran’s Ali Miri (89 kg) and Ayoub Mousavi (96kg) have previously won two silver medals in the competition.

IPL: Persepolis, Sepahan ends in stalemate

TASNIM — Persepolis and Sepahan football teams played out a goalless draw here in Iran Professional League (IPL) on Friday

The match was marred by the fans’ clashes in the stands at the Azadi Stadium.

Two teams showed a lackluster performance in front of about 80,000 spectators.

Tractor Sazi earlier on the day suffered their third defeat in a row, losing to Zob Ahan 2-0.

Vahid Mohammadzadeh gave Zob Ahan the lead in the 16th minute from the penalty spot and Mehran Derakhshan Mehr was on target at the added time.

Struggling Sepidrood were also defeated against Foolad 2-1 in Ahvaz.

On Saturday, Esteghlal will face Padideh in Mashhad and are hoping to close the six-point gap with Persepolis.

Fan dies during Persepolis, Sepahan match

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — A football fan in Tehran passed away after he suffered a heart attack in the match between Persepolis and Sepahan Friday night.

According to Tehran emergency center, a 30-year-old man died from cardiac arrest and more than 200 fans were also injured in the clashes before and after the game.

Iran Professional League leaders Persepolis met Sepahan at the Azadi Stadium but the fans scrapped with each other in the stands before the start of the match.

Persepolis, who could move an inch closer to title for the third successive year with a win over Sepahan, were held to a 0-0 draw in a hectic match.

Shahrdari Varamin’s Jalali named Asian Club Volleyball Championship MVP

Alireza Jalali from Iran’s Shahrdari Varamin was named as the Most Valuable Player of the 2019 Asian Men’s Club Volleyball Championship.

The Iranian team won the title after an epic comeback 3-2 win against Japan’s Panasonic Panthers in an action-packed final showdown at the University of Taipei (Tianmu) Gymnasium on Friday.

Jalali was named as the tournament’s MVP by the organizers.

Furthermore, Mohammad Razipoor was named as the best middle blocker and Parviz Pezeshki was selected as the best setter.

Panasonic Panthers’ Michal Kubiak was named as the best outside spiker.

(Source: asianvolleyball)

Iran’s Hashemi claims bronze at Asian Weightlifting Championships

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Ali Hashemi from Iran claimed a bronze medal in the men’s 109kg weight category of the 2019 Asian Weightlifting Championships on Saturday.

The Iranian weightlifter lifted 180kg in the snatch and 225kg to end on a total of 405kg.

Yang Zhe from China seized the gold medal overall on 417kg and the silver medal went to Uzbekistan’s Akbar Djuraev with 410kg.

Reza Beiraland and Amir Haghoughi had won a gold and silver medal in the 102kg.

Ali Miri (89 kg) and Ayoub Mousavi (96kg) had also won two silver medals in the competition.

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Contentment is a wealth which never ends. Contentment is an everlasting treasure.

Imam Ali (AS)

Persian translation of “Running Through Beijing” unveiled at Tehran book fair

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — A Persian translation of Chinese writer Xu Zechen's novel “Running Through Beijing” was unveiled during the 32nd Tehran International Book Fair last Thursday.

The book was originally published by the Wuzhou Communication Publishing House in China in 2008 and Negah Publications is the publisher of the Persian version.

Wuzhou deputy director Jing Xiaomin, Negah director Alireza Reisdanai and translators Elham Sadat Mirzania and Rezvan Zeinali also attended a ceremony held to unveil the book.

The book is about 25-year-old Dunhuang, who is just released from prison for peddling fake IDs and finds himself having to start over from scratch in Beijing.

He meets a woman who sells pirated DVDs, giving him a new way to earn a living. Now he needs to work to get back on his feet in order to save enough money to rescue his friend from prison.

Speaking at the ceremony, Xu expressed his hope that the book will be warmly received by Iranian readers.

“Despite the different places where we live, we all have things to think about in common and we are all facing the same problems. I tried to be realistic about the main character's experiences as we all are affected by the world's economic problems,” he added.

As a special guest, China is participating in the book fair with the motto of “Getting to Know China”.

A delegation composed of about 200 Chinese cultural figures and officials as well as over 100 publishers, writers, translators and illustrators are taking part in the book fair, which will run until May 4.

Iranian organization launches literary awards on Palestine

C U L T U R E d e s k **TEHRAN** — The Literary and Cultural Union of Muslim Countries in Tehran has launched literary awards with the central theme of the Palestinian resistance.

Writers from all over the world have been invited to send their works created over the past 20 year to the union.

Winners will be selected in the categories of story, poetry and novel, secretary of the awards Mohsen Parviz said during a ceremony organized at the 32nd Tehran International Book Fair on Friday to unveil a poster of the awards.

“Defending Palestine is our duty and the literary awards as part of the resistance is also part of our duty,” Parviz said.

Writers can submit their works including short stories, poetry, children's stories and travelogues to the secretariat of the awards found on the website www.palintaward.com no later than September 28.

Rami Malek to play Bond villain in franchise's 25th film next year

O C H O R I O S, J a m a i c a (R e u t e r s) — Oscar winner Rami Malek will play the international villain who Daniel Craig's James Bond must battle in the British spy franchise's 25th film set for release next year, the producers announced on Thursday.

Malek, 37, drew critical acclaim for his portrayal of Queen front man Freddie Mercury in last year's “Bohemian Rhapsody.”

“I promise you all I will be making sure that Mr. Bond does not have an easy ride of it,” Malek said in a recorded announcement from New York aired as part of a webcast about the new movie.

In an interview, Malek promised a different type of villain than Bond fans have come to expect.

The film will take “the perspective of what it means to be a villain, and perhaps flipping that on its head in some way, shape or form,” he said. The still untitled movie known by the working title “Bond 25” will be Craig's fifth go-around as Britain's most famous fictional secret agent, and will feature on-location scenes in Jamaica, the producers said in the webcast from the Caribbean island.

Tehran's Tabiat Pedestrian Bridge hosts Citizen Artist Festival

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — The Tabiat Pedestrian Bridge in Tehran hosted the First Citizen Artist Festival with over 300 artists in attendance on Friday.

The artistic event was warmly welcomed by both the artists and the people as well as the tourists who had come to take a walk on the bridge on a cool April morning in Tehran.

The event was organized by the Iranian Painters Association in collaboration with the Visual Arts Office and the Nosazi Abbasabad Co.

“Art is usually created by the artists in their solitude, and the visitors can only see the works when they are completed. This will give a good chance to the visitors to watch the artists while creating their works,” Deputy Culture Minister for Artistic Affairs Seyyed Mojtaba Hosseini said during a visit to the festival.

The festival can improve ordinary people's connection with arts, he noted and added, “Many great artists are working here and that can be a big source of inspiration for the visitors, especially children and young adults.”

Visual Arts Office director Hadi Mozaffari, who was in company with Hosseini, said that the office is determined to strengthen and support art associations.

He said that they aim to take the visual arts to the cities and villages to create a dialogue between artists and people.

“People's tastes change through these events, and the warm welcome of the people and the artists is a good sign for the next steps,” he added.

Director of the association Amir Raad also said that he was surprised to see such good support and warm welcome.

The festival is scheduled to be organized in the northern Iranian city of Ramsar, Mazandaran Province, next week.



Deputy Culture Minister for Artistic Affairs Seyyed Mojtaba Hosseini (1st R) and Visual Arts Office director Hadi Mozaffari (2nd R) visit the First Citizen Artist Festival on the Tabiat Pedestrian Bridge in Tehran on April 26, 2019.

New version of Attar's Tadkerat al-Awlia corrected by Shafiei Kadkani published



Persian literature scholar Mohammadreza Shafiei Kadkani is seen with a copy of Persian poet and mystic Farid ad-Din Attar's Tadkerat al-Awlia.

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — A new version of Persian poet and mystic Farid ad-Din Attar's Tadkerat al-Awlia (Saints' Lives) corrected by poet and Persian literature scholar Mohammadreza Shafiei Kadkani has been published.

Sokhan Publications has announced that the work is available at the 32nd Tehran International Book Fair at a 15 percent discount.

The Tadkerat al-Awlia is a hagiographic account of the sayings and miraculous deeds of eminent Sufis and other religious figures from the early Islamic centuries.

Shafiei Kadkani has added descriptions of various issues in the book.

“I never claimed that I have answered all the questions of an observant reader,” Shafiei Kadkani wrote in a preface to the book.

“But, understanding various words and phrases in the book and making corrections to the materials have been one of my major concerns for over 40 years,” he added.

He also said, “Every sentence in the book is the outcome of thoughts of men of asceticism and Sufism, and each of these sentences has its unique world.”

Shafiei Kadkani, 80, is a professor at the Ferdowsi University of Mashhad and a member of the Academy of Persian Language and Literature.

Born in Neyshabur, Shafiei Kadkani rose to fame with his collection “On the Avenues of Neyshabur”.

He is also the author of “With Light and Mirror: In Quest of Roots of Iran's Contemporary Poetry Evolution”, which reviews the impact of social and political elements on Persian poetry.

Art collection criticizes glass ceiling in modern world



Sculptor Amir-Hossein Delbari poses with one of his works displayed at Mojdeh Gallery in Tehran on April 26, 2019.

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Sculptor Amir-Hossein Delbari has created his latest collection to criticize the glass ceiling in the modern world.

The collection, which contains 15 bronze sculptures, is currently on display in an exhibition titled “Under the Glass Ceiling” at Tehran's Mojdeh Gallery.

Glass ceiling is an intangible barrier within a hierarchy that prevents women or minorities from obtaining upper-level positions.

“The glass ceiling is a symbol of widespread discrimination against women in society and the obstacles against their development,” the gallery wrote in a statement for the showcase.

“Actually, mostly throughout

the history, women have faced a ceiling which seems invisible, but is a formidable obstacle to progress,” it says.

“The sculptures depict women in different costumes. The headless figures, which mainly aim to disguise identities, are dressed in different costumes to look modern,” it adds.

“The shiny golden color of the figures is a reference to stereotypes about women in modern societies, which actually annoy women. Delbari's sculptures actually criticize the current conditions of women in modern societies,” it concludes.

The exhibition will be running until May 3 at the gallery located at No. 27, 18th Alley off North Allameh Blvd. in the Saadatabad neighborhood.

Iran's Cinema Verite, Kazan International Muslim Film Festival ink MOU



Kazan festival executive director Milyausha Aytuganova (L) and Cinema Verite director Mohammad-Mehdi Tabatabaiejad sign an MOU in Kazan on April 25, 2019. (DEFC)

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Cinema Verite, Iran's major international festival of documentary films, and the Kazan International Muslim Film Festival have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU).

The MOU was inked by Cinema Verite director Mohammad-Mehdi Tabatabaiejad and Kazan festival executive director Milyausha Aytuganova on Thursday in Kazan, Iran's Documentary and Experimental Film

Center (DEFC) announced on Saturday.

Tabatabaiejad is in Kazan to take part in the world festival directors' meeting, which is held on the sidelines of the Kazan International Muslim Film Festival to exchange cultural and cinematic experiences between Kazan and the neighboring Muslim countries.

The festival, which opened on April 24 in the capital of the Republic of Tatarstan, will be running until April 30.

Coffee paintings by Adak Jamshidzadeh to raise funds for Iran flood survivors



A coffee painting by Adak Jamshidzadeh.

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian artist Adak Jamshidzadeh, who is mostly famous for his coffee paintings, is showcasing his latest coffee paintings in an exhibition at Artland Gallery to raise funds for victims of Iran's recent floods.

Jamshidzadeh also plans to organize a three-day workshop on coffee painting on the sidelines of the exhibition, which opened on Friday.

The exhibit will run until May 4 at the gallery located at 4 Safa Alley, Kachui St. in the Evin neighborhood.

The recent heavy rainfall in Fars, Golestan, Mazandaran, Lorestan, Khuzestan and several other provinces in western, southwestern and northeastern Iran led to severe flooding, which struck and damaged many cities and villages and left 78 people dead and hundreds displaced and injured.