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## India insisting on oil imports from Iran

**TEHRAN** – India's External Affairs Minister said that India should be allowed to continue importing oil from Iran at least for a longer time span, Hindustan Times reported, citing people familiar with developments.

Sushma Swaraj made the remarks in a telephone conversation with her U.S. counterpart Mike Pompeo.

The official mentioned her country is

going through election, saying the next government with a fresh mandate will take a final call on this issue.

Swaraj explained India's political and economic conditions to Pompeo and sought some relaxation as making immediate arrangements for 23.5 million tons of oil – the amount supplied by Iran every year – from an alternative source was not possible, the people said. →5

## Persian Gulf historical maps, documents go on show in Tehran

**TEHRAN** – Over 50 rarely-seen historical maps and documents, regarding the Persian Gulf, are on display at the Tehran Map Museum.

The exhibit opened to the public on April 30, which marks the Persian Gulf National Day, an occasion to commemorate the exit of colonial and foreign forces from the strategic waterway.

Tenth of Ordibehesht month (April 30) in the Iranian calendar marks the

anniversary of Shah Abbas I of Persia's successful military campaign when the Portuguese navy was forced out of the Strait of Hormuz in the Capture of Ormuz (1622).

The museum also hosted a follow-up professional meeting in which several experts, academia and researchers including Gholamreza Sahhab, Kianush Kiani, and Seyyed Abbas Mojtahedi had been invited to deliver speeches. →10

## Venezuelan government denounces an 'attempted military coup'

**TEHRAN** – Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido said on April 30 he had begun the "final phase" of his plan to oust President Nicolas Maduro as Venezuelan government denounces an 'attempted military coup.'

A Reuters journalist later saw Guaido near the La Carlota air force base in Caracas, surrounded by a group of men

in uniform.

Venezuelan Information Minister Jorge Rodriguez tweeted that the government was confronting a small group of "military traitors" seeking to promote a coup.

Guaido, in a video posted on his Twitter account, spoke in the company of men in military uniform and opposition politician Leopoldo Lopez, who is under house arrest. →13

**ARTICLE**  
By Mehdi Sepahvand  
Editor at the TehranTimes

## Shadow of terror: Is the world failing itself?

The Daesh leader appeared in a video on Monday which the group said had been shot in April, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's first appearance in five years.

The heftier-than-before leader was calmly speaking about their defeat in Baghuz in Syria, and how they had tried to retaliate in heavy suicide attacks which took place in Sri Lanka recently. Not only that, he was vowing to seek revenge for its loss of territory.

The question is now this: how powerful really is the world community to secure itself against such threats? Are the countries failing themselves security-wise?

The first U.S. reaction came from the Pentagon. "We are aware of a video posted today reportedly showing Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi," said Pentagon spokesman Navy Commander Sean Robertson. "We are continuing to support partner forces in their mission of an enduring defeat of ISIS," he said, according to Reuters.

Elsewhere, a spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition fighting Daesh told CNN, "We are continuing to support partner forces in their mission of an enduring defeat of Daesh, which includes the capability to finance their operations, recruit new members, and collaborate to conduct violent extremist attacks."

Despite this, the Iranian government has in the past been trying to question America's claim to fighting Daesh, even claiming that there exists some sort of cooperation between the two.

Chief of the Iranian Army Ground Force said in mid-April that his forces had been deployed to Iran's eastern borders because of Daesh movements in Afghanistan.

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

The commander of the IRGC Quds Force, Major General Qassem Soleimani, said in February that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's visit to Tehran earlier was for the axis of resistance's "victory celebration". Tehran has been a supporter of the Syrian government against Daesh and considers itself to great extend responsible for the defeat of Daesh in the Arab country.

## Impossible to drive Iran's oil export to zero: Turkish politician

By Payman Yazdani

**TEHRAN** – Condemning the U.S. move to force Turkey to buy oil from Saudi Arabia and UAE instead of Iran, Faruk logoglu says the U.S. move is flagrant violation of international law and his sovereign right of nations to trade freely.

In continuation of the U.S. hostile policies against the Iranian nation, the White House recently announced that it has decided not to reissue waivers on Iranian oil after they expire in May. The statement went on to say that the United States, Saudi Arabia, and the

United Arab Emirates have pledged to ensure that the global market will have sufficient oil supply following Washington's decision to terminate sanctions waivers for countries importing Iranian oil.

To know more about the issue we reached out to Dr. Osman Faruk Logoglu, a senior member of Turkey's Republican People's Party (CHP). Following is the full text of our interview with him:

■ Are the U.S. moves to slap unilateral sanctions against Iran and not extending waivers for Iran's oil importers in compliance with interna-

tional law and regulations?

A: The U.S. sanctions against Iranian oil exports are in flagrant violation of international law and regulations as they transgress the sovereign right of nations to trade freely. The sanctions are illegal also because they have been imposed unilaterally without a mandate from the UN Security Council or by any other authorized body. The U.S. is certainly entitled not to import Iranian oil or goods itself but has no right to prevent others from engaging in what is legal and proper. →6

## Saudi would be different if it faced consequences for its actions: expert

By Payman Yazdani

**TEHRAN** – Commenting on the reasons behind violation of human rights by Saudis, Anthony Cartalucci says the U.S. doesn't base its ties with other nations on human rights, but rather obedience and utility which Riyadh has both in abundance.

The Saudi Interior Ministry recently issued a statement on the execution of 37 people in the Saudi Arabia. It has been claimed that the executed individuals were sentenced to death

for involvement in terrorist cases.

The fact is that the executed people are not terrorists. They were Shias who have been oppressed by the Saudi regime for decades. This is not the first time that the Saudi regime has committed such terrible crimes against Shias, and it is clear that it won't be the last. Accordingly, we reached out to Bangkok-based geopolitical researcher Anthony Cartalucci.

Following is the full text of our interview with him:

■ What is your assessment of execution of 37 Saudi citizens by the rulers of the country?

A: Saudi Arabia - a nation that readily aids and abets Western interference and even military interventions around the globe - finds itself once again guilty in reality of what the West and Riyadh have accused nations like Syria and Iran of in fiction. The executions were done without fair or transparent trials and were motivated by politics, not justice. →7

## 'Saudi Arabia among top violators of religious freedom'

A U.S. government commission has called Saudi Arabia – a close ally of Washington – one of the world's "worst violators" of religious freedom, citing the Riyadh regime's discrimination against Shia minorities, non-Muslims, women and prisoners of conscience.

In its 2019 report, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) listed Saudi Arabia in its tier one category of the

states which merit designation as a "country of particular concern" or CPC.

According to Press TV, the U.S. State Department first designated Saudi Arabia a CPC in 2004, but it has granted an indefinite waiver to Riyadh since 2006.

The U.S.CIRF recommended that the U.S. State Department re-designate the kingdom a CPC under the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA).

"Shia Muslims in Saudi Arabia continue to face discrimination in education, employment, and the judiciary, and lack access to senior positions in the government and military," the survey said.

It also noted that during a USCIRF visit to Saudi Arabia's mainly Shia-populated Eastern Province, certain Shia Muslims had reported harassment and invasions of privacy by the regime's forces. →13



## Rosewater festivals attract holidaymakers from home and abroad

**TEHRAN** – Every year, by late April, thousands of holidaymakers start to visit Kashan or its neighboring villages, where many local rosewater festivals take center stage in the central Iranian region.

The distillation ceremonies, which are commonly known as "Golab-giri", are usually running through to mid-June. Visitors may revel in lush flower gardens or witness how rosewater is made indigenously from harvesting to steaming damask rose petals. →10

**REPORT**  
Ramin Hossein Abadian  
Mehr News Agency  
journalist

## U.S. hostile military activities in Iraq

It seems that U.S. hostile military operations and futile activities in Iraq is not going to end anytime soon. U.S. troops recently launched a new aggressive military operation in Iraq by attacking the headquarters of Iraq's security forces in Kirkuk.

U.S. has not made any official response yet regarding the attack. What is obvious though, is that such an attack undermines Iraq's national authority and violates the country's territorial integrity. U.S. officials, on the other hand, seem to be completely aware that there is no way they can justify their action to political and military officials of Iraq.

U.S. hostile activities have stirred up a variety of reactions in Iraq.

### ■ 'U.S. move an overt act of aggression against Iraq'

Fazil Fatlawi, a member of Iraqi Parliament, condemned U.S. aggressive attack in Kirkuk, saying "by doing this operation, U.S. has committed an overt act of aggression against Iraq," adding that "Abdul-Mahdi, the Iraqi prime minister should respond strongly and forcefully".

Fatlawi added that U.S. air strike against Iraqi armed forces was preplanned, so the Parliament should run an emergency session to analyze the threats made to Iraq's national authority and to pass a law so that U.S. and other foreign military forces are completely expelled from the country.

Meanwhile, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq group also published a statement and condemned the U.S. military attack in Kirkuk which left one dead and two injured.

According to the statement, the U.S. recent move clearly shows that U.S. has deployed military and combat forces in Iraq, rather than technical and consultative groups. Moreover, it reveals that U.S. forces are acting according to their own decision and preference rather than making joint decisions with Iraqi forces. Here, the important question is whether the U.S. military forces are subject to Iraq law, or U.S. law?

First of all, U.S. is clearly unhappy with Iraq having strong armed forces in post-ISIS era and is trying to unleash its anger by taking hostile military measures against Iraq national forces who are supported by all different parties and people of the country. →7

## Rouhani announces implementation of law to counter U.S. move against IRGC

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — President Hassan Rouhani Tuesday officially ordered the implementation of a law that is aimed at countering the U.S. government for labelling the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organization.

The law had been passed by the Majlis a week earlier and then confirmed by the Guardian Council.

Rouhani announced the implementation of the law to the ministries of intelligence, foreign affairs, and defense, as well as to the Supreme National Security Council and the Planning and Budget Organization.



The Iranian parliament on April 23 voted to put the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) in West Asia on the list of terrorist groups.

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

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

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

The approval by the Iranian parliament was a retaliatory measure against the United States which designated the IRGC as a "foreign terrorist organization" on April 8.

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

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

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

Based on the parliament's approval, the government is also duty bound to take counteractions against the U.S. forces within the framework of the SNSC decisions.

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

The government should also provide parliament with reports on the acts taken in response to the U.S. move.

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

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

## Europe should pay price if it wants to save nuclear deal: Araqchi

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi reiterated on Monday that Europe should not just express political support for the 2015 nuclear deal, saying Europe should pay the price if it wants to save the international agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Speaking at the 9th round of Iran-Norway political consultations, Araqchi said the international community has not responded properly to the U.S. illegal act in withdrawing from the JCPOA.



"The U.S. proved that it does not understand language of respect and interaction and can just talk with language of bullying," he said.

For his part, Tore Hattrem, the secretary general of the Norwegian Foreign Ministry, said Oslo supports the JCPOA.

U.S. President Donald Trump unilaterally pulled Washington out of the 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.

Also, on April 22 the U.S. announced that Washington has decided not to extend waivers allowing major importers to continue buying oil from Iran when they expire in early May.

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

During a meeting with a group of Austrian MPs in Tehran on Sunday, Araqchi said that Iran's patience is not limitless and will give a proper response to the United States' illegal actions soon.

"The Islamic Republic's patience is not limitless and will give a proper response to America's illegal actions soon by comprehensive assessment of the current situation far from emotional reactions," Araqchi asserted.

He also criticized Europe's delay in implementing its special mechanism to save the nuclear deal.

"We welcome political position of the European Union, but political support will be of no help to save the JCPOA. The JCPOA is not an economic agreement and has security nature. If it matters to Europe, it should also pay the costs to keep it," added Araqchi who acted as senior nuclear negotiator with the 5+1 group and the European Union in crafting the JCPOA.

# U.S. administration driven by 'rule of jungle': diplomat

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Gholam Hossein Dehqani has said that "the unlawful and coercive measures by the U.S. administration against Iran allude to the fact that this administration is driven by the 'Rule of the Jungle' in its international relations."

Addressing the preparatory committee for the 2020 NPT review conference, he said, "Such policies will not be left unanswered and Iran will adopt appropriate measures to preserve its supreme national interests."

Following is the text of his speech published by ISNA on Tuesday:

I congratulate you for your election to Chair this important session and assure you of our full cooperation. My delegation fully subscribes to the views expressed in the statement made by Venezuela on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has resolutely advocated the objectives of the NPT and supports their effective implementation. This is obvious that the sustainability and credibility of the NPT, as an important contribution to international peace and security, is warranted if its so-called "core bargain" is secured; the non-nuclear-weapon States not to pursue the acquisition of nuclear weapons in return for the nuclear-weapon States' pursuing nuclear disarmament. Regrettably, the nuclear-weapon States have not kept their side of the "bargain".

With the exception of a few nuclear umbrella States in Europe which host the U.S. nuclear weapons in their territory, the overwhelming majority of non-nuclear-weapon States continue to fulfill their obligations relating to non-proliferation. In return, the nuclear-weapon States have failed to abide by their obligations to pursue negotiations on effective measures for nuclear disarmament and have not eliminated their arsenals of nuclear weapons. The non-compliance with Article VI poses a serious threat to the NPT with far-reaching implications. Nuclear-weapon States should acknowledge that there is no scope for selective or conditional compliance with their treaty obligations.

Nuclear arms reductions should not be



confused with effective nuclear disarmament measures. Reductions, in most of the cases, did not lead to actual elimination of nuclear weapons. Such reductions, mainly driven by cold war concepts of the strategic balance of power, have been offset by development of more advanced nuclear weapons with higher destructive power.

The prospect for a new era of nuclear arms race is looming large. The very ambitious and extensive modernization plan of the U.S., which is in gross violation of the spirit and letter of the NPT, offers a clear example in this

regard. The INF treaty, once symbolizing the end of the cold war, is on the verge of collapse as a result of the U.S. non-compliance with its treaty obligations. The U.S. also intends to produce the so-called more usable nukes and brazenly threaten to use them against non-nuclear-weapon States. The prospect is even worse with the current intransigent U.S. administration which shows zero respect for their international obligations.

The America's withdrawal from international treaties and instruments one after another, its withdrawal from the Joint Com-

**"America's withdrawal from international treaties and instruments one after another, its withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), a rampant violation of Security Council resolution 2231, and its re-imposition of illegal and unilateral sanctions against my country clearly attest to U.S. continued disrespect for multilateral regimes and institutions."**

prehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), a rampant violation of Security Council resolution 2231, and its re-imposition of illegal and unilateral sanctions against my country clearly attest to U.S. continued disrespect for multilateral regimes and institutions. The U.S. is pursuing such policies despite the fact that IAEA has repeatedly confirmed Iran's full compliance with its commitments under the JCPOA and the NPT. Surprisingly, and as a party to the unanimous Security Council resolution 2231, the U.S. is blatantly threatening to punish other UN member states if they comply.

The U.S. continues to exert maximum pressure to dismantle the JCPOA and UNSC resolution 2231. These pressures, if continued, will be detrimental not only to the stability and security in the Middle East region, but to the NPT. The anti-JCPOA and other unlawful and coercive measures by the U.S. administration against Iran allude to the fact that this administration is driven by the Rule of the Jungle in its international relations. Such policies will not be left unanswered and Iran will adopt appropriate measures to preserve its supreme national interests.

Before concluding, let me highlight that in 2020 Review Conference, the first priority must be to adopt concrete decisions on nuclear disarmament, including through agreeing on the commencement of negotiations and early conclusion of a comprehensive nuclear weapons convention. Any such notion as the CCND that aims to create conditions for nuclear disarmament must be categorically rejected.

The second priority should be the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East. The nuclear weapons of the Israeli regime continue to threaten the peace and security of the region and beyond. This occupying and aggressor regime, that brazenly threatens others with nuclear annihilation, must be compelled to join the Treaty as a non-nuclear-weapon party, without further delay and precondition. It must place all its nuclear activities and facilities under the IAEA full-scope safeguards. This is the only way towards the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East.

## Iran supports ongoing Afghan peace talks

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Tuesday that Iran supports any efforts or talks that help establish peace, stability and security in Afghanistan.

"Iran supports any process and dialogue in line with Afghanistan's independence, peace and stability," Mousavi stated.

A four-day consultative grand assembly, known as a Loya Jirga, started meeting in Kabul on Monday. The rare consultative meeting is aimed at finding ways to negotiate a peace deal with the Taliban and end the long-running war in Afghanistan.

It is an attempt by President Ashraf Ghani to influence peace talks between the U.S. and the Taliban, which the Taliban have excluded his government from.

"It is a proud moment for me to have representatives from all over the country here and today we are gathered to speak about the peace talks," Reuters quoted Ghani as saying in an opening ceremony in huge tent set up for such assemblies in central Kabul.

This week's meeting, being attended by 3,200 tribal elders, and community and religious leaders from all 34 provinces, aims to set out Kabul's conditions for any peace deal.

But opposition political leaders and government critics,

including former president Hamid Karzai, are boycotting the assembly accusing Ghani of using it as a platform to boost his status as leader in an election year.

Ghani has invited the Taliban, but they have rejected the offer and urged others to boycott it.

The group has also alleged that this is an attempt by the government to deceive the country and extend its "illegitimate rule".

"Do not participate in the enemy's conspiracy under the name of Jirga; instead find ways to further sideline the shaky administration of Kabul," Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said in a statement, according to Press TV.

## Trump places Israel above U.S.: Takht-Ravanchi

Envoy says Golan Heights inseparable from Syria

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — Iran's permanent representative to the United Nations said that the Trump administration is violating peremptory norms to bring Israel above U.S. itself, noting that "America First" is a sham motto.

Majid Takht-Ravanchi made the remarks in his address to the UN Security Council meeting on "Situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question".

Takht-Ravanchi said that the Security Council must ensure honoring the basic international law and oblige Israel to fully withdraw from the occupied territories of Palestine.

"The first and foremost problem of the Middle East is the question of Palestine, and the plan by the U.S. and some of its allies including Israel and Saudi Arabia to substitute it with artificial and manufactured threats and crises is designed to divert the attention of the international community from its illegal occupation of Palestine and others' lands," he explained.

The envoy also stressed that the Golan Heights is an inseparable part of Syria.

The text of Takht-Ravanchi's speech is as follows:

Mr. President, I thank you for convening this open debate on the world's longest crisis.

It is a given fact that no crisis can be solved permanently without addressing its main root causes, and the question of Palestine is no exception. It has started as a result of the occupation and can come to an end only by ending the occupation.

The Security Council, whose primary responsibility is the maintenance of international peace and security, has an explicit legal obligation to counter aggression and occupation. It must therefore take the necessary measures to force the Occupying Power to end the occupation.

However, the consideration of this issue by the Council over the course of the past seven decades has resulted in the adoption of some resolutions with no actual effect on the fate of Palestinians.

Interestingly enough, relying on the absolute support of a permanent member of this Council, Israel has implemented none of those resolutions.

Additionally, whenever this Council has opted to adopt any resolution to force Israel to implement them, the U.S. has vetoed all such

proposals (44 times thus far).

As a result, the Zionist regime has been emboldened to continue, with total impunity, its expansionist policies and illegitimate practices and has systematically committed all four core international crimes, i.e. crime of aggression, genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.

However, under the current U.S. Administration, the situation has changed drastically as the U.S. itself has also embarked on violating directly relevant binding resolutions of the Security Council.

The first example was moving the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem and the second one was recognizing Israel's sovereignty over the Occupied Syrian Golan.

Both acts are against the peremptory norms of international law, let alone Council's resolutions. According to international law, the territory of a State shall not be the object of acquisition resulting from the threat or use of force, and no such territorial acquisition shall be recognized as legal.

Therefore, the acts of the U.S. in this regard are illegitimate, null and void and have no legal

weight and value.

The Islamic Republic of Iran once again condemns, in the strongest possible terms, these internationally wrongful acts.

We stress that the Golan is and will remain an integral part of Syria.

Mr. President, The history of Palestine over the past seven decades teaches us certain important lessons.

First, on Israel, this Council has been both inactive and ineffective because of the unreserved support of the U.S. for Israel. Indeed, the continuation of this situation would further erode the credibility of the Council and deteriorate its already trust and confidence deficit. Likewise, in addition to UN, international law is another victim of the Israeli intransigence to end its occupation of Palestine.

Second, on Israeli related issues, the only principle guiding the U.S. foreign policy, particularly under its current Administration, is not "America first", rather it is "Israel first"; even at the price of blatantly violating the basic principles as well as the peremptory norms of international law.

→ 13

## We should export oil powerfully

The Americans will see for themselves in the coming months that our oil exports will continue, Rouhani says

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — The Iranian president says his country should continue to powerfully export oil, despite U.S. sanctions.

Speaking at a gathering of workers in Tehran, Hassan Rouhani said the U.S. administration intends via sanctions to reduce Iran's exchange revenues, a major source for which has been oil.

"The Americans will see for themselves in the coming months that our oil exports will continue. America may shut one door to us, but there is not just one way to doing this business. There are other ways which America does not know about," Rouhani said.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the president said in order to prevent the national currency from falling in value, Iran needs

to lower its dependence on foreign currencies.

To realize this goal, Rouhani said, workers and producers should meet Iran's needs. "And this is where you, workers and producers, are doing a great job as a major part of our needs is being made by your hands."

He added, "A great measure in countering America would be to increase exports as America is looking forward to limiting Iran's currency revenues so that we will face problems in importing goods."

"You are at the forefront of the fight with America... Our production capacity should increase... and quality Iran-made goods should be available at stores in Baghdad, Karbala, and Najaf."

After Tehran and world powers started implementing the 2015 nuclear deal in 2016, Iran started selling 2.3 million barrels of oil per day.

Washington quit the deal last May and re-imposed sanctions against Iran's oil exports last November.

It nevertheless issued six-month waivers for Iran's eight biggest buyers that allowed them to continue importing limited volumes. That drove Iran's oil sales down to around 1 million barrels per day.

Recently, the U.S. administration announced that it would no longer issue waivers for Iran's oil customers, with the aim to maximize its pressure on Tehran. It has announced that if any country imports oil from Iran after May 2 will face sanctions.

# 'Sanctions mean nothing to Iran which has 15 neighbors'

**POLITICAL TEHRAN** — Former Deputy foreign Minister Mohammad Reza Baqeri has said sanctions do not mean anything to Iran as a country which is surrounded by 15 neighbors.

"The policy of sanctions does not mean anything to a country that has 15 neighbors; however, we should know by what mechanism we can interact with these countries," Baqeri said in an interview with Mehr published on Tuesday.

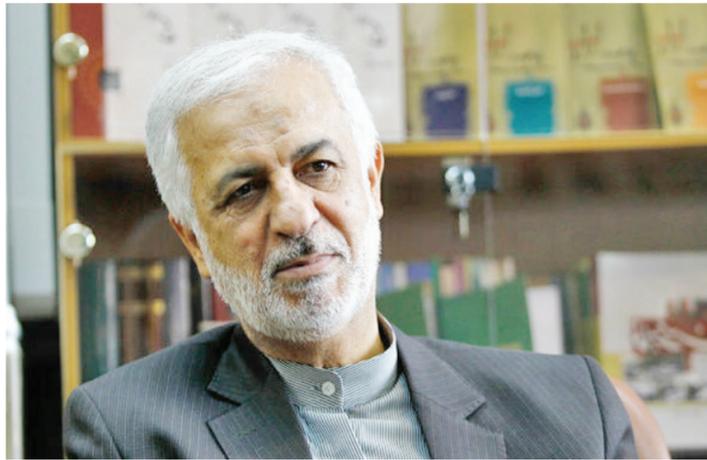
He said according to the principles of Iran's foreign policy, expanding relations with neighboring and regional countries is a top priority.

"However," he said, "this principle is sometimes neglected."

Baqeri pointed to Iran's relations with European countries, saying, "I believe work with Europeans should not be halted; however, we should also maintain and expand our relations with neighboring countries, including Arab and non-Arab states in order to pass through the current situation smoothly."

**'Astana process is the best mechanism available'**

On the future of the Astana peace process which aims to put an end to the Syrian cri-



sis, Baqeri said the Astana talks are the best mechanism currently available to resolve the protracted Syrian conflict.

The Astana process was launched by Russia, Turkey and Iran in January 2017 to bring

all warring parties in Syria to the negotiating table to complement the UN-sponsored peace talks in Geneva.

Baqeri also said disagreements among the three guarantor countries (Iran, Russia,

and Turkey) with regard to Syria is a natural issue because in the international stage, every player considers its national interests to be a priority and sets its policies based on that.

He pointed out that Iran, Russia and Turkey have all fallen victim to Washington's policies and also share the same concerns with regard to Syria's security and stability.

"Authorities of the country's diplomatic apparatus should make visits to the three countries of Russia, Turkey and Syria and meet their top authorities in order to maintain the important achievement of the Astana talks," the former diplomat remarked.

**'U.S. failed to coax Turkey, Iraq into acting against Iran'**

Baqeri also commented on the U.S. government's efforts to isolate Iran, saying the U.S. "has failed to lure Ankara into [supporting] its sanctions policy against Iran."

The Turkish authorities are well aware of Iran and Russia's capability in the region and thus they wouldn't follow the United States' commands, he argued.

Baqeri made similar comments about the Iraqi government, which he said "knows its friends and enemies" and would not be pressed into following Washington's anti-Iran policies.

## Minister offers condolences over assassination of cleric

**POLITICAL TEHRAN** — Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli on Monday expressed his condolences over the assassination of a cleric in the city of Hamedan.

Hojatoleslam Mustafa Ghasemi, 46, was shot dead on Saturday while leaving a local madrasah, an Islamic religious school.

The assassin was later killed in a clash with police forces. Ghasemi's murder was attributed to a fake Twitter account which had published contentious posts using his name.

Rahmani Fazli, in a post on his Instagram account, highlighted the necessity of putting certain restrictions on social media networks.

The tragic assassination of the cleric in Hamedan "showed that the cyberspace, beside its positive and valuable aspects,

can lead to crimes and unfortunate incidents," he stated.

He added that the internet is subject to strict rules in other countries — even the countries hosting big social media networks — in order to prevent anarchy and chaos.

The minister said violence is not limited to physical acts of terror, adding that disinformation, inciting people's sentiments by different means such as insulting, humiliating and spreading hopelessness lay the ground for "blind violence".

The Society of Qom Seminary Teachers has also issued a message of condolence over the incident.

In its message, which was published on Sunday, the society called on security authorities to take harsh measures against such acts, Fars reported.

"Those who are behind such incidents must be dealt with severely," it stated.



## General says U.S. trying in vain to target Iran's pillars of power



**POLITICAL TEHRAN** — Major General Mostafa Izadi, chief of the Cyber Headquarters of the Iranian Armed Forces, has said the current U.S. administration, which is supported by the Zionist lobby, has been trying in vain to target Iran's pillars of power.

"In return, the Islamic Republic has succeeded to change the enemy's military approach from offensive to defensive," Izadi said, Fars reported on Tuesday.

Calling Iran an important country in the world, General Izadi also said more than 200 American think tanks are currently doing studies on Iran.

He also said in the war against imperialism, "the Iranian nation has inflicted

many defeats on the enemy."

The general further referred to U.S. sanctions against Iran, saying the pipe dream of driving the Iranian oil exports to zero will not come true.

On April 22, the United States demanded that buyers of Iranian oil stop purchases by May 1 or face sanctions, ending six months of waivers which allowed Iran's eight biggest buyers, most of them in Asia, to continue importing limited volumes.

The White House said after its Iran move it was working with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to ensure oil markets were "adequately supplied" but traders worried about tight supplies.

## Islamic Coalition Party slams Saudi mass execution



**POLITICAL TEHRAN** — The Islamic Coalition Party has issued a message in condemnation of the "authoritarian" regime in Riyadh for beheading 37 of its citizens.

"The authoritarian Saudi regime once again added a paper to its dark list of crimes by beheading 37 religious and social activists in a mass execution," the party's statement read, Fars reported on Monday.

The statement added that the Saudi regime has committed numerous atrocities against humanity, including its creation and support of Takfiri terrorist groups such as Daesh (ISIL), brutal killing of the innocent Yemeni people and fomenting sedition in Syria, Iraq and other areas. As crackdown on pro-democracy campaigners, human rights

activists and intellectuals widens in the kingdom, Saudi Arabia's Interior Ministry announced a week ago that it had executed 37 people in a single day "in connection with terrorism crimes."

Human rights groups state that at least 33 out of the 37 executed individuals were from Saudi Arabia's persecuted Shia minority, according to the Middle East Eye.

Documents obtained by the CNN showed that many of the executed individuals had "repeatedly" told the Saudi court that, in a bid to save their lives, they had been forced to accept confessions their torturers had written for them.

Analysts say Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is responsible for such acts. The mass execution followed the killing and dismembering of Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in October 2018.

## Zarif departs for Doha to attend ACD meeting

**POLITICAL TEHRAN (Tasnim)** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif left Tehran for Doha on Tuesday to attend a ministerial meeting of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD).

The top Iranian diplomat is joining other dignitaries at the

16th ministerial meeting of the ACD, which will run until May 2.

Established in 2001, the Asian Cooperation Dialogue has 34 member countries. Its first meeting was held in Thailand in 2002 with 18 Asian founding countries in attendance.

Qatar's Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdul-

rahman al-Thani has announced in a Twitter post that the country's priority during its presidency over the ACD meeting will be to reach an Asian consensus, enhance cooperation, develop mechanisms for joint work, and strengthen economic and commercial ties.

## CENTCOM confirms IRGC video of U.S. aircraft carrier in Persian Gulf

**POLITICAL TEHRAN (Tasnim)** — The United States Central Command (USCENTCOM or CENTCOM) has confirmed an IRGC video that was published by the Tasnim news agency on Saturday showing U.S. warships are being monitored in the Persian Gulf waters, south of Iran.

The Persian language Twitter page of the U.S. Central Command wrote in a post last night that the video clip is showing the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower, a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier currently



in service with the United States Navy. It added the video was captured when the ship was present in the Persian Gulf back in 2016.

IRGC naval forces released on Saturday a high quality video of close observation of a U.S. aircraft carrier in the Persian Gulf.

On April 8, U.S. President Donald Trump announced that Washington is designating the IRGC a foreign "terrorist organization", marking the first time the U.S. has formally labeled another country's military a terrorist

group. Responding to the move, Iran's Supreme National Security Council immediately declared the U.S. as a state sponsor of terrorism and U.S. forces in the region terrorist.

The SNSC said it has put CENTCOM on its terror list as a "reciprocal measure" against the U.S. "illegal and unwise" move.

The Islamic Republic of Iran plays a significant and leading role in establishing security in the Persian Gulf.

## Persian Gulf means more than geographical, political issues: Zarif

**POLITICAL TEHRAN (MNA)** — In a message on the occasion of National Persian Gulf Day, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said "to us, the Persian Gulf has a broader definition than those political and geographical ones."

Referring to the Persian Gulf as a means of creating wealth in the region and the focal point of attention due to geopolitical and geo-economic issues, Zarif added that "the Islamic republic, with the longest coastline, believes that the Persian Gulf should remain strong and secure from threats."

"Security and stability of the Persian Gulf can be reached by constructive cooperation among the regional countries not by purchasing weapons, relying on foreign powers and forming doomed to failure coalitions," he added.

"Iran has insisted on its principled position about the necessity of building confidence and conducting negotiations as well as cooperation among regional countries and preventing dependence on trans-regional powers," he said in the message.



## Iran, Turkey launch direct internet link to neutralize sanctions

**POLITICAL TEHRAN (MNA)** — The Iranian ICT minister announced on Monday that a direct internet link between Iran and Turkey has been established amid threats and sanctions against Iran's access to the internet.

The report surfaced after a meeting between Iranian ICT Minister Mohammad-Javad Azari Jahromi and Turkish Minister of Transport and Infrastructure Mehmet Cahit Turhan in Tehran on Monday afternoon.

Azari Jahromi said that Iran had faced restrictions and problems in its communications with other countries due to limited communications that the country had established with some companies, and due to sanctions on financial issues at some point in the past, while adding that "we did not face problems with Turkish companies and the [neighboring] country accompanied us." The ICT minister added that a direct internet link (peer communications) between Iran and Turkey has been established amid threats and sanctions on the internet access.

He added that Iran has established a direct link with Turkey's internet network, so U.S. sanctions will not affect data relations between the two countries.

## National Trust Party calls on govt. to raise workers' salaries

**POLITICAL TEHRAN** — The National Trust Party on Tuesday called on the Rouhani administration to provide workers with support packages and to make efforts to raise their salaries.

In a statement published ahead of International Workers' Day, the party said celebrating workers' day without paying attention to their requests would not bring any benefits to their community.

However, the day is an opportunity to address the workers' issues and pay attention to their role in production and economic development, the statement added.

## Commander warns U.S. of Iran's crushing response to any adventurous move

**POLITICAL TEHRAN (FNA)** — Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Deputy Commander for Coordination Affairs Rear Admiral Ali Fadavi warned the Americans against any adventurism against Iran, stressing that Tehran's military power has increased greatly compared to the past.

"The Americans have always been given a crushing response when they have done anything wrong, and they will surely receive a response in future too if they take any (wrong) action. At present, we are much more powerful than before and the Americans know this well too," Fadavi said, addressing Iranian university students in Tehran on Monday.

Asked about U.S. allegations of blocking the bank accounts of IRGC commanders in foreign states after blacklisting the IRGC, he said that his colleagues do not have any accounts outside the country. Elsewhere, General Fadavi referred to Iran's military advisory role in Syria, saying, "Today, we fight against enemy thousands of kilometers away, while we have the initiative."

Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri said on January 27 that Iran could change its defensive approach to offensive if its interests are endangered. "Of course, we do not have any greedy eyes on other countries' interests and soil, but it is possible that we adopt an offensive approach to protect our interests to make foreigners keep thoughts of aggression against our country's interests away even from their minds by witnessing impacts," General Baqeri said.

Then, five days later, General Hossein Salami said that if Western powers sought to limit Iran's missile power, the country would have no option but to expand its potential in the strategically important field.

Salami, who is now the IRGC chief, made the remarks on February 3, when he reiterated that Iran's strategy to maintain a cap on its missile power would change if the European Union and others sought to force the country into disarmament.

"If the Europeans and others want to pursue the missile disarmament of the Islamic Republic of Iran based on a plot, we will have no option but to resort to a strategic leap," Salami told the Iranian television.

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	216642.0
IFX	2632.29

Sources: tse.ir, ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,996 rials
GBP	54,356 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$72.00/b
WTI	\$64.08/b
OPEC Basket	\$72.38/b
Gold	\$1,285.60/oz
Silver	\$15.03/oz
Platinum	\$900.70/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



**Bank loans to economic sectors rises 26% in a year**

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — Iranian banking system's offered facilities to domestic economic sectors during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2019), increased by 26 percent from its previous year, IRIB reported. As reported, 7,737 quadrillion rials (about \$184.2 billion) of loans were granted to Iranian economic sector in the past year. Working capital loans paid to different economic sectors was above 4.319 quadrillion rials (about \$102.8 billion) accounting for 55.8 percent of the total provided facilities in the said period, registering a 14-percent increase from the previous year.

**Isfahan to host intl. stone exhibition from today**

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — The 15th International Exhibition of Stones, Quarries and Related Industries is scheduled to be opened today in Isfahan, central Iran. According to IRIB, in this exhibition domestic companies along with foreign exhibitors from various countries including China, Spain, Russia and Italy are going to showcase their latest products, achievements and innovations. The exhibition will be covering four main sectors of exploration, extraction, processing and exports, with companies active in various areas including mining equipment, mining machinery manufacturers, drills and processing equipment as well as exporters and importers in attendance. It is also scheduled for several foreign and domestic trade and investment delegations to visit the exhibition and hold B2B talks with manufacturers, traders, and producers. In this exhibition, various types of processed construction and decoration stones, equipment and machinery and tools for stone processing, mining and extraction technologies, cutting and polishing tools, safety equipment, and transportation, as well as special publications, besides banking and insurance services will be showcased.

**Stocks wilt after weak China data; euro zone GDP in focus**

European equity markets nudged down on Tuesday as weak Chinese business surveys dampened appetite for risk, while investors braced for a spate of data on the region's economic health. Reuters reported the bourses in Britain, France and Germany followed Asian peers into the red after the surveys on China manufacturing missed forecasts - another sign that Beijing's efforts to spur growth in the world's second biggest economy had yet to bear fruit. Both official and private business surveys suggested slower Chinese factory growth this month, dashing hopes for a steady reading or even a faster expansion. Data also showed a slower expansion in its services sector. Those figures underscored questions over prospects for the Chinese economy, with investors across the world already on edge over growing signs of a two-speed global economy where a robust United States outpaces its peers. The Euro STOXX 600 was off 0.2 percent, with British shares down 0.2 and bourses in Germany and France down 0.1 and 0.4 percent respectively. All eyes were on euro zone GDP figures, due at 0900 GMT, and data on German CPI, due at 1200 GMT. **Wages edging higher** "Unemployment is down, wages are starting to edge higher but inflation remains very subdued," he said. "That is the biggest problem for the European Central Bank in terms of its policy response in trying to lift demand in the euro area." Forecasts for the euro zone are for a 0.3 percent rise in GDP from the previous quarter. Earlier, France reported steady growth for the first quarter, while Spain's economy also grew faster than expected. Ahead of the euro zone data, corporate earnings were the major factor. Chipmaker AMS jumped 16 percent after beating forecasts for first-quarter profit. AMS is a supplier to Apple, which is due to report its results later. Banks dragged heavily on the STOXX 600. Danske Bank, hit by money-laundering scandals, fell more than 6 percent after lowering its outlook for 2019, while No. 1 euro zone bank Santander also slipped after first-quarter net profit.

**Crude steel production rises 7.1% in Q1**

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — Production of crude steel in Iran rose 7.1 percent during the first quarter of 2019 compared to the same period of time in 2018, Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) announced citing a recent report by the World Steel Organization (WSO). It is while crude steel production in the world increased 4.5 percent in the first quarter of this year, IRNA reported on Tuesday. The WSO's report put Iran's crude steel output at 6.223 million tons and that of the world's 64 steel producers at 155.9 million tons in the three-month period. China, India, Japan, the U.S., and South Korea were the top five steel producers in the world during the first quarter of this year. A previous report by the WSO indicated that Iran became the world's tenth largest steel producer in 2018. Iran which stood at the 13th place in 2017 could lag behind three major steel producers in the world, namely Italy, Taiwan, and Ukraine to stand at the 10th place in 2018, despite the re-imposition of sanctions by the U.S. According to the WSO's report, Iran produced 25 million tons of crude steel in 2018 which indicates 17.7 percent growth from 21.2 million tons in 2017. The country's crude steel production capacity will increase by 25 million tons within the next four years, according to a deputy director in IMIDRO. Ardeshtir Sa'd Mohammadi said that through such increase in crude steel output, the required feedstock for the plants will be properly supplied, IRNA reported on Saturday. The official further lamented that of the 35 million tons of crude steel produced in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2019), 25 million tons were used in the production process. Iran is one of the top 10 mineral-rich countries where 68 types of minerals have been identified so far, including the world's largest deposits of copper, zinc and iron ore, which are tempting international investors.



**Over \$857m of loans to be offered to industrial units**

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — Iranian deputy industry minister said that 360 trillion rials (about \$857.1 million) of facilities will be granted to the industrial units in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21) in the framework of production flourishing plan, IRNA reported. Mohsen Salehinia, who is also the head of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO), made the remarks on Monday evening when visiting an industrial estate in the northern city of Rasht. In late February, the official had said that about 1,300 industrial units have come back online to production cycle via injection of financial resource. In the current Iranian calendar year, the government plans to provide facilities under the framework of subsidies for projects with more than 60 percent of physical development, to supply working capital of firms, to renovate production units and etc, the official noted. According to Salehinia, small-sized units account for 93 percent of the total number of units active in Iran's industrial estates. Stressing the significance of supporting these units, the official said that small units are more vulnerable to the economic pressures. The deputy minister further said that 43,000 industrial and production units are active in 983 industrial estates of the country creating jobs for 885,000 persons.



**INSTEX chief briefs British businesses on mechanism progress**

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — President of Europe's special purpose mechanism for trade with Iran, known as Instrument for Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX), discussed the progress of the mechanism in a meeting with British officials, manufacturers and heads of businesses in London, IRNA reported. Per Fischer visited London on Monday to brief investors, businessmen, and financial and credit institutions interested in trade with Iran, on the latest developments on INSTEX. In the gathering which was organized by the British department for international trade in collaboration with Iran-Britain joint chamber of commerce, industries and mines, Fischer responded to some of the concerns of the British companies about conducting financial transactions with Iran, and the two sides discussed how this mechanism could work better in order to facilitate business contacts between Europe and Iran. According to the Iranian Ambassador to London Hamid Baedinejad, in the meeting Fischer announced that despite the existing challenges INSTEX is seriously seeking to conduct the first trade transactions with its Iranian counterpart as soon as possible. INSTEX is a special purpose trade mechanism which was created in January 2019 by France, Germany and Britain to facilitate legitimate trade between European economic operators and Iran. European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas and British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt have said INSTEX will support legitimate European trade with Iran. Russia and China have also remained publicly committed to the existing accord.

**Annual non-oil exports from Iran to Turkey at over \$2.3b**

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — The value of Iran's non-oil exports to Turkey surpassed \$2.3 billion in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2019), IRNA reported. With taking into account the oil exports, the figure rose up considerably. Turkey is among the countries that are the exporters of goods and household appliances to Iran and it imports non-oil goods and oil from Iran without observing the sanctions.



Turkey, the fourth export destination for Iran in ranking, was among the countries to oppose Washington's sanctions on Tehran. Ankara, recently, condemned the U.S. not renewing the waivers for Iranian oil purchasers and called the move childish. Head of Iran-Turkey Joint Chamber of Commerce Reza Kami told IRNA after the waivers were not renewed that Turkey had officially announced that Ankara would not accept Iran's oil and natural gas being replaced by others', so one can rely on the mutual trade. Kami said that Iran has a record level economic cooperation with Turkey; nearly 100 Turkish companies have made investment in Iranian private sector, mostly in the northwestern provinces, which are close to the Turkish border. He added that most of the investment has been in industries and production. Iranian and Turkish officials have already reached agreement to set up a joint bank, he said, adding that due to some tariff problems, the bank has not become operational yet. During a visit of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to Iran both sides stressed that the tariffs should be reviewed and finalized as soon as possible. He said that experts have advised the Iranian and Turkish officials to adopt preferential tariffs to regulate trade ties and help boost economic cooperation.

IN THE NAME OF GOD  
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING

**INTERNATIONAL TENDER NO. 98/133-02/03**

**Tender Holder:**  
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING (IRIB)

**Subject of Tender:**  
Leasing 18MHz space on Eutelsat 3B (E3B) for three years in accordance with the technical specifications and other terms and conditions mentioned in the tender documents.

**Deadline and How to Receive the Tender Documents:**  
From **Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2019 (1398/02/10)** until **Saturday 04<sup>th</sup> May 2019 (1398/02/14)** by **16:00 p.m.** with presentation of introductory letter by company or its representative and the receipt of paying the documents fee.

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

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

**Type and Amount of Guarantee for Participation to Tender:**  
The amount of deposit for participant in tender is **USD 41,180** fixed or its equivalent in 5,765,000,000 Rials which should be in the form of Bank Guarantee.

**Time and Place of Delivering Bidding Envelopes:**  
The sealed packages/envelopes should be submitted no later than **4 p.m. on Saturday 08 of June 2019 (1398/03/18)** and at the address mentioned in the 4th clause.

**Time and Place of Opening Envelopes:**  
The date of opening the envelopes is on **Sunday 09 June 2019 at 03:00 p.m. (1398/03/19)** in the office of Financial Vice President. In case of complete content in the envelopes A, the envelope B including contract draft, Technical specifications and qualitative assessment analysis will be considered and opened. The Envelop C will be opened of only those eligible participants who meets the qualification criterion and approval of Technical and Commercial committee at the same time and place.  
For more information, please see: [www.iriboffice.ir/tenders](http://www.iriboffice.ir/tenders) and <http://i.ets.mporq.ir/> Tel: **00982122167053**

**Purchasing (Kala) Dept. of IRIB**

# Up to 1GW of new power plants to come on stream

**E N E R G Y** TEHRAN – Up to 1000 megawatts capacity of new power plants are going to be added to the country's electricity network to supply the demands in the summer peak period, IRNA reported on Tuesday quoting a deputy at Iran's Power Generation and Distribution Company (known as TAVANIR).

Speaking on the sidelines of a conference in Tehran, TAVANIR Deputy of Operation Monitoring and Coordination Gholam-Reza Mehrdad noted the general overhauling program of the country's thermal power plants is almost finished and all of them are getting ready for the peak period.

In March, Homayoun Haeri, the deputy minister of energy for electricity affairs, said Iranian power plants are set to produce at least 51 gigawatts (GW) of electricity during



the peak hours of consumption in summer.

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

In October 2018, the head of Iran's Thermal Power Plants Holding Company unveiled a plan for an increase in the efficiency of the country's power plants up to 40 percent.

Some 448 units in 91 of Iran's thermal power plants are going under a general overhauling program to get ready for the year's demand peak period.

The annual overhaul program starts every year in early September and will continue until late May in the next year.

## Petrochemical plant project to start on Thursday

**E N E R G Y** TEHRAN – The construction project of a new petrochemical complex is going to be commenced on Thursday in Sonqor County, in the western Iranian province of Kermanshah, Mehr news agency reported quoting an official as saying.

According to Sonqor and Kolyaei MP Javad Hosseini-Kia, with a production capacity of 48,000 tons per annum, the project will be inaugurated in a ceremony to be attended by Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh.

As reported, in line with the government's policies for promoting the downstream petrochemical industry, the plant will provide over 150 direct job opportunities in the region.

Petrochemical is Iran's most impor-

tant industry after oil and gas. The National Petrochemical Company hopes to lift output capacity to 120 million tons per annum by 2022.

In the March 2018-19 fiscal, Iranian companies exported \$14.1 billion worth of petrochemicals. Official data has it that petrochemicals account for 32 percent of Iran's non-oil exports.

The petrochemical industry has played a key role in domestic economic growth as it creates value-added and reduces the sale of oil and gas on which the economy has been dependent for decades.

With abundant hydrocarbon reserves and new private sector investments, Iran is working hard to maintain its global status in the key sector and broaden its scope.

## BP first-quarter profits slip despite oil price recovery

BP reported first-quarter profit largely in line with expectations on Tuesday, citing tough market conditions at the start of the year.

As cnbc.com reports the British oil giant posted first-quarter underlying replacement cost profit, used as a proxy for net profit, of \$2.4 billion, versus \$2.3 billion expected in a Reuters poll. That compared with a profit of \$2.6 billion a year earlier and \$3.5 billion in the final three months of 2018.

The London-listed company said profits were supported by stronger results from its oil and gas trading operations.

"It was a pretty resilient set of results actually given the environment we came into at the start of the year," Brian Gilvary, chief financial officer at BP, told CNBC's "Squawk Box Europe" on Tuesday.

Gilvary said the three-month period through to March had been particularly "tough" because of adverse weather conditions, assets being put out of action and lower oil prices in January.

"I think oil prices look pretty firm given where we are today but we are going to continue to maintain capital discipline," he added.

BP's results coincided with a significant recovery in oil prices through the first three months of the year. International benchmark Brent crude and U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) have risen by approximately 33% and 40% year-to-date.

The value of a barrel of Brent crude stood at \$71.82 Tuesday morning, while WTI traded at \$63.43. Shares of BP are up more than 11% since the start of 2019.

## Iran oil import issue to hit India-U.S. ties

By Zhang Jiadong

The U.S. recently announced that it would not extend sanctions waivers for Iran oil importers, claiming all oil buyers will have to end imports from Iran or be subject to U.S. sanctions after May 2. Given that Iran is an important energy and trade partner of India, the U.S. move will highly likely affect U.S.-India ties.

India relies on imports for 80 percent of its oil demand. Before the U.S. withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal, Iran was India's third largest oil supplier. Previously, the U.S. has granted exemptions to India, according to which, as of March 2019, India had to restrict its monthly oil purchase from Iran to 1.25 million tons, equivalent to 70 percent of what India had been importing from Iran before Washington quit the Iran nuclear deal. This is bearable for India.

More importantly, by importing oil from Iran, India saves around a quarter of combined costs due to favorable conditions such as prices, transportation and insurance. Based on the deal of exemptions, the Iranian oil should not be traded in U.S. dollars, lest Iran's export earnings be used to finance international ter-

rorism. India has to pay Iran in rupees for oil imports. The sum of money is deposited in a special account in India. Iran U.S. es it to purchase humanitarian supplies such as rice and medicines from India. For India, this situation worked to its advantage.

Judging from the current political situation in the U.S., the country is unlikely to compensate India economically. U.S. oil exporters hope to take the opportunity to expand oil exports to India. However, their trade terms are not attractive while the trade volume is limited. Nor does India want its energy security to be navigated by the U.S.

Therefore, once the sanction waiver expires, India's oil import costs, its U.S. dollar payouts will rise and its export revenue will decrease. By then, India's economic growth and exchange rate's stability will be under great pressure.

In addition, if the U.S. tightens sanctions on Iranian oil exports, it will push up international oil prices, thereby increasing India's overall oil import bills. Once India's economic interests are impaired, India-U.S. relations are sure to be hurt.

Moreover, cooperation between the U.S. and India on issues such as Afghanistan will be

impeded. India-Iran relations transcend the oil trade. The two nations also share a long-term strategic consensus, on issues such as Afghanistan and Pakistan. Iran hopes to strengthen its ties with Afghanistan.

Similarly, India also hopes to reach out to Afghanistan through Iran and extend its influence to Central Asia. According to The Economic Times, India has "committed \$3 billion in assistance to Afghanistan since 2001," so as to cultivate Afghan's goodwill toward India.

In addition, India is investing in Iran's Chabahar port in order to build a new link between India and Afghanistan through the port and to have more connections between the two countries.

Now, the U.S. has announced its withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, which jeopardizes Afghanistan's stability and India's investment in the country. Moreover, U.S. sanctions would severely stymie cooperation between India and Iran over the port of Chabahar.

All that is likely to undermine the relationship between India and Iran, thwart U.S.-India defense cooperation on Afghanistan as well as counter-terrorism efforts that started since the September 11 attacks.

The divergences between U.S. and India on Iran are impairing their strategic relations and mutual understanding. India maintains close military cooperation with the U.S. and is involved in Washington's Indo-Pacific strategy.

However, policy changes by the U.S. on the Iran nuclear issue make India worried about Washington's real interests, long-term strategy and uncertainty in ties with the U.S. Many Indians believe that the U.S. does not care for India's interests and strategy, but merely intends to use New Delhi to contain Beijing. They say India is a strategic pawn of the U.S. but not an equal partner. There is resentment among certain Indians because the U.S. has demanded that India cut ties with Iran, but keeps providing assistance to Pakistan without considering India's feelings.

In fact, since last year, India has begun to distance itself from the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy and reverted to its strategic independence and autonomy. India's frosty relations with Russia and China have also improved. Probably, U.S.-India relations will only be normal and sustainable under multilateral framework.

(Source: Global Times)

## Oil traders eye Saudi Arabia's response in a critical juncture for crude

By Dan Murphy

Global oil markets sit at a critical juncture, with risks to supply being balanced against rising prices and questions over whether major producers will now turn on the taps.

Brent crude touched \$75 per barrel last week for the first time this year, helping the benchmark to log a fifth positive week in a row and add to the year's near 40% gain.

"This is definitely something we have to monitor," UBS APAC Chief Investment Officer Adrian Zuercher told CNBC's "Squawk Box Asia."

"It will remain volatile," he added. "We expect Brent to remain between 70 and 80 U.S. dollars at this point." WTI also moved above \$65 a barrel, even as rising U.S. stockpiles and surging U.S. production slowed some of the recent price momentum.

Renewed U.S. efforts to curb Iranian output, escalating tensions in Libya, supply outages in Nigeria and the ongoing crisis in Venezuela have created a complex and uncertain outlook for crude.

### A major test ahead

The week ahead will be another major test, with Iranian sanction waivers officially expiring in early May, and the U.S. decision to cancel all concessions raising new questions about how Saudi Arabia and other major producers will respond.

"We now know that OPEC has that spare capacity," Goldman Sachs' Head of Commodities Research Jeff Currie told CNBC's "Power Lunch," reiterating his Brent forecast of \$70-75 barrel for the second quarter of 2019.

"They ramped it up, they took it back down, and we think the (Iran) shock is roughly 900,000 barrels per day, and we just saw OPEC, at least core OPEC, taking 1.8 million barrels per day off the market," Currie added.

The decision to end the waivers could remove 1.3 million barrels per day of Iranian exports, according to S&P Global Platts. OPEC has about 3.3 million barrels per day of spare production capacity, according to the



International Energy Agency, of which about 2.2 million barrels per day is held by Saudi Arabia.

While capable of doing so, whether or not Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are willing to increase supply to make up for the Iranian shortfall remains to be seen. The assurance given to the U.S. lacks concrete details, and no formal agreement has been set. Both countries have also been vocal advocates of discipline within the OPEC-plus production agreement.

Now, there is increased diplomatic pressure to reverse course.

"We are not going to be pre-emptive and increase production," Saudi Energy Minister Khalid al Falih said at an event in Riyadh last week, indicating that he won't pump beyond the agreed cap of around 10 million barrels per day, at least for now.

But what Saudi Arabia does next will be very closely watched.

The Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee meeting in Saudi Arabia on May 19 will be the first opportunity for Saudi Arabia and OPEC-plus to telegraph its intentions for the second half of the year. The meeting will also set the stage for a critical gathering of OPEC on June 25, just days before the current production cut accord is

set to expire.

OPEC-plus will probably agree to extend its cuts into the second half of the year, but the cancellation of the Iran waivers and a slew of other supply side uncertainties mean a volume adjustment could be on the agenda.

### Relaxing the supply curbs

Relaxing the agreed supply curbs would appease the United States and likely temper oil price gains. But it could also risk putting the fragile and hard-fought unity of OPEC-plus to the test, and more importantly, it would erode spare production capacity at a time of heightened geopolitical risk.

Reducing capacity would significantly lessen the group's ability to deal with unforeseen supply uncertainties stemming from fragile producers such as Venezuela, where the U.S. is mulling additional sanctions that could further cripple output, or Libya; where a battle in the capital threatens to spill over to the country's oil-producing assets.

"If we lost Libya from the market, it would take spare capacity down to very uncomfortable levels and would certainly add a major risk premium to oil," Neil Beveridge, senior oil and gas analyst at Bernstein, told CNBC's "Squawk Box Asia."

Instability in Algeria, Nigeria and Sudan, as well as the recent suspension of some Russian crude exports to Europe, are also issues that OPEC-plus will be watching.

"Sometimes you have to look in the back-view mirror to predict where the future is going," Khalid al Falih told CNBC back in February.

"I'm leaning towards the likelihood of an (supply cap) extension in the second half, but that's not automatic," he added.

"If we find out that the fundamentals are tightening, by June you can bet that I will be, just like we did last year, encouraging my colleagues within OPEC plus to ease their voluntary limits."

Now, the market is watching to see exactly which way Saudi Arabia will lean.

(Source: cnbc.com)

## India insisting on oil imports from Iran

**1** → In May last year, the U.S. brought back sanctions on Iran after withdrawing from the Iran nuclear deal which was struck in 2015.

They told India and other countries to cut oil imports from the Persian Gulf nation to "zero" by November 4 or face sanctions. However, Washington granted a six-month waiver to India and seven other countries to buy oil from Iran. The waivers are due to expire in May.

India, which is the second biggest purchaser of Iranian oil after China, has since then restricted its monthly purchase to 1.25 million tons or 15 million tons in a year (300,000 barrels per day), down from 22.6 million tons (452,000 barrels per day) bought in 2017-18 financial year, sources said.

The world's third biggest oil consumer, meets more than 80 percent of its oil needs through imports.

## Oil prices firm on signs that OPEC may extend supply cuts

**E N E R G Y** Oil prices on Tuesday reversed earlier losses after Saudi Arabia said a deal between producers to withhold output that has been in place since January could be extended beyond June to cover all of 2019.

According to Reuters, the statements by Saudi energy minister Khalid Al-Falih came despite pressure by U.S. President Donald Trump to raise output to make up for a supply shortfall expected from tightening U.S. sanctions against Iran.

Brent crude futures were at \$72.25 per barrel at 0701 GMT, up 21 cents, or 0.3 percent, from their last close.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were at \$63.67 per barrel, up 17 cents, or 0.3 percent, from their previous settlement.

Prices had come under downward pressure earlier on Tuesday after data on China's factory activity weighed on financial markets, including crude oil futures, as it suggested Asia's biggest economy is still struggling to regain traction.

Despite a shaky global economy, oil prices have surged by almost 40 percent since January, lifted by supply cuts led by the Middle East-dominated producer club of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) as well as by U.S. sanctions on producers Iran and Venezuela.

Matt Stanley, a broker with Starfuels in Dubai, said oil prices had risen this year due to the "choking" of supply rather than because of strong demand.

The Saudi statements appear to defy calls by Trump late last week for OPEC and its de-facto leader Saudi Arabia to raise output to meet the supply shortfall caused by the tightening Iran sanctions.

Bank of America Merrill Lynch said "Iranian oil production will fall to 1.9 million barrels per day in 2H19 from 3.6 million barrels per day in 3Q18 as U.S. sanctions kick in and waivers eventually expire".

Despite this, the bank said it expected "a nearly balanced market in 2019" as output from OPEC and also the United States will rise.

French bank BNP Paribas said it expected oil prices "to rise in the near-term" as crude producers were "over-tightening the market in the face of unplanned supply outages and resilient oil demand".

The bank said it expected crude markets to climb until the third quarter of 2019, adding that prices would then "start to become vulnerable to a sharp rise in U.S. exports of light crude thanks to pipeline and terminal capacity expansion".

U.S. exports exceeded 3 million barrels per day (bpd) for the first time in early 2019 amid a more than 2 million bpd production surge over the past year, to a record of more than 12 million bpd.

## Russia says 'clean' crude to reach the port of Ust-Luga on May 7

By Nadia Rodova and Rosemary Griffin

Register Now Deliveries to the port have been disrupted due to contamination of crude with excess chlorides. The problem has also led to damage to refineries in Russia and Belarus, and suspension of deliveries to Europe.

Earlier Monday, Russia said that the crude reaching its entry point to Belarus through the Druzhba Pipeline is now of export quality, as the nation works to resolve last week's rare but massive contamination of key export blend Urals.

Deliveries through the Druzhba line -- which supplies crude to refineries in Belarus, Poland, Germany, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic -- have been halted since last week after high levels of organic chlorides were found in crude delivered to Belarus, affecting its Mozyr refinery.

"Crude meeting (the required) standards has reached the bordering entry point at the Unecha station as of 12:00 Moscow time (0900 GMT)," according to Ilya Dzhus, spokesman for Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Kozak, as reported by Prime news agency Monday. Kozak's comment followed an earlier statement Monday from Belarus key refiner, Belneftekhim that the country was yet to start receiving on-spec Urals barrels via the Druzhba pipeline as had initially been planned.

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Belarus' sections of the Druzhba pipeline have undergone "all technical measures for the earliest possible reception of clean oil from the Russian (entry point of) Unecha," the company said in its statement. "At present, there is still oil with a high level of organic chlorides content in the pipeline on the territory of Belarus. Pumping of pure oil via Druzhba has not started."

Belneftekhim added that a company delegation was flying to Moscow for talks on the matter Monday.

Russia's energy ministry did not comment on the current situation around the Druzhba line.

Key pipeline operators of the Druzhba infrastructure, including those in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Poland, held consultations Friday to find out a way to resolve the problem, after which Kozak, who supervises the Russian energy sector, said that stable supplies of high-quality crude would be restored within two weeks.

The parties have developed a technological plan to eliminate the consequences of the incident, "and fully restore the stable work of the pipeline" within two weeks, Kozak said at the time.

### Halt in crude supplies

Russia, meanwhile, is continuing its investigation to identify what caused the unprecedented halt in crude supplies via Druzhba.

The country's biggest oil producer, Rosneft, said the latest analysis conducted jointly with pipeline operator Transneft had proven that its crude pumped into the Druzhba pipeline was meeting all of the appropriate standards.

"Rosneft conducted analysis of arbitration samples of oil handed over by the Rosneft Group into the Samara-Unecha pipeline section for the period from the last decade of March to the end of April 2019. The results of the research confirmed that oil delivered by Rosneft (entities) corresponded fully to the requirements," it said.

(Source: spglobal.com)

## BRF spotlights higher-quality opening-up



By Ei Sun Oh

**Global Times** — The second Belt and Road Forum (BRF) for International Cooperation concluded in Beijing over the weekend, perhaps with results that went beyond the expectations of many observers. President Xi Jinping's speech at the opening ceremony echoed both the yearnings among many countries along the route of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) for "two-way traffic" in BRI dealings as well as the continuation of free trade.

These include the announcement of further measures in deepening and broadening China's reform and opening-up process, including widening market access for foreign investors and strengthening intellectual property (IP) protection, with China's huge domestic markets pledging to procure even more foreign goods. This is of course in stark contrast to US administration's frequent threats of tariff hikes to deter foreign goods.

The vast China market is a most coveted one for countries with economies steeped in export of commodities and manufactured products. So Xi's announcement of further opening-up of the Chinese economy for foreign goods and services is a most welcome move and is likely to uplift the economic performance of these countries. Similarly, the tightening of IP protection would spur further foreign direct investment (FDI) into China by the more advanced BRI countries, thereby realizing an "open" participation by all Belt and Road nations in each other's economies.

Since the BRI was first proposed by Xi six years ago in Kazakhstan, the regions along the routes have experienced tremendous, sometimes fundamental developmental transformation. Among the five BRI principles is policy coordination, which saw China signing up memoranda of cooperation or strategic partnerships not only among close neighbors but also stretching as far as Italy and Switzerland in Europe. In line with the principle of facility linkage, many infrastructural projects with Chinese involvement have been sprouting all along the Belt and Road.

That was perhaps a well-intentioned move by the Chinese side, based on its own hugely successful developmental experience. The country has a saying, first build the road, prosperity will come along. Indeed, the many high-speed rail lines and highways linking cities big and small in China, for example, have spurred hitherto unseen growth almost wherever they reach. The entrepreneurial Chinese would make use of the reach of such advanced infrastructure to develop previously remote regions in order to better their own livelihoods and the community's in the process.

And seeing the somewhat dated infrastructure of its many developing neighbors, China was perhaps overenthusiastic in trying to assist them to improve their physical linkages, not the least with China, so that some other BRI principles, such as trade facilitation, capital fluidity and ultimately people-to-people bonds could be achieved more efficiently. That was perhaps the main theme of the first BRI summit two years ago, summing up some of the mainly infrastructural projects that have been carried out and announcing new ones, with financial packages in the form of funds and loans to back up. Many of the regions along the BRI do need such infrastructural upgrades in order to unleash their developmental potential thus far hemmed in by a lack of basic amenities, such as access to electricity and yes, roads.

Fast forward two years, and both the global socioeconomic and geopolitical scenes have somewhat shifted. Socioeconomically, although new wealth has been created even despite the world economy being in the doldrums, it has often not been fairly and effectively spread across all social strata in many regions, not the least those along the BRI.

The sustainability of such wealth creation is then called into question. Geopolitically, the US which remains the world's largest economy, has increasingly and unabashedly practiced isolationism, ditching the concept and practice of free trade which it first advocated for the longest period in favor of rabid protectionism disguised as "America First," setting up an example for the rise of jingoism around the world.

It is against this somewhat convoluted backdrop that the second BRI summit was unveiled. There was a distinct shift in emphasis from "hardware" development to perhaps what can be called "software" promotion. Xi in his speech stressed the importance of quality development that is open, clean and green.

This renewed emphasis on refining the BRI projects is expected to be welcomed across the participating regions, as openness would mean increased participation by all stakeholders, both local and foreign, and hopefully from all strata in a society, in implementation.

"Cleanliness" here refers to joint efforts in combating corruption and abuses which have plagued many developing countries, not the least some along the BRI. But most importantly, the BRI projects should be "green," being minimally environmentally invasive, with optimal use of renewable energy and sustainable resources. Many countries are starting essentially from scratch in their developmental journey, and they must do it in tune with the aspirations of their people and the preservation of the environment, which is precious.

And there was also a subtle, renewed emphasis on further building up of people-to-people bonds in this summit. And that, ultimately, would perhaps be the ultimate achievement of the BRI, so that a community of shared destiny and peace and prosperity would come to fruition.

# Impossible to drive Iran's oil export to zero: Turkish politician

**1 →** ■ The U.S. is making efforts to drive the export of Iranian oil to zero. Is it possible? If no, why?

A: The U.S. effort to drive Iranian oil exports to zero is not possible. There will certainly be buyers of Iranian oil who will not comply with U.S. sanctions. China has already declared that its trade with Iran is legal and normal. Turkey has also taken a stance against the U.S. move. Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu stated that the U.S. decision will not serve regional peace and stability, yet harm the Iranian people and added that Turkey rejects unilateral sanctions and impositions on how to conduct relations with neighbors. Iran's exports might be curtailed for some time to come in the near future, but over time the volume of its exports could/should rise. We should expect adverse reactions to the U.S. decision to grow in time and this could also help Iran to sell more of its oil.

■ The U.S. is forcing Turkey to stop buying oil from Iran and replace Saudi and



Emeriti oil instead of Iranian oil. What are the advantages of Iranian oil for Turkey?

A: Iran is our neighbor. We have a broad range of economic relations. Oil is one major element in the nexus of our ties with Iran. The physical proximity is also an important asset as far as Iranian oil is concerned. Given the state of our problematic relations with both Saudi Arabia and the UAE, there is no incentive for Turkey to buy oil from them.

■ Considering the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and UAE from one side with Turkey and their differences, Can't U.S. request threaten Turkey's energy security and maybe consequently it national security due to the fact the UAE is one of the supporters of the PKK terrorist separatist group?

A: Even if Turkey reduces its Iranian oil imports and starts to look for other sources, the alternative for Turkey will be neither Saudi Arabia nor the UAE. Current conditions will not allow Turkey to turn in that direction. In any case, the U.S. is not in a position to ask Turkey where it is to buy its oil from.

## E-payment platforms necessary for Africa's economic development

By Toumert Al

**Global Times** — Africa is facing challenges that are taking root due to not engaging with micro-economic policies that focus on bringing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to a level required for stable economic growth.

For 2019, the World Bank has forecast weak growth due to the lack of comprehensive regulations under global commerce integration and the ability to deliver at the local level. Now, there is one clear fact, without robust local economies, global integration cannot be successful. African policymakers must focus on SMEs to follow through with economic growth plans.

While African countries are busy with important infrastructure projects such as transportation hubs, power plants, and industrial capacity, efforts on linking local economies with these initiatives are imperative. Governments need to financially empower their country's populations, or otherwise risk confronting expensive and useless endeavors.

The 21st century economy is far different from the one developed after World War II. The internet is an essential component for economic growth. Local businesses cannot launch and be part of this new era without the necessary tools. E-payment is a vital part of the future.

According to the World Bank, in several African countries, less than 15 percent of total populations have a bank account. Imagine if they had the opportunity to access their accounts through mobile payment. Their ability to sustain micro-economic growth would render the African economy stronger, make it more reliable, and help it become part of



global integrated economic platforms such as the BRICS and the EU.

E-payment is a must for infrastructure development and to connect macro-level decisions with micro-level economic activities. Africa has a secure and reliable partner already involved with development – China. China is a worldwide contributor in terms of e-payment infrastructure, solutions and experience.

There are roughly 500 million online payment users in China. In 2016, WeChat Pay founded by Tencent and Alibaba Group's Alipay processed about \$3 trillion in transactions. African policymakers need to focus on this \$3 trillion figure.

Without China opening third-party payment solutions to its population including small businesses, and peer-to-peer transactions, the country would have experienced less economic development.

WeChat Pay and Alipay should be viewed as a closed loop solution, a full economic cycle where entrepreneurs can have access to buyers without having to shoulder heavy startup costs and bureaucratic red tape. Empowering the next generation of economic actors, reducing resource waste, and raising their level of importance to make them legitimate and transparent is necessary.

So, what does the future hold for Africa? Some nations have invited WeChat Pay and Alipay to participate with e-payment infrastructure development. Kenya-based regional financial institution Equity Bank and Singapore's Red Dot Payment have signed Memorandums of Understanding to introduce the Chinese e-payment systems in the East African marketplace.

Another step would be to support local businesses linked to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects that have access to WeChat Pay and Alipay. African countries can push for the early adoption of e-payment platforms enabling users to buy train tickets, use pier and airport facilities, and create e-commerce platforms to use opportunities created by BRI, making transactions easy and secure.

Without empowering local and small businesses and Africans through e-payment methods, there will remain a gap and a missing link between national projects, regional integration, and the real economy. China can deliver and support fair trade that helps address African ambitions and challenges.

## Ankara-Backed Militants Block Sochi Agreement Implementation in Hama, Idlib

**TEHRAN (FNA)** — The Turkey-backed terrorists blocked a strategic highway in Northern Syria in contravention to the implementation of the Sochi Agreement, pro-militant media reports said.

The Ankara-backed Jesh al-Izza militant group closed the Idlib-Hama Highway and prevented patrols by the Turkish and Russian troops in the region, the media reports said.

The reports quoted Jesh al-Izza Commander Mostafa Ma'arati as saying that his militants have prevented the Russian troops from entering the areas under their control, warning that they will come under fire.

They also reiterated that Jesh al-Izza has reinforced its military positions in areas along the highway and they have prepared for attacking the military points and centers of the Russian Army.

The Arabic-language al-Watan newspaper quoted Spokesman of Ankara-backed National Liberation Front (NFL) Mostafa Naji as saying that they will not allow the Russian troops to enter the areas under their control and also their contact lines with the Syrian Army.

In a relevant development earlier in April, a Syrian newspaper reported that Turkey intends to delay implementation of the Sochi agreement in a bid to keep Tahrir al-Sham al-Hay'at (the Levant Liberation Board or the Al-Nusra Front) terrorists in Idlib province.

Ankara has failed to implement the Sochi agreement after nearly six months since the deal was reached between Turkey and Russia, the Arabic-language al-Watan newspaper reported.

The Turkish Army has so far focused its efforts on merger of Tahrir al-Sham al-Hay'at and the NFL.

Al-Watan newspaper quoted some military experts as saying that Ankara has not contained the terrorists and done nothing to force them to pull their heavy weapons from the demilitarized zone specified under the Sochi Agreement.

They said that Turkey which has established 12 observation points to monitor the



**Al-Watan newspaper quoted some military experts as saying that Ankara has not contained the terrorists and done nothing to force them to pull their heavy weapons from the demilitarized zone specified under the Sochi Agreement.**

terrorist groups and deter their operations has deliberately delayed implementation of the Sochi agreement to strengthen Tahrir al-Sham terrorists in Idlib and its countryside.

The military experts said that Turkey has also launched 18 patrol posts in the demilitarized zone, but terrorists still feel unimpeded to continue attacks on the Syrian Army.

In late February, Arab media reports said that the Turkish intelligence officials and commanders of Tahrir al-Sham al-Hay'at have been meeting on protecting and keeping the terrorist group in Idlib province.

Al-Watan newspaper quoted sources close

to the militants as saying that Ankara has set conditions for supporting Tahrir al-Sham and its continued control over Idlib, saying that they should follow Ikhwan al-Muslimoun (Muslim Brotherhood) approach.

They added that the two sides have reached an agreement that includes a shift of approach by Tahrir al-Sham. "In return Turkey has promised the terrorist group that it will prolong the demilitarized zone agreement as long as possible, will not participate in any joint military operations against Tahrir al-Sham and will try to prevent such operations."

The paper also referred to the Syrian army's

airstrikes against the terrorists in Northern and Northwestern Hama and Southeastern Idlib in response to their attacks, raising the possibility that military operations in Idlib would soon start.

The Turkish army has in recent days sent over 20 vehicles, carrying soldiers, military equipment and prefabricated houses to Northern Hama and Southern Idlib to strengthen its occupied points in Northern Syria in regions near the areas occupied by Tahrir al-Sham terrorists.

Media reports said earlier that Turkey was trying hard to keep Tahrir al-Sham al-Hay'at in Syria's Idlib province and block the implementation of upcoming military operations against the terrorist group by changing its name.

Al-Watan newspaper quoted local sources and some sources close to Ankara-backed militants in Idlib as saying that despite President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's recent statements on the possibility of Turkish Army's cooperation in Idlib military operations, Ankara is strongly looking for changing Tahrir al-Sham's face with the aim of blocking military operations against the terrorist group in Northern Syria.

It pointed to Turkey's intention to pave the way for the survival and stabilization of Tahrir al-Sham al-Hay'at in Idlib province, and said that Ankara had agreed with electricity supply for a group affiliated to Tahrir al-Sham al-Hay'at amid public unrest over the presence of terrorists in the region.

The sources also said that the Turkish government intended to change the situation in Idlib province to make it similar to the territories occupied by the Turkey-backed Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch forces, plans to open the air space of the regions under Tahrir al-Sham's control to Turkish planes.

The presidents of Russia, Turkey, and Iran held a fourth trilateral meeting on settlement of the Syrian conflict in the Russian resort city of Sochi on Thursday. According to Ankara, the meeting focused on the situation in Idlib.

# U.S. hostile military activities in Iraq

By undermining Iraqi military forces, the U.S. aims to prepare the ground for reemergence of Takfiri terrorists in Iraq, so that U.S. can once again use these terrorists as its own subordinate soldiers in Iraq and will also justify its own military presence in the country.

## U.S. unhappy with Iran, Iraq enhancing relations

Furthermore, by stirring up turmoil in Iraq, U.S. is trying to show its anger toward Baghdad officials for not inhibiting the influence of Iran in the country.

Iraq senior officials, however, has repeatedly announced that expanding relations with Iran is of great importance to them.

Recently, Abdul-Mahdi, the Iraqi prime minister announced that it is necessary for Iraq to have good relations with Iran. In his journey to Tehran, he headed a high-level delegation and the two countries signed a number of Memorandums of Understanding (MOU). Such relations, however, seem to have unsatisfied U.S. senior officials.

Subsequently, U.S. is not only trying to diminish Iraqi military strength, but it also seeks to put obstacles in the way of Tehran, Baghdad relations and reduces Iran's influence in Iraq.

In fact, such destructive measures are only a beginning to the series of activities taken by U.S. to wage war against Iraq strategic allies such as Iran. Such hostile actions are simply



against all diplomatic rules and regulations, but U.S. is taking them anyway as it intends to use Iraq as a field for its own international confrontations.

Earlier on, U.S. top officials had announced that they are against the expansion of ties between Baghdad and Tehran. U.S. President, Donald Trump has also announced that they are unsatisfied with Iran's influence in

Iran, adding that watching Iran's activities is among the main reasons why U.S. troops are still in Iraq.

Trump remarks even caused a reaction from Ayatollah Sistani, the Iranian Shia marja in Iraq. In his meeting with Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, the United Nations special representative for Iraq, Ayatollah Sistani announced that "Iraq is not at a place to bring

harms to any other countries."

"Iraq is aiming to have friendly, well-balanced and equal relationships with all other peaceful nations based on mutual benefit and without intervening in their internal affairs or trying to disrupt their integrity or national sovereignty," he further remarked.

## Iraqi coalitions ask U.S. troops to be expelled

U.S. activities against Iraq and its allies, such as Iran, has caused many coalitions in Iraq to ask for expelling U.S. troops from Iraq.

Meanwhile, the Reform and Reconstruction Alliance in Iraq Parliament condemned Washington destructive activities in Iraq, saying that "U.S. is acting as if Iraq is one of its states, so it seems necessary for the Parliament to hold an urgent meeting to stop U.S. activities in threatening Iraq national sovereignty."

The Fatah Alliance also released a statement, saying that U.S. activities in Iraq are in clear violation of diplomatic rules and regulations and are rooted in the fact that U.S. administration assumes superiority over Iraq government.

To all reasons above, it seems more than clear that U.S. recent moves in disturbing peace and security in Iraq has stirred reactions from all different groups and entities in Iraq and could be the beginning of expelling U.S. forces from the country.

## New START talks cannot include China

**Global Times** — Several White House officials told the US media that US President Donald Trump will not renew the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) between the US and Russia, which expires in 2021. Washington intends to build another nuclear pact that includes China.

After withdrawing from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, the Trump administration is adopting the same tactic toward START.

The key objective of this US tactic is to restrain China from developing its strategic nuclear forces. Washington hopes to exert pressure on Beijing with the help of Moscow and Western public opinion.

In terms of the INF treaty, Russia rejected the US offer to include China in the talks, as the US' demand was utterly unjustifiable. But it would be even more ridiculous if the US were to include China to the New START as it restricts the number of warheads and nuclear missile launchers the US and Russia own.

The number of warheads owned by China has never been made public, but it is known to all that their numbers are not comparable to that of the US and Russia. According to estimates by the Federation of American Scientists, China has 280 warheads, while the US has 6,450 and Russia has 6,490.

China must reject every move by the US to pursue such strategies. China should never be bothered by the pressure the US may impose. China should be determined to carry out its own strategic nuclear program.

In recent years, China has seen the rapid development of its military strength, and it has more options in its strategic toolbox.

Nuclear power is still the most fundamental strategic tool. China's strategic nuclear power remains at the lowest level possible to maintain the country's national security. Once weakened, the country's strategic security will be undermined.

It should be noted that China does not only maintain a low-level nuclear arsenal, and is also the only nuclear power committed to the principle of non-first-use of nuclear weapons, which further restricts China's nuclear deterrence.

In principle, the nuclear deterrence produced by China is different from countries that have not made such a commitment but have the same number of nuclear warheads and delivery vehicles. It is strategic greed for the US to push China to participate in US-Russia nuclear disarmament.

Chinese people should be clear that US' arrogant strategy toward China mainly lies in the difference of magnitude between US' and China's strategic nuclear force. If China's nuclear warheads were in the thousands, the US will never conduct such frivolous "free navigation" in the South China Sea and its moves in the Taiwan Straits would be more restrained.

We believe China should boost its scale and quality of its strategic nuclear force. The more urgent security situation of China allows of no delay of such a mission and other considerations should give way.

The thought that having enough nuclear weapons is good enough should keep abreast of the national security situation to figure out the concept of "enough."

China does not have to regard the US as an example in terms of nuclear weapons, which is also unrealistic. But China's nuclear force must be enough to deter US hawks' ideas of making strategic threats toward China, which should be the minimum for China's nuclear forces.

## Saudi would be different if it faced consequences for its actions: expert

A: Saudi Arabia - a nation that readily aids and abets Western interference and even military interventions around the globe - finds itself once again guilty in reality of what the West and Riyadh have accused nations like Syria and Iran of in fiction. The executions were done without fair or transparent trials and were motivated by politics, not justice.

If there are truly international standards regarding human rights, Saudi Arabia is blatantly in violation of them - not that it would seem so considering the deafening silence coming from many of the self-appointed arbiters of such standards including Western governments and the army of "international bodies" they have funded to allegedly confront such human rights abuses.

After brutal killing of Khashoggi in Saudi Consulate in Istanbul the international community's reaction especially the White House's to Saudi rulers' crime was not serious enough. Would Saudi rulers dare to commit such crimes if they had faced with strong reaction from Washington?

A: Saudi Arabia would obviously be a different nation today if it faced consequences for its actions both abroad



and at home. Of course, the White House doesn't base its ties with other nations on human rights, but rather obedience and utility - and Riyadh has both in abundance. For the U.S. and other Western nations - human rights is merely a convenient pretext for political and even military intervention abroad - selectively enforced reflecting Western interests and opportunism, not any sort of principled stand.

What is the responsibility of international bodies

to stop Saudi crimes?

A: In theory, we would imagine "international bodies" be they nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) or institutions like the United Nations - would be very vocal over Saudi Arabia's human rights abuses. But these same bodies are mute over Saudi Arabia's current war in neighboring Yemen, and Riyadh's sponsorship of terrorism including the arming and funding of groups like Al Qaeda and Daesh. So to expect these bodies to speak up or act in response to the recent executions is unrealistic.

Ultimately Riyadh will be held accountable when the "might" component of the "might makes right" basis of U.S. foreign policy ebbs, and emerging global powers assume more influence and responsibility over regional politics. Without U.S. protection, Riyadh would not only be unable to commit the crimes it does today both at home and abroad - it will be too costly politically and economically for it to continue doing so. It is ironic that the self-proclaimed underwriters of global human rights - the U.S. and Europe - are in fact the greatest enablers of human rights abuses - with Saudi Arabia as "Exhibit A."

## Plans To Memorialize a War Without End

By Lucy Steigerwald

**Antiwar** — On August 8 (2018), The New York Times Magazine's C.J. Chivers published a lengthy pre-mortem of the failures of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, noting how "Aside from displacing tyrants and leading to the eventual killing of Osama bin Laden, none of this turned out as pitched. Prominent successes were short-lived." This faint praise of the War on Terror comes as the Afghanistan War approaches its 17th birthday.

In June, it was announced that a monument for soldiers who fought in the first Gulf War was approved for construction on the National Mall near the Lincoln Memorial, by the US Commission of Fine Arts. Elizabeth K. Meyer, a professor at the University of Virginia and member of the commission, expressed concern over "the proliferation of war memorials on the National Mall," according to the Washington Post. "The Mall is a public space that symbolizes our collective national identity, and we're more than wars. We're more than commemorating the dead..."

Her worry is due to plans for four other war memorials on or around the Mall in the near future: dedications to World War I, Native American Veterans, African-American Veterans in the Revolution, and the most off-putting, yet inevitable of all, a Global War on Terror Memorial, scheduled for construction in 2024.

A Global War on Terror Memorial is objectionable for many reasons, but the most obvious is that the war is not over - and in fact, by the letter of the law, can never be over. Given the war's unending nature, a War on Terror Memorial prematurely closes the debate and will prevent a full reckoning of whether or not it has been worth it - and the evidence suggests it hasn't. No one will want to point to the memorial and say this war is unjust and unwise, for fear of disrespecting those still fighting it.

September 11 was the catalyst for the War on Terror. However, it was the September 18 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) that confirmed its open-endedness, giving the president wide latitude to "use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons" he determined were responsible for 9/11.

Little thought was given to how finely stretched that single page would become to include a never-ending ground war in Afghanistan, multiple, unaccountable drone wars, extrajudicial killing of American citizens, omnipresent surveillance, and military deployment in some 37 countries. In half a dozen of these places, such as Somalia and Yemen, the US military and its drones and planes are involved in violent clashes. By definition these are undeclared, open-ended wars in countries nobody in Congress voted to start.

Afghanistan is the mother and permanent child

of the War on Terror. The conflict is almost 17 years old, the longest in American history, now in its third presidential administration. Last summer, President Trump announced a new "conditions-based" strategy that maintains the US presence until the Afghan government is able to provide for its own security.

The problem with that is, even after 17 years of American investment, the Afghan government is losing territory to the Taliban. Reconstruction projects fail to deliver even lukewarm results. Rampant corruption and an invigorated opium trade undermine both security and economic development. The policies "that sent [American soldiers] abroad, with their emphasis on military action and their visions of reordering nations and cultures, have not succeeded." Yet American



troops are expected to labor on forever in hopes the Afghan government will eventually stand on its own.

Any realism is largely absent from public discourse and totally absent at the Pentagon. In fact, we receive the exact opposite, as a May statement on the war's "progress" from General John Nicholson, Jr. highlights: "violence and progress can coexist, and that's what we're seeing."

The 2003 Iraq War had its own AUMF, but those arguing in favor of the invasion relied on two accusations - both untrue - 1) Iraqi possession of WMDs and 2) an overt tie between Saddam Hussein and the al-Qaeda. Although it's now politically safe to say that war was a mistake, as most otherwise stalwart hawks do, it destabilized the entire region and fed other conflicts, such as the Syrian Civil War (where there are 2,000 American troops). Intervention has created a situation where the Middle East is now "more complex

and conflict-ridden than it has been at any time since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire," according to the Cato Institute's Emma Ashford. The current fight in Iraq and Syria is focused on combating ISIS, who emerged from the power vacuum left after toppling Hussein, and who in many cases evolved out of the most extreme elements of al-Qaeda.

The War on Terror is more than just a bundle of bad policy decisions, though. The project writ large is an assault on liberal values. NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden confirmed the long-suspected totalitarian surveillance apparatus carried by the surveillance state. President Obama compiled a "kill list" of those he could eliminate without due process, including American citizens (a power that Trump still possesses). Three successive administrations have imprisoned terror suspects indefinitely without a trial, and some were tortured during the Bush years. President Trump is dropping a record number of bombs and killing record numbers of civilians. Perpetual war is inherently illiberal, and it's what we have.

The War on Terror has been long, devoid of substantive victories, served no long-term strategic purpose, and has made us less safe. We should abolish the AUMF, bring the troops home, and then we can talk about whether this epoch deserve memorializing. Before we erect any permanent monuments to the War on Terror, it should first end.

Second Announcement

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**Two-Stage (semi compressed) tender**

Subject of Tender: BOP Control Line Hose

N.I.O.C  
1398.543

National Iranian Drilling Company

**Tender descriptions:**

The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. /Indent No.	Estimated value (Rial/Euro)
National Iranian Drilling Company	3,198,337	Tender No. :FP/09-97/045 Indent No.:08-22-9645024	8,460,843,204 (Rial)

**Qualitative evaluation of tenderers**

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

**Purchasing & Submitting**

Tender Document Distribution by Company	The distribution of the documents will be started one day after the publishing of second advertisement and ended on the following tenth day thereof.										
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; font-size: x-small;"> <tr> <td style="width: 30%;"><b>Distribution Place</b></td> <td>Hall No.:113, 1<sup>st</sup> floor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Submitting Method</b></td> <td>Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 510,000 Iranian Rials under account number 4001114004020491( Shaba No. IR 520100004001114004020491) in name of "NIDC Incomes Centralized Fund" issued by I.R. of Iran Central Bank. Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents.</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Closing date</b></td> <td>Days after the last time of Purchasing 14</td> </tr> </table>	<b>Distribution Place</b>	Hall No.:113, 1 <sup>st</sup> floor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN	<b>Submitting Method</b>	Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 510,000 Iranian Rials under account number 4001114004020491( Shaba No. IR 520100004001114004020491) in name of "NIDC Incomes Centralized Fund" issued by I.R. of Iran Central Bank. Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents.	<b>Closing date</b>	Days after the last time of Purchasing 14	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; font-size: x-small;"> <tr> <td style="width: 30%;"><b>Documents Receiving Method</b></td> <td><b>Address</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Hall No. 107, 1<sup>st</sup> floor, Tender Committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel: +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569</td> </tr> </table>	<b>Documents Receiving Method</b>	<b>Address</b>		Hall No. 107, 1 <sup>st</sup> floor, Tender Committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel: +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569
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**Tender Guarantee**

<b>Value of guarantee</b>	423,100,000 Rial / 8,760 Euro
<b>Type of guarantee</b>	✓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.
<b>Duration of credit &amp; quotation</b>	Tender Guarantee and 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://www.nidc.ir) <http://sapp.ir/nidc.ir>

تهران تایمز نوبت اول ۹۸/۲/۱۱ نوبت دوم ۹۸/۲/۱۱

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Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

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**Price: negotiable**  
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Bdrs., unfurn, equipped kitchen,  
elevator, lobby parking  
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parking, **\$700**  
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

## Ideal Offers

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Apt in Fereshteh  
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parking  
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Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

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furn, parking  
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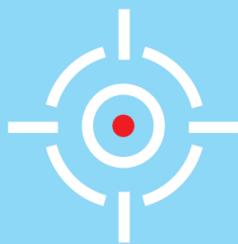
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<b>Velenjak (\$1800)</b> 200sq.m, 3bdrs S/p, S, J, F.F	<b>Gheitarih (\$1500)</b> 2bdrs, 160sq.m, S/p, J, F.F	<b>Vanak office (\$28 per sq.m)</b> 300sq.m, 4bdrs

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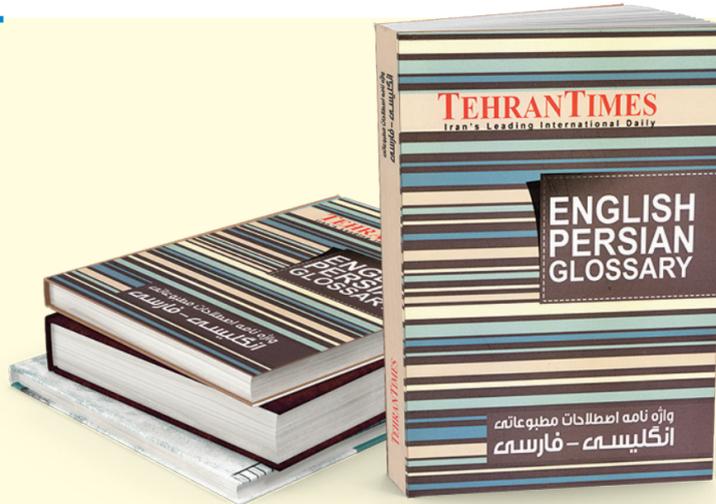
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# NASA's InSight detects first likely 'quake' on Mars

NASA's Mars InSight lander has measured and recorded for the first time ever a likely 'marsquake'. This is the first recorded trembling that appears to have come from inside the planet, as opposed to being caused by forces above the surface, such as wind.

NASA's Mars InSight lander has measured and recorded for the first time ever a likely "marsquake."

The faint seismic signal, detected by the lander's Seismic Experiment for Interior Structure (SEIS) instrument, was recorded on April 6, the lander's 128th Martian day, or sol. This is the first recorded trembling that appears to have come from inside the planet, as opposed to being caused by forces above the surface, such as wind. Scientists still are examining the data to determine the exact cause of the signal.

"InSight's first readings carry on the science that began with NASA's Apollo missions," said InSight Principal Investigator Bruce Banerdt of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in Pasadena, California. "We've been collecting background noise up until now, but this first event officially kicks off a new field: Martian seismology!"

The new seismic event was too small to provide solid data on the Martian interior, which is one of InSight's main objectives. The Martian surface is extremely quiet, allowing SEIS, InSight's specially designed seismometer, to pick up faint rumbles. In contrast, Earth's surface is quivering constantly from seismic noise created by oceans and weather. An event of this size in Southern California would be lost among dozens of tiny crackles that occur every day.

"The Martian Sol 128 event is exciting because its size and longer duration fit the profile of moonquakes detected on the lunar surface during the Apollo missions," said Lori Glaze, Planetary Science Division director at NASA Headquarters.

NASA's Apollo astronauts installed five seismometers that measured thousands of quakes while operating on the Moon between 1969 and 1977, revealing seismic activity on the Moon. Different materials can change the speed of seismic waves or reflect them,



allowing scientists to use these waves to learn about the interior of the Moon and model its formation. NASA currently is planning to return astronauts to the Moon by 2024, laying the foundation that will eventually enable human exploration of Mars.

InSight's seismometer, which the lander placed on the planet's surface on Dec. 19, 2018, will enable scientists to gather similar data about Mars. By studying the deep interior of Mars, they hope to learn how other rocky worlds, including Earth and the Moon, formed.

Three other seismic signals occurred on March 14 (Sol 105), April 10 (Sol 132) and April 11 (Sol 133). Detected by SEIS' more sensitive Very Broad Band sensors, these signals were even smaller than the Sol 128 event and more ambiguous in origin. The team will continue to study these events to

try to determine their cause.

Regardless of its cause, the Sol 128 signal is an exciting milestone for the team.

"We've been waiting months for a signal like this," said Philippe Lognonné, SEIS team lead at the Institut de Physique du Globe de Paris (IPGP) in France. "It's so exciting to finally have proof that Mars is still seismically active. We're looking forward to sharing detailed results once we've had a chance to analyze them."

Most people are familiar with quakes on Earth, which occur on faults created by the motion of tectonic plates. Mars and the Moon do not have tectonic plates, but they still experience quakes -- in their cases, caused by a continual process of cooling and contraction that creates stress. This stress builds over time, until it is strong enough to break the crust, causing a quake.

Detecting these tiny quakes required a huge feat of engineering. On Earth, high-quality seismometers often are sealed in underground vaults to isolate them from changes in temperature and weather. InSight's instrument has several ingenious insulating barriers, including a cover built by JPL called the Wind and Thermal Shield, to protect it from the planet's extreme temperature changes and high winds.

SEIS has surpassed the team's expectations in terms of its sensitivity. The instrument was provided for InSight by the French space agency, Centre National d'Études Spatiales (CNES), while these first seismic events were identified by InSight's Marsquake Service team, led by the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology.

"We are delighted about this first achievement and are eager to make many similar measurements with SEIS in the years to come," said Charles Yana, SEIS mission operations manager at CNES.

JPL manages InSight for NASA's Science Mission Directorate. InSight is part of NASA's Discovery Program, managed by the agency's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama. Lockheed Martin Space in Denver built the InSight spacecraft, including its cruise stage and lander, and supports spacecraft operations for the mission.

A number of European partners, including CNES and the German Aerospace Center (DLR), support the InSight mission. CNES provided the SEIS instrument to NASA, with the principal investigator at IPGP. Significant contributions for SEIS came from IPGP; the Max Planck Institute for Solar System Research in Germany; the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich) in Switzerland; Imperial College London and Oxford University in the United Kingdom; and JPL. DLR provided the Heat Flow and Physical Properties Package (HP3) instrument, with significant contributions from the Space Research Center of the Polish Academy of Sciences and Astronika in Poland. Spain's Centro de Astrobiología supplied the temperature and wind sensors.

(Source: ScienceDaily)

## Starwatch: Venus and the moon share the eastern horizon at dawn



The month ends as it began with a conjunction between the moon and Venus at dawn. The chart shows the view looking east at 0515 BST on 1 May, when the moon and Venus will both rise shortly before the sun. The moon will be a slim crescent, with just 14% of its surface illuminated. To make the most of this opportunity, start looking the morning before, when the moon will be a little further from Venus, and its crescent will be a little fatter. Make sure you have an excellent eastern horizon as the pair will not rise very high before the sun appears and washes them away. Although the moon will be gone by 2 May, Venus will remain visible in the morning sky until the middle of June. Its orbit will then carry it behind the sun, rendering it invisible throughout the summer.

The planet will return to visibility in October but will appear in the evening sky, and remain there until the end of the year. The ancient Greeks named Venus differently depending on whether they saw it in the morning or evening sky. It was known as Phosphoros, the morning star, or Hesperos for evening star. Remember, never look directly at the sun, it is so bright that it can cause permanent eye damage.

(Source: The Guardian)

## World's largest ice shelf is melting 10 times faster than the global average



Antarctica's Ross Ice Shelf, the largest ice shelf in the world, is melting ten times faster than the global average.

Over the last several years, scientists have been tracking the interactions between the northwest section of the ice shelf and the Southern Ocean. Their analysis suggests an influx of warm ocean water is responsible for the ice shelf's accelerated melt rate.

"The stability of ice shelves is generally thought to be related to their exposure to warm deep ocean water, but we've found that solar heated surface water also plays a crucial role in melting ice shelves," Craig Stewart, researcher at the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research in New Zealand, said in a news release.

Stewart and his research partners drilled a borehole several hundred feet into the ice and deployed an instrument-filled mooring in the ocean water inside the ice shelf's cavity. For four years, scientists measured temperature, salinity, melt rates and ocean currents. The team of researchers also used a custom-made radar system to track the ice shelf's changing thickness.

The data and analysis - published this week in the journal *Nature Geoscience* - showed that during the summer, water heated by the sun flows into the cavity beneath the ice shelf. The influx of warm water more than triples melt rates at the base of the ice shelf.

"Climate change is likely to result in less sea ice, and higher surface ocean temperatures in the Ross Sea, suggesting that melt rates in this region will increase in the future," said Stewart, who conducted the research while a PhD student at the University of Cambridge.

Conditions inside the ice shelf's cavity are closely tied to ocean and atmospheric changes. Sudden changes in air and ocean surface temperatures can quickly alter the ice shelf's dynamics. Because the ice shelf's cavity is located near a stabilizing pinning point, scientists say a continued influx of warm water could undermine the ice shelf's structural integrity.

The Ross Ice Shelf might not be as stable as scientists previously estimated. That's bad news for the many glaciers that flow into the ice shelf. If the Ross Ice Shelf were to collapse, the flow of many other glaciers toward the Southern Ocean would likely accelerate.

(Source: upi.com)

## Astronomers discover 2000-year-old remnant of a nova

For the first time, a European research team involving the University of Göttingen has discovered the remains of a nova in a galactic globular cluster. A nova is an explosion of hydrogen on the surface of a star which makes it much brighter. The remains have formed a glowing nebula. The remnant is located near the centre of the globular cluster Messier 22 and has recently been observed using modern instruments. The results will be published in the journal *Astronomy & Astrophysics*.

"The position and brightness of the remains match an entry from 48 BC in an ancient collection of observations by Chinese astronomers," says first author Fabian Gärtgens of the Institute for Astrophysics at the University of Göttingen. This is research carried out for his PhD in the Stellar Astrophysics research group led by Professor Dreizler. "They probably saw the original nova in the same place." This means modern measurements confirm one of the oldest observations of an event outside the solar system.

Globular clusters are large, spherical clusters of several



hundreds of thousands of very old stars that orbit together around their home galaxy. There are 150 known globular clusters orbiting our galaxy, the Milky Way. Messier 22

is one of these star clusters, it lies in the constellation Sagittarius in the direction of the center of the Milky Way. It was observed together with two dozen other globular clusters with the instrument MUSE at the Very Large Telescope of the ESO in Chile. The MUSE instrument was developed with the participation of the Institute for Astrophysics, which was funded by the BMBF. It does not only produce images, it also simultaneously splits starlight by color, measuring the brightness of stars as a function of color. This makes it particularly suitable for finding nebulae that often only glow in a certain color - usually red.

The newly discovered remains of the nova form a red shining nebula of hydrogen gas and other gases, which has a diameter of about 8000 times the distance between Earth and Sun. Despite its size, the nebula is relatively light, with a mass about 30 times that of Earth, because the gas was dispersed by the explosion.

(Source: sciencedaily.com)

## Caffeine gives solar cells an energy boost

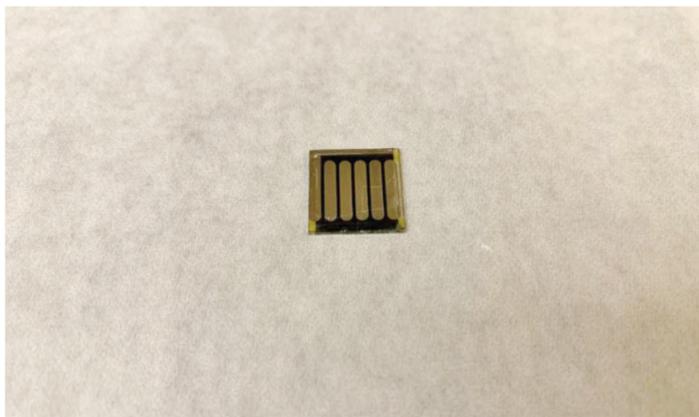
Scientists have discovered that caffeine can help make a promising alternative to traditional solar cells more efficient at converting light to electricity. Their research may enable this cost-effective renewable energy technology to compete on the market with silicon solar cells.

This image shows the solar cells the researchers enhanced with caffeine.

Scientists from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and Solargiga Energy in China have discovered that caffeine can help make a promising alternative to traditional solar cells more efficient at converting light to electricity. Their research, published in the journal *Joule*, may enable this cost-effective renewable energy technology to compete on the market with silicon solar cells.

The idea began as a joke over morning coffee. "One day, as we were discussing perovskite solar cells, our colleague Rui Wang said, 'If we need coffee to boost our energy then what about perovskites? Would they need coffee to perform better?'" recalls Jingjing Xue, a PhD candidate in Professor Yang Yang's research group at the Department of Materials Science and Engineering at UCLA.

The offhand comment led the team to recall that the caffeine in coffee is an alkaloid compound containing molecular structures that could interact with the precursors of perovskite materials -- compounds with a particular crystal structure that form the light-harvesting layer in a class of solar cells. Previous attempts to improve the thermal stability of these solar cells have included enhancing the perovskite layer by introducing compounds such as dimethyl sulfoxide, but researchers have struggled to boost the cells' efficiency and long-term stability. No



**Scientists have discovered that caffeine can help make a promising alternative to traditional solar cells more efficient at converting light to electricity. Their research may enable this cost-effective renewable energy technology to compete on the market with silicon solar cells.**

one had tried caffeine.

Realizing they might be onto something, the team set aside their coffee and began investigating further. They added caffeine to the perovskite layer of forty solar cells and used infrared spectroscopy (which uses infrared radiation to identify chemical compounds) to determine that the caffeine had successfully

bonded with the material.

Conducting further infrared spectroscopy tests, they observed that the carbonyl groups (a carbon atom double bonded to an oxygen) in caffeine interacted with lead ions in the layer to create a "molecular lock." This interaction increased the minimum amount of energy required for the perovskite film to

react, boosting the solar cell efficiency from 17 percent to over 20 percent. The molecular lock continued to occur when the material was heated, which could help prevent heat from breaking down the layer.

"We were surprised by the results," says Wang, who is also a PhD candidate in Yang's research group at UCLA. "During our first try incorporating caffeine, our perovskite solar cells already reached almost the highest efficiency we achieved in the paper."

But while caffeine appears to significantly improve the performance of cells that utilize perovskite to absorb sunlight, the researchers do not think it will be useful for other types of solar cells. The unique molecular structure of caffeine only allows it to interact with perovskite precursors, which may give this solar cell variety an edge on the market. Perovskite solar cells already have the advantage of being cheaper and more flexible than their silicon counterparts. They are also easier to manufacture -- perovskite cells can be fabricated from solution-based precursors as opposed to solid crystal ingots. With further research, Wang believes caffeine may facilitate large-scale production of perovskite solar cells.

"Caffeine can help the perovskite achieve high crystallinity, low defects, and good stability," he says. "This means it can potentially play a role in the scalable production of perovskite solar cells."

In order to continue enhancing the solar cells' efficiency and stability, the team next plans to further investigate the chemical structure of the caffeine-incorporated perovskite material and to identify the best protective materials for perovskites.

(Source: ScienceDaily)

## Moon rocks to be studied at University of Tennessee

A professor at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville will help analyze moon rocks collected decades ago and never before opened. NASA calls the project the Apollo Next Generation Sample Analysis Program, and it's part of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the first moon landing in 1969.

UT Professor Molly McCanta says NASA kept the samples sealed hoping for better research technology, and that has happened.

McCanta teamed up with researchers at Argonne National Laboratory in Illinois and the University of Massachusetts to analyze rocks collected during the Apollo 17 mission in 1972.

McCanta's research begins next month and runs for three years. The researchers will meet at NASA Johnson Space Center in Texas to determine how best to open the samples and transport them.

(Source: apnews.com)

## Persian Gulf historical maps, documents go on show in Tehran

1 → Persian Gulf's modern strategic importance dates from the mid-19th century, when three great empires of British India, Tsarist Russia and Ottoman Turkey confronted each other there. The British established political control over much of the Persian Gulf in the early 1800s and kept it for 150 years, establishing a tradition of outside involvement that persists today. Britain did not establish formal protectorates (as in the case, for example, of Egypt), but did enter into treaties with local sheikhs offering them protection in return for control over their foreign policy. In 1899, Kuwait, then considered a dependency of the Ottomans, was brought into this system.



Spanning some 250,000 square kilometers, the Persian Gulf shares boundaries with littoral states Iran (Persia), Oman, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. The strategic waterway connects the region to the Gulf of Oman and the Indian Ocean.

## UFO enthusiast claims ancient Egyptians were from Mars

UFO enthusiast claimed that a photo provides evidence that Martians exist -- and that the ancient Egyptians of long ago were from Mars.

Self-titled UFO expert Scott C. Waring claimed that an old photo taken by NASA's Mars rover shows carvings resembling the ones found in ancient Egypt, Express reported. This led Waring to speculate several things, all of which can be summarized in one thought: Ancient Egyptians could be from Mars.

In a blog entry, Waring explained that the photo shows not just one but several "Egyptian-style" carvings. Most of them featured elongated heads resembling ancient Egyptian headwear. Waring said these "carvings" appear similar to how Egyptian carvings look like: protruding from a wall.

Aside from emphasizing the elongated "statue" heads, Waring also pointed out how most of these "carvings" appear "unfinished." He also pointed out that some "carvings" appear out of place: like a huge slab of rock that looks smooth, another "unfinished carving" that also appears smooth, and one that looks like a piece of "technology."

(Source: International Business Times)



## ROUND THE GLOBE

### Lake Turkana National Parks

Lake Turkana National Parks is an outstanding laboratory for the study of plant and animal communities in Kenya.

Inscribed on UNESCO World Heritage list under the name Lake Turkana National Parks, the property serves as a stopover for migrant waterfowl and are major breeding grounds for the Nile crocodile, hippopotamus and a variety of venomous snakes.



An aerial view of the Turkana national park in Kenya

The Koobi Fora deposits, rich in mammalian, molluscan and other fossil remains, have contributed more to the understanding of paleo-environments than any other site on the continent.

The long body of Lake Turkana drops down along the Rift Valley from the Ethiopian border, extending 249 kilometers from north to south and 44 km at its widest point with a depth of 30 meters. It is Africa's fourth largest lake, fondly called the Jade Sea because of its breathtaking color.

The property represents unique geo-morphological features with fossil deposits on sedimentary formations as well as one hundred identified archaeological and paleontological sites. There are numerous volcanic overflows with petrified forests. The existing ecological conditions provide habitats for maintaining diverse flora and fauna.

At Kobi Fora to the north of Allia Bay, extensive paleontological finds have been made, starting in 1969, with the discovery of Paranthropus boisei. The discovery of Homo habilis thereafter is evidence of the existence of a relatively intelligent hominid two million years ago and reflect the change in climate from moist forest grassland when the now petrified forest were growing to the present hot desert.

The human and pre-human fossils include the remains of five species, Australopithecus anamensis, Homo habilis/rudolfensis, Paranthropus boisei, Homo erectus and Homo sapiens all found within one locality. These discoveries are important for understanding the evolutionary history of the human species.

(Source: UNESCO)

# Rosewater festivals attract holidaymakers from home and abroad

1 → Qamsar, Niasar, and Barzok are amongst popular destinations where every corner is teemed with the dance of colors and delicate fragrance of roses.

Golab or rosewater is a fragrant distillate of the roses which is used nationwide in diverse traditional dishes to flavor them or consumed as a religious perfume as well. Many believe traditionally distilled rosewater is of higher quality from that of produced in factories probably due to shorter time interval between the harvest and distillation practices.

Distillation of flowers and herbs has a deep history in the country.

■ **Harvesting and distillation**  
Rosewater is obtained from a very sweet smelling kind of the flowers, best known as Mohammadi roses in the country. Rosewater and rose oil are major products of the damask rose.

Harvesting damask rose flowers is somewhat an intensive work. It is mostly performed from dawn through morning. Delay in har-

vesting or transport to distillery results in decreased essential oil quantity and quality.

To extract the rosewater people first amass their petals to put them into the massive copper pots. Then the pots are put on traditional ovens made from bricks, stones and mud.

Almost every 30 Kg of rose petals plus 80 liters of water are poured into each pot that is connected to metal pipes for the steam moving through to obtain the hydrosol. The waste of distillation is used for feeding livestock or composting.

■ **Therapeutic effects**

Narratives say that rose oil and rosewater have many therapeutic benefits. Rose oil soothes the mind and heals depression, grief, nervous stress and tension. It aids in problems with the digestive system, healing colds, and skin health.

Distillation of flowers and herbs has a deep history in Iran. Many believe traditionally-distilled rosewater is of higher quality than that produced in factories probably due to shorter time interval between the harvest



and distillation practices.

Kashan embraces abundant scenic landscape, historical sites and monuments such as UNESCO-registered Fin Garden with its

Safavid and Qajar era edifices, Tabatabaei House, Boroujerdi House, Ameri House, a traditional bazaar, and Jame Mosque of Kashan just to name a few.



## Tehran to host intl. gastronomy festival

HERITAGE TEHRAN — The Iranian capital will be hosting a major international culinary festival from August 20 to 25.

The first edition of the Tehran International Food Festival is to be jointly organized by the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization; Foreign Ministry; Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance; the Cultural Institute of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO); and the Touring & Automobile Club of the Islamic Republic of Iran (TACI), CHTN reported.

"Food is not merely an organic product with biochemical compositions. However, for members of each community, food is defined as a cultural element," said Jalal Zokaei, the director of the festival.

He added that food can generally be regarded as a significant parameter which has its own impact on social relations, having effect on people's beliefs and religion and it also may define many economic patterns.

The event will be revolving around scientific basis of diets and foodstuff, their herbal and remedy medication, and it will also pursue commercialization of the Iranian cuisine, said Ebadreza Eslami, a deputy of the TACI.

The Tehran International Food Festival will be held at the exhibition center of the Milad Tower.

The Iranian cuisine, usually dominated with fragrant herbs, varies from region to region. It principally accentuates freshness, deliciousness, and colorfulness.

## Pet-keeping and animal sacrifice as seen economically and archaeologically

By most modern standards, household pets such as cats and dogs are looked at as companion animals. It can be assumed that some people in the past acquired a similar affection to household or working animals. A companion animal is generally valued as being able to bring its owner a sense of loyalty, comfort, security and friendship.

Aside from being strictly companions, pets may additionally provide a household function such as dogs providing security for the family and household and cats catch and kill small, destructive pests. Companion animals need not always be soft and cuddly housemates and dogs and cats were not the only animals valued as pets. In some medieval and post-medieval farming societies, cattle and sheep were regarded as companion animals in life but at the time of their death, they quickly were converted from pet-status to food commodity (Harris 1986, 177-178).

Historical evidence surrounding the keeping of pets clearly shows that animals were prized not only for their household duties, but some, for more non-practical reasons. Some companion animals came to symbolize the status of a person or family. Lap dogs were in fashion in the early seventeenth century, as they are today.

The tiny dogs were a sure sign of wealth and status as evident by the sheer uselessness of the dog. Lapdogs generally do not catch and kill household pests, could not secure the home of its owner or protect its family from intruders. Aside from being

little more than a vocal alarm, lapdogs have virtually no other practical purpose.

In Thomas' (1983) work, it is stated that, "The Stewarts in particular, were so obsessed with them that in 1617 James I was accused of loving his dogs more than his subjects." Other not-so-cuddly animals were often kept as non-practical companion animals or symbols of wealth.

Exotic birds and monkeys among other unusual critters within the society were also clues to the statuses of their owners. Archaeologically, trade routes and bone evidence give clues to the animals imported and exported by a community. North African tortoises were traded as far back as the seventeenth century (Thomas 2005, 101) and the acquisition or collecting of strange, unusual or non-local animals signifies the elevated status of an individual (Thomas 2005, 101).

Archaeologically, animal remains often show evidence of mistreatment, cruelty and other inhumane acts toward the animal in life. Numerous broken rib and jaw bone remains of dogs provide unmistakable evidence of abused animals. Contrasting evidence also shows animals being taken care of when wounded, or treated with respect at death. If the dog was not particularly useful during its life, one must wonder what its purpose was. Surely, a dog with an amputated leg or other deformity was not furry companion.

The zooarchaeological-economic link is revealed again through the acknowledg-



ment of the abundance of reasons for the sacrifice of animals throughout history. Animals have been sacrificed for seemingly endless reasons. People in the past and also the present choose animals based on many factors; age, sex, size and association to a certain god or goddess are just a few.

The reasons why people sacrifice animals at all is plentiful as well. Secular, as well as non-secular reasons including honoring the dead, ensuring the continuation of life, providing good luck, enhancing fertility of people, animals as well as crops, keeping the rain god, the sun god or any number of other gods satisfied are all only a fraction of the reasons why. Reasons, whether economically charged or not; are still valid answers to the question "Why?" Zooarchaeologically, the economic, as well as the non-economic reasons can be uncovered. Lauerier (2002) discusses the economic impact of different types of animal sacrifice.

Which is more detrimental to the economy of a society, the loss of one horse's meat, or the loss of a few chicken's meat? One may immediately answer with the horse meat of course, as a horse provides many hundreds of kilograms of meat where as a chicken may only offer one or two. That answer would be argued as incorrect if the society never or rarely consumes horse meat.

In Roman times, horses were used as work animals, in battle, and as transport; but, as today, horses were considered comrades (Lauerier 2002, 70). Additionally, the consumption of horse meat might be considered taboo.

Ritual consumption, however, is often the culprit for a horse or other animal 'comrade' to be eaten. Rituals can be economic or non-economic in nature; often they are both. Suovitaurlia, the sacrifice of the same numbers of sheep, cattle and pigs in a single ritual, was performed either for the commemoration of the dead or to purify a field used for agricultural purposes and (Wilkins 2002, 73). The commemoration of the dead appears have no economic motive; the purification of the field before seed planting or harvest-time, most certainly does.

The keeping of pets and the sacrifice of animals adds to and often enhances the economic standing of a society whether it is intended or not. Archaeologically, these actions can be seen, establishment of the practice can be made and therefore, it can and should be examined and scrutinized. (Source: heritagedaily.com)

## Airport baggage problems declining

In just over a decade – from 2007 to 2018 – the number of air travel passengers increased by 75%, from 2.48 billion to 4.36 billion. Thanks to technology, irregularities and related costs were reduced for operators, falling from 4.22 to 2.4 billion (-43%). The amount of airport baggage being mishandled decreased as well.

According to the report by SITA, the global technology provider for air transport, the percentage of mishandled baggage was 5.69 per thousand travelers in 2018. Last year set a new record for passenger traffic exceeding the figure recorded in 2017 by 6.6%, when 4.09 billion people travelled by air.

A significant result, considering that in 2007 the number of mismatched airport baggage was 18.8 per thousand passengers. The 2019 edition of the SITA report shows that significant results have been obtained thanks to the introduction of luggage tracking at several key points of the route. This has allowed management improvement rates of up to 66%.

Sergio Colella, President of SITA Europe, said: "In the last three years, thanks to technology, the rate of mishandled baggage has stabilized. The average is 5.7 mishandled baggage per thousand passengers – in contrast with the traffic data, which will continue to grow."

"In 2018, with 4.36 billion passengers, more than 4.27

billion baggage were boarded. For air transport operators, these numbers take on an even greater challenge. Here, in this challenge, technology is an excellent ally, and the adoption of increasingly advanced solutions – for example, tracking systems – is the key tool to achieve the next big cut at the rate of mishandled airport baggage," he added.

95% of baggage that is subject to irregularities are still returned to the owner. In fact, the majority of mishandled baggage (77%) is returned late, 18% arrive at their destination damaged and only 5% of baggage suffering irregularities are lost or stolen.

In the last year, a growing number of airlines and airports have begun to introduce baggage tracking systems at key points of the trip – check-in, boarding, transfer between flights, arrival. The goal is to improve management and reduce the risk of irregularities.

The SITA report provides the first data on the success of the tracking. When the baggage is traced there is variable improvement rate between 38% and 66%, depending on the level of the systems introduced and those already existing.

"Baggage tracking solutions are a key tool to reduce airport baggage irregularities even when bags and luggage are transferred from one flight to another, a particularly critical step because it involves several airlines and airports.



In 2018, 46% of the problems occurred at this stage. In addition to improving the management, baggage tracking allows passengers to keep an eye on their luggage at every moment of the journey," Colella added.

Ahmed Juma Al Shamsi, CEO for Abu Dhabi Airports, said: "We have implemented baggage tracking at arrivals and we already have significant results. For our passengers, timely delivery of luggage is essential for smooth travel experience." (Source: Tourism Review)

# Obesity may put young people at risk of anxiety, depression

Researchers have recently examined the link between mental health conditions and obesity in over 12,000 children and teenagers. The results show that obesity raises the risk of anxiety and depression, which is something that physicians and healthcare professionals should be "vigilant about."

Obesity raised anxiety and depression risk by 33% among young boys.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), over 35% of young adults in the United States are obese.

Among U.S. adolescents, mental health conditions are also prevalent.

About 32% of young people ages 13–17 have had an anxiety condition at some point in their lives, according to research published last year.

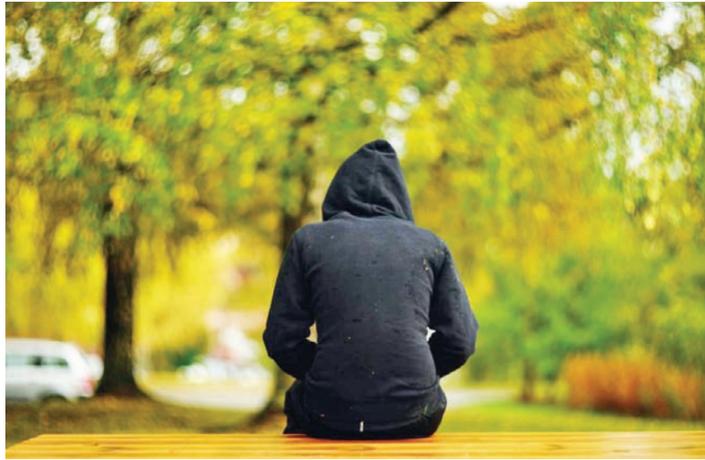
Now, a new, nationwide study connects obesity and anxiety among young people, finding that obesity is an independent risk factor for anxiety and depression among children and teenagers.

Louise Lindberg, from the Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm, Sweden, is the lead researcher of the new study.

She and her colleagues presented their findings at the European Congress on Obesity, which this year took place in Glasgow, United Kingdom.

**■ Anxiety, depression risk higher by up to 43%**

Lindberg and her team examined data on over 12,000 children and teenagers ages 6–17 who had received treatment for obesity, and



they compared them with the data of more than 60,000 counterparts who did not have obesity.

Researchers sourced the data in 2005–2015 as part of the Swedish Childhood Obesity Treatment Register. Over an average period of 4.5 years, more than 4,200 of the children and teenagers developed anxiety or depression.

The girls with obesity were 43% more likely to experience anxiety or depression compared with their age- and sex-matched peers. The risk of anxiety and depression was also 33%

higher among boys with obesity, compared with their peers who did not have obesity.

The team adjusted for other risk factors for depression and anxiety, such as migration background, other neuropsychiatric conditions, a history of mental health issues in the family, and socioeconomic status.

After adjusting for these factors, obesity still raised the risk of developing anxiety and depression.

Specifically, 11.6% of the girls who had obesity received such a diagnosis, compared

with 6% of girls without obesity. Also, 8% of boys with obesity received the diagnosis, compared with 4.1% of boys without obesity.

"We see a clear increased risk of anxiety and depressive disorders in children and adolescents with obesity compared with a population-based comparison group that cannot be explained by other known risk factors such as socioeconomic status and neuropsychiatric disorders," explains Lindberg.

"These results suggest that children and adolescents with obesity also have an increased risk of anxiety and depression, something that healthcare professionals need to be vigilant about."

The scientists also acknowledge some limitations to their study; for example, that it is observational and cannot say anything about the mechanisms behind the associations.

Importantly, they had no access to any information on the height or weight of the boys and girls in the control group.

Finally, the data on how many people have anxiety and depression may be biased. This is because many people who live with these conditions do not seek professional help.

"Given the rise of obesity and impaired mental health in young people," Lindberg goes on to say, "understanding the links between childhood obesity, depression, and anxiety is vital."

"Further studies are needed to explain the mechanisms behind the association between obesity and anxiety/depression," she concludes.

(Source: Medical News Today)

## Poor sense of smell in old age associated with higher risk of death in next decade, study shows

A disappearing sense of smell is linked to higher chances of dying prematurely and should be included in routine GP health checks, experts have said.

US research found that older people who were least able to detect common odors were 46 per cent more likely to die in the next decade.

While losing your sense of smell can be an early symptom of some neurological disorders such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease, it can also be lead to a loss of appetite and weight loss.

But Michigan State University researchers behind the latest study said the scent test was most effective in patients who were otherwise healthy.

This means it could be a useful early warning particularly as older people are often unaware their sense of smell is going.

"Poor sense of smell becomes more common as people age, and there's a link to a higher risk for death," said Dr Honglei Chen, one of the authors of the study in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

"[So] incorporating a sense of smell screening in routine doctor visits might be a good idea at some point."

Dr Chen's team analyzed data from almost 2,300 men



and women who took part in a major US ageing study.

Participants aged between 71 and 82 were asked to identify 12 common scents, and given four guesses for each with those identifying the most correct odors given a higher score. Compared with those having a good smell sense, people

in the "poor" category were 46 per cent more likely to die of any cause in the next decade, and 30 per cent more likely after 13 years.

This held true regardless of age, gender and race, but poor smell was most predictive of early death in patients who were otherwise healthy and had a good weight for their physique and age.

Neurological conditions and weight loss only explained 28 per cent of the increased risk of death among the poor smellers.

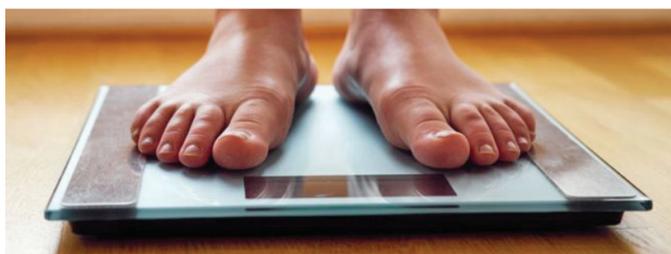
This means the vast majority of people who died didn't have any condition which could explain their impaired olfactory senses.

"It tells us that in older adults, impaired sense of smell has broader implications of health beyond what we have already known," Dr Chen said.

Robert Howard, professor of old age psychiatry at University College London who was not involved in the study, said: "This raises the interesting possibility that loss of smell may be a marker of generalized ageing and should be taken seriously by older people and their doctors."

(Source: The Independent)

## Obesity: Study of 2.8 million shows increased disease and death risks



A major study has highlighted the scale of the obesity problem in the UK, with a significant risk of death and disease attached to weight gain.

People with a body mass index (BMI) of 30–35 were at 70% higher risk of developing heart failure than their healthy weight peers (18.5–25 BMI).

The study of 2.8 million adults showed even slightly overweight people were twice as likely to get Type 2 diabetes.

Public Health England said "sustained action" was needed to tackle obesity.

The study, to be presented at the European Congress on Obesity (ECO) in Glasgow, also showed: For those with a BMI of 35–40, the risk of Type 2 diabetes was almost nine times higher, and 12 times higher for sleep apnoea, people with severe obesity (BMI of 40–45) were 12 times more likely to develop Type 2 diabetes and had a risk of sleep apnoea that was 22 times greater, people with a BMI of 40–45 had triple the risk of heart failure, high blood pressure, and dyslipidaemia (abnormal levels of cholesterol and other fats in the blood).

BMI of 40–45 was also linked to a 50% higher risk of dying prematurely from any cause.

The study's author, Christiane Haase, of healthcare firm Novo Nordisk which funded the work, said: "With the number of people living with obesity almost tripling worldwide over the past 30 years (105 million people in 1975 to 650 million in 2016), our findings have serious implications for public health."

**■ BMI and obesity: Where are you on the UK fat scale?**

We calculate BMI using the standard

formula of a person's mass in kg divided by the square of their height in metres (kg/m<sup>2</sup>) and display it to one decimal place.

Where a user's data is entered in imperial units, we first convert to metric and then carry out the BMI calculation.

The BMI result is assigned to a standard category:

Less than 18.5 - underweight  
18.5 to 24.9 - healthy weight  
25 to 29.9 - overweight  
30 to 39.9 - obese (split into two categories for the new study)

40 and over - very obese (also known as morbidly obese)

The research found that the risk of developing serious health problems was highly dependent on whether or not people already had issues at the start of the study. For example, having high blood pressure at the start of the study was strongly associated with developing dyslipidaemia, chronic kidney disease and Type 2 diabetes.

Researchers looked at health, death and BMI data from more than 2.8 million adults between January 2000 and July 2018 from the UK Clinical Practice Research Datalink.

This was linked with hospital data to estimate the risk for serious health problems.

But the authors stress that their findings show observational differences, so no firm conclusions can be drawn about cause and effect, and they point to a number of limitations: the study participants must have seen their doctor and had their weight measured for a reason, other, unmeasured factors may have influenced the results.

(Source: BBC)

## Severe child obesity highest in Greece, Italy and Spain amid decline of Mediterranean diet, WHO report shows



Mediterranean nations whose diets have long been held up as benchmarks for healthy living have the highest rates of severe child obesity in Europe, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has warned.

A report taking in data from 21 European nations lays bare the crisis in southern states, with more than 4 per cent of primary school age children severely obese in Greece, Italy, Spain and San Marino.

With more than 5.5 per cent of children affected, Malta had the highest rates of severe obesity in the study, which is being presented at the European Congress on Obesity in Glasgow on Tuesday.

While countries in western and northern Europe, including Belgium, Ireland and Norway, had severe obesity rates below 2 per cent, some notoriously overweight states – such as the UK – were not included. France, Germany and Russia were also left out of the study.

Researchers said one factor was likely to be the "decline" in the idealised Mediterranean diet, high in whole grains, nuts, vegetables, olive oil and fish.

Many countries are now seeing the effects of an influx of cheap, high calorie convenience foods and some, such as Denmark and the UK, have introduced taxes on high sugar or high-fat items.

Other studies have found similarly high rates of child and adult obesity in southern Mediterranean nations.

But the research, led by Dr João Breda, head of the WHO's European office for Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases is the first to look specifically at "severe" child obesity. This is defined differently

from adults but roughly requires them to have a body mass index higher than 19 out of 20 children in their age group.

Dr Breda and colleagues said an explanation for higher rates of obesity in southern Europe "remains elusive", though there are several possible explanations.

"The loss of the Mediterranean diet in southern European countries could be linked to this severe obesity problem," the authors said.

Though it could also be a result of "lower height-for-age found in southern Europe", higher birth weights, reduced sleep duration and different patterns for meals and physical activity.

Higher rates of maternal education were another factor that reduced the risk of severe obesity, the report found.

The authors warn that without action the same pattern could develop in other nations with traditionally Mediterranean diets and habits, such as Albania and Moldova.

"Without timely, appropriate and effective policy measures to prevent obesity, there is a risk that prevalence rates in these countries will eventually match the levels seen in other European countries," the authors said.

The study used data from 636,933 six- to nine-year-olds, and the findings indicate that there are at least 400,000 children who are already severely obese of a total 13.7 million six- to nine-year-olds in the 21 countries included in the study.

"Severe obesity is a serious public health issue and the results of this study show that a large number of children in Europe suffer from it," the authors concluded.

(Source: The Independent)

## 'Completely avoidable' measles outbreak hits 25-year high in U.S.

American health officials report that more than 700 people have been infected by measles this year, marking a 25-year high for the infectious disease.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said on Monday that cases had been recorded in 22 states and were mostly affecting unvaccinated children.

Officials said the increase in cases is the largest since 1994, including 78 reported in the past week.

There have been no deaths reported as a result of the outbreak.



"The suffering we are seeing today is completely avoidable," U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar said on Monday.

Mr Azar directed his comments at some parents who have chosen to leave their children unvaccinated due to the unscientific claim that vaccines cause illnesses such as autism.

"We know vaccines are safe because they're among some of the most studied medical products we have," he said.

The findings mark a 1.3% increase over the report last Wednesday, which found 695 cases that have been detected in the U.S. this year, and was the highest level discovered since the disease was declared eliminated from the U.S. in 2000.

The report adds that 40 people in 2019 have brought measles back to the U.S. after returning from international travel, with Ukraine, Israel and the Philippines being the most frequent sources. Most cases occurred in 13 outbreak zones, including in New York City's orthodox Jewish communities.

Up to 10% of patients are adults who have received measles-mumps-rubella vaccine, leading officials to warn that some adults may need additional booster vaccines.

Adults travelling to outbreak zones, or adults who were vaccinated prior to 1968 with an earlier prototype of the vaccine, should consider receiving another vaccination, federal officials say.

The 22 states where cases have been reported are Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Texas, Tennessee and Washington.

The disease was declared eliminated from the U.S. in 2000, which meant it was no longer continually present year round, but health officials say that sporadic outbreaks do still occur from travellers coming from countries where measles are more common.

(Source: BBC)

## Social media influencers give bad diet and fitness advice eight times out of nine, research reveals

People who wish to lose weight have been warned to stay away from social media influencers who claim to have the latest diet fix, researchers say.

A study by a team at University of Glasgow found that just one out of nine leading UK bloggers making weight management claims actually provided accurate and trustworthy information.

The health researchers studied the country's most popular influencers, based on those who had more than 80,000 followers on at least one social media site, verification from at least two sites such as Twitter, and who had an active weight management blog.

Lead author Christina Sabbagh said: "We found that the majority of the blogs could not be considered credible sources of weight management information, as they often presented opinion as fact and failed to meet UK nutritional criteria.

"This is potentially harmful, as these blogs reach such a wide audience."

Although the social media stars were not named in the study, blogs by nine top influencers published between May and June 2018 were analyzed and scored against 12 criteria to demonstrate credibility.

The university team examined whether the health and diet claims made by influencers were transparent, trustworthy, nutritionally sound and included evidence-based references. They also looked at the role of bias in what was put online.

Influencers were regarded as having "passed" the test if they met 70 per cent or more of the criteria. Researchers also examined the latest 10 meal recipes from each blog for energy content, carbohydrates, protein, fat, saturated fat, fibre, sugar and salt content.

The findings – presented at this year's European Congress on Obesity (ECO) in Glasgow – showed that a majority of bloggers failed in fundamental areas.

Five of them presented opinion as fact or failed to provide evidence-based references for nutritional claims. Five failed to provide a disclaimer and, when meals were examined against Public Health England calorie targets and traffic light criteria, no blogger met these criteria.

Of the advice-based blogs, only one by a registered nutritionist with a degree passed overall, with 75 per cent. The lowest compliance, 25 per cent, was from an influencer without any nutritional qualifications.

The authors concluded: "Social media influencers' blogs are not credible resources for weight management. Popularity and impact of social media in the context of the obesity epidemic suggests all influencers should be required to meet accepted scientifically or medically justified criteria for the provision of weight management advice online."

Tam Fry, chairman of the National Obesity Forum, said: "This study adds to the evidence of the destructive power of social media. Any Tom, Dick or Harry can take to the ether, post whatever they like and be believed by their followers.

"Particularly unfortunate is that the genie is now firmly out of the bottle and getting these bloggers to conform to standards, though desirable, will be nigh impossible.

"The bloggers will defend their right to freedom of speech to the hilt but publishing junk advice is indefensible."

(Source: The Independent)

## Spring downpours replenish Hamoun and Helmand, revive agriculture

**ENVIRONMENT** TEHRAN — After two decades of dryness, enough rain has finally come to bring Hamoun wetland and Helmand River back to life in southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan, hence revives agriculture in the region as well.

Based on the latest data published on Monday by National Drought Warning and Monitoring Center affiliated to Iran's Meteorological Organization since the start of the current water year (September 23, 2018) the whole country received 293.8 millimeters of rain.

The number amounted to 126.5 millimeters in the previous water year and 204.4 millimeters in the long-term, the data indicated. The numbers show a drastic increase of 132.3 percent compared to last water year. It also reveals a 43.7 percent increase compared to long-term means.

The province of Sistan-Baluchestan also received 107.5 millimeters of rain in the same period which indicates 386 percent rise compared to last water year and a 5.8 percent increase compared to the long-term averages.

And now with Hamoun and Helmand springing back to life again agriculture will be revived in the region once again.

Helmand River which starts in the Hindu Kush Mountains in Afghanistan feed the Hamouns in Iran and Afghanistan. The Hamouns are transboundary wetlands on the Iran-Afghanistan border made up of three lakes: Hamoun-e Helmand, which is entirely in Iran, Hamoun-e Sabari on the border, and Hamoun-e Puzak, almost entirely inside Afghanistan.

Helmand River is the longest river in Afghanistan and the primary watershed for the endorheic Sistan Basin. Sistan Basin is an inland endorheic basin encompassing large parts of southwestern Afghanistan and minor parts of southeastern Iran, one of the driest regions in the world and an area subjected to prolonged droughts.

Director of Sistan-Baluchestan province's agriculture department general said that considering the climatic characteristics of the area as well as newly refilled water resources off-season production of 14 products including tropical fruits, vegetables and grains is on agenda.

Gholamheidar Zoraqi explained that while there are some 420,000 hectares of farming lands in the province due to severe water shortages crops is normally cultivated on 45-70 percent of the lands.

However, the climatic features of the region makes it possible for cultivation of tropical fruits which do not usually grow in other areas, ISNA news agency quoted Zoraqi as saying on Monday.

Annually 5 million tons of crops, livestock and aquaculture products are being produced in the province, he highlighted.

Nearly 30 kinds of dates are being produced in Sistan-Baluchestan province, he added, stating that the date harvested in the province is normally exported to neighboring provinces as well as Pakistan and the Persian Gulf littoral states.

In addition to agriculture sector the lakebed of Hamoun which has turned to a hotspot for sand and dust storms is now covered with water and episodes of crippling storms are hoped to decrease to the minimum with the revival of the reservoirs.



# Return to motherland: Asiatic lion to return to Iran after 80 years

**ENVIRONMENT** TEHRAN — Tehran Zoological Garden, also known as Eram Zoo, will be home to Asiatic lion, which was extinct in the country for almost 80 years, a veterinarian at Eram Zoo has said.

According to Iman Memarian the last remaining Asiatic lion was sighted about 80 years ago in Iran. He went on to explain that before and after the Islamic Revolution (1979) Iran made attempts to bring back Asiatic lion to Iran, but Indians did not cooperate.

Tehran Zoological Garden has put in efforts to bring back Asiatic lion to Iran for 6 years, he said, adding that, "we submitted our request to the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA)."

"We also developed a lion pen which complied with EAZA's standards," Memarian highlighted.

According to the National Geographic nearly all wild lions live in sub-Saharan Africa, but one small population of Asiatic lions exists in India's Gir Forest. Asiatic lions and African lions are subspecies of the same species.

European Endangered Species Programme (EEP) recommended that a male and a female lions will be brought to Iran, however, U.S sanctions against Iran has complicated the transfer.

And now after years of collective attempts on Wednesday morning Tehran Zoological



**Asiatic lions once prowled from the Middle East to India. Now, only a fraction of these magnificent animals survive in the wild. Its range is restricted to the Gir National Park and environs in the Indian state of Gujarat.**

Garden will celebrate the return of the Asiatic lion to the country, Memarian concluded.

Asiatic lions once prowled from the Middle East to India. Now, only a fraction of these

magnificent animals survive in the wild. Its range is restricted to the Gir National Park and environs in the Indian state of Gujarat. The Gir Forest's dry teak woods were

once a royal hunting ground. Today they are a reserve where these at-risk big cats are heavily protected.

On the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List, it is listed under its former scientific name *Panthera leo persica* as Endangered because of its small population size and area of occupancy. It was also known as "Indian lion" and "Persian lion".

Until the 19th century, it occurred in eastern Turkey, Iran, Mesopotamia, and from east of the Indus River to Bengal and Narmada River in Central India. Since the turn of the 20th century, it is restricted to the Gir Forest National Park and surrounding areas.

Historical records in Iran indicate that it ranged from the Khuzestan Plain to the Fars in steppe vegetation and pistachio-almond woodlands. It was widespread in the country, but in the 1870s, it was sighted only on the western slopes of the Zagros Mountains, and in the forest regions south of Shiraz. Some of the country's last lions were sighted in 1941 between Shiraz and Jahrom in Fars province, and in 1942, a lion was spotted about 65 km northwest of Dezful. In 1944, the corpse of a lioness was found on the banks of Karun River in Khuzestan province.

Conflicts with humans, wildfires, poaching, canine distemper virus, decreases in population sizes of native ungulates are of the threats to the lions.

## Benefactors donate \$48m to rebuild flood-hit schools

**SOCIETY** TEHRAN — Iranian benefactors have donated some 2 trillion rials (nearly \$48 million) for reconstruction of schools damaged by recent flood in the country, IRNA news agency reported on Monday.

The donation was made over a charity event held on Monday night. During the event, the Ministry of Education and Mohammad-Hassan Aboutorabi Fard, interim Friday prayer leader of Tehran, also committed to provide reconstruction projects of the flood-stricken schools with 1 trillion rials each (nearly \$24 million).

Education Minister Mohammad Bat'haei said during the event that following devastating floods some 1,500 schools were damaged, 200 of which are razed to the ground.

1,300 schools damaged by the flood will be repaired and prepared for the students by the beginning of the next school year starting on September 23, Bat'haei added.

The minister went on to highlight that last year (March 2018-March 2019) more than half of the school classes were built by benefactors and



within a 10-year period the number of dilapidated schools dropped from two thirds to one thirds.

Mehroллаh Rakhshanimehr, director of schools renovation, development and equipment organization, for his part, explained in order to reconstruct and repair damaged schools in 9 flood-hit provinces some 4.4 trillion rials (nearly \$104 million) is needed.

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

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

## Charity foundation donates livestock to flood victims

**SOCIETY** TEHRAN — Barekat Charity Foundation, affiliated to Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam also known as Setad-e Ejaray-e Farman-e Hazrat-e Emam has donated some 1,500 livestock to flood victims in the northeastern province of Golestan on Sunday.

Above-normal precipitations in many provinces across Iran since March 19 resulted in catastrophic flood in provinces of Golestan, Mazandaran, Khuzestan and Lorestan causing damages to infrastructures, houses, crops and livestock.

According to a report by IRIB, Barekat Charity Foundation will also provide the flood-hit Golestanis with another 2,500 livestock.

Mustafa Seyyed Hashemi, an official with the Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam, explained that each livestock breeder is provided with 15 livestock.

He went on to say that the headquarters will donate 9,000 livestock to flood victims in various provinces.

According to Mohammad Hamidi, an official with Golestan governor general's office, some 6,850 livestock have been killed due to the flood in the province.



Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam, also known as Setad-e Ejaray-e Farman-e Hazrat-e Emam, was founded in 1989. In the Iranian calendar year 1386 (March 2017-March 2018) Barekat charity foundation- the social arm of the organization- with the aim of promoting social justice was established.

Socio-economic empowerment of the communities by encouraging entrepreneurship prioritizing breadwinner women, developing infrastructure such as water supply schemes, power grid, and road building, constructing schools and increasing educational spaces, promoting health for all, granting non-repayable loans and insurance especially in less developed areas and regions most affected by 1980s war and natural disasters are of the priorities of the charity foundation.

## Scotland declares 'climate emergency' following school strikes

Nicola Sturgeon has warned the world is facing a "climate emergency" and vowed Scotland "will lead by example" by cutting carbon emissions.

The Scottish first minister said the declaration was "a public promise" to act on global warming and had been inspired by young protesters who went on strike from school to urge action.

At least 90 councils across the UK have declared a climate emergency and pledged to work to limit damage to the environment.

MPs in Westminster will vote on whether to follow suit on Wednesday, after Labour forced a Commons debate on the issue following mass protests over political inaction on the crisis.

The declaration of a climate emergency is one of the key demands of environmental campaigners including the Extinction Rebellion movement, which paralysed parts of London with protests in the last fortnight.

Speaking at Scottish National Party's (SNP) spring conference in Edinburgh on Sunday, Ms Sturgeon said: "A few weeks ago I met some of the young climate change campaigners who've gone on strike from school to raise awareness of their cause."

"They want governments around the world to declare a climate emergency. They say that's what the science tells us, and they are right."

"Today, as first minister of Scotland, I am

declaring that there is a climate emergency and Scotland will live up to our responsibility to tackle it." The UK's Committee on Climate Change will this week publish a report which is expected to recommend more ambitious action to cut carbon emissions. "If that advice says we can go further or go faster, we will do so," Ms Sturgeon said. "Scotland will lead by example."

"I am making this public promise to the young people I met, and to their entire generation."

Scotland's parliament has been repeatedly targeted by climate change protesters, including Extinction Rebellion.

(Source: The Independent)

### First Announcement



Permit No.1398.625

### NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY AHVAZ-IRAN

TENDER NO. : 01-31-9280038

National Iranian South Oilfields Company intends to purchase the following goods

Material Description	Quantity
PARTS FOR "COOPER-ROLLS"POWER GAS TURBINE TYPE RT 48 SERIAL NOS.	33 ITEMS
884 RT,885 RT AND 886RT	INCLUDING 497 NO

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

The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 3,479 EURO or 164,252,588 RIAL, in favor of NISOC.

Tender documents including the materials thorough technical specifications and Qualitative Assessment Forms can be accessed via: WWW.nisoc.ir-material procurement management tab  
NO ADVANCE PAYMENT WILL BE PAID

#### FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPT

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Second Announcement

call for public tender (First/Second publish)

One-Stage (semi-compressed) tender

Subject of Tender: : Tires & Tubes

N.I.O.C.  
1398.545

National Iranian Drilling Company

Tender descriptions:

The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. /Indnt No.	Estimated value (Rial/Euro)
National Iranian Drilling Company	3,198,338	Tender No. :FP/09-97/056 Indnt No.:01-22-9647687	7,333,100,000 (Rial)

Qualitative evaluation of tenderers

Method	
	R Based on minimum scoring (60) made in award criterion reflected in the tenderers pre-qualification forms.

Purchasing & Submitting

Tender Document Distribution by Company	
Distribution Place	Hall No.:113, 1 <sup>st</sup> floor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahvaz, IRAN - Tel : 061 34148601
Submitting Method	Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 510,000 Iranian Rials under account number 400114004020491(Shaba No. IR 52010000400114004020491) in name of "NIDC Incomes Centralized Fund" issued by I.R. of Iran Central Bank. Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents.
Closing date	Days after the last time of Purchasing 14
Documents Receiving Method	Address Hall No. 107, 1 <sup>st</sup> floor, Tender Committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahvaz, IRAN. Tel. +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569

Tender Guarantee

Value of guarantee	367,000,000 Rials / 7,686 Euro
Type of guarantee	✓Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran. ✓Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 400114006376636 (Shaba No. IR 35010000400114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.
Duration of credit & quotation	Tender Guarantee and 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://www.nidc.ir) [http://sapp.ir/nidc\\_pr](http://sapp.ir/nidc_pr)

تهران تایمز نوبت اول ۹۸/۲/۱۱ نوبت دوم ۹۸/۲/۱۴

# Venezuelan government denounces an 'attempted military coup'

→ "The national armed forces have taken the correct decision, and they are counting on the support of the Venezuelan people," Guaido said.

Venezuelan Defence Minister Vladimir Padrino said on Tuesday that the armed forces remained "firmly in defence" of the "legitimate" government of President Maduro.

Guaido, the leader of Venezuela's opposition-controlled National Assembly, in January invoked the constitution to assume an interim presidency, arguing that Maduro's re-election in 2018 was illegitimate.

He has been traveling outside the capital, Caracas, more and more in recent weeks to try to put pressure on Maduro to step down.

Protests are planned for Wednesday, May 1, including what Guaido has said will be "the largest march in Venezuela's history", part of what he calls the "definitive phase" of his effort to take office in order to call fresh elections.

Around 50 countries including the United



States have recognized Guaido as Venezuela's interim president.

According to Hurriyet, Maduro calls Guaido a U.S.-backed puppet who

seeks to oust him in a coup. The government has arrested his top aide, stripped Guaido of his parliamentary immunity and opened multiple probes. It has also barred him from leaving the country, a ban Guaido openly violated earlier this year.

The move was Guaido's boldest effort yet to convince the military to rise up against Maduro. If it fails, it could be seen as evidence that he lacks the support he claims to have.

It might also encourage the authorities, which have already stripped him of parliamentary immunity and opened multiple investigations into him, to arrest him.

The United States is among some 50 countries that recognize Guaido as Venezuela's president, and has imposed sanctions to try to dislodge Maduro.

A former U.S. official said that while it was unclear whether Guaido's efforts would touch off a broader military uprising against Maduro, it appeared aimed at building momentum toward Wednesday's May Day Street protests and making that a turning point.

## 'Saudi Arabia among top violators of religious freedom'

→ The report further complained about restrictions of non-Muslims living in the kingdom.

"As a matter of law, the Saudi government bans the public practice of non-Muslim faiths by citizens and expatriates alike. While the Saudi government has stated repeatedly that non-Muslims who are not converts from Islam may practice their religion in private, this policy has not been codified," it said.

Elsewhere, the report criticized Saudi Arabia's guardianship system for classifying women as "legal minors," who need permission to study at universities and travel abroad.

"Saudi Arabia is the only Muslim country with such an extensive system of guardianship, which places severe limitations on women's religious freedom and human rights," it added.

The survey also raised concerns about the situation of Saudi Arabia's prisoners of conscience and the government's failure to address the intolerant language in official textbooks inciting hatred and violence toward non-Muslims.

The report said, however, that the administration recommends renewing a waiver for Saudi Arabia as required in the "important national interest of the United States."

It was published before Saudi Arabia's brutal beheadings of its 37 nationals, which sparked widespread condemnations.

The commission later reacted to the mass execution in a statement on Friday, saying the U.S. State Department "must stop giving a free pass" to Saudi Arabia and urging the government to lift the waiver.

USCIRF Chairman Tenzin Dorjee said in the statement, "The Saudi government's execution of minority [Shia] Muslims on the basis of their religious identity and peaceful activism is not only shocking, but also directly contradicts the government's official narrative of working toward greater modernization and improving religious freedom conditions."

Among other issues that have tarnished the image of the Saudi royal family is the state-sponsored killing of dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi in October 2018.

Riyadh has also been under scrutiny over the crimes it has been committing during its U.S.-backed military campaign against Yemen.

Despite Riyadh's brazen rights violations, President Donald Trump has repeatedly stressed the importance of Washington's alliance with Riyadh, citing petrodollars.

Addressing his supporters in Wisconsin on Sunday, Trump



indicated that he would remain a steadfast supporter of the Saudi regime, largely due to Riyadh's purchases from U.S. companies.

"They have nothing but cash, right?" he told the crowd. "They buy a lot from us. \$450 billion they bought."

"You had people wanting to cut off Saudi Arabia ... I don't want to lose them," he added.

## Japan's emperor prays for peace in first abdication in 200 years



TEHRAN — Japanese Emperor Akihito, in his final remarks as his three-decade reign drew to a close on Tuesday, thanked the people for their support and expressed hope for a peaceful future.

Akihito, 85, the first monarch to abdicate in two centuries, had sought to ease the painful memories of World War Two and bring the monarchy closer to the people, including those marginalized in society.

The popular Akihito was the first monarch to take the Chrysanthemum Throne under a post-war constitution that defines the emperor as a symbol of the people without political power, Reuters reported.

His father, Hirohito, in whose name Japanese troops fought World War Two, was considered a living deity until after Japan's defeat in 1945, when he renounced his divinity.

"To the people who accepted and sup-

ported me as a symbol, I express my heartfelt thanks," Akihito, wearing a Western-style morning coat, said at a brief abdication ceremony in the Imperial Palace's Matsu no ma, or Hall of Pine.

"Together with the empress, I hope from my heart that the new Reiwa era that begins tomorrow will be peaceful and fruitful, and pray for the peace and happiness of our country and the people of the world," said a solemn Akihito, referring to the new imperial era.

Standing on a white dais flanked by Empress Michiko, who wore a long white and gray dress, Akihito bowed after he spoke.

About 300 people attended the ceremony broadcast live on television. They included Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Crown Prince Naruhito and Crown Princess Masako, as well as the heads of both houses of parliament and Supreme Court justices.

## N. Korea warns of 'undesired' outcome if no change in U.S. nuclear stance



TEHRAN — North Korea's vice foreign minister said on Tuesday the United States will face "undesired consequences" if it fails to present a new position in denuclearization talks by the end of the year, state media reported.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has set a year-end deadline for the United States to show more flexibility after his second summit with U.S. President Donald Trump failed to produce a deal to end Pyongyang's nuclear program in return for sanctions relief.

But Trump and U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo have brushed aside the deadline, calling for Kim to take action on his pledge to denuclearize after years of pursuing nuclear and rocket programs in defiance of UN Security Council resolutions.

North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui singled out Pompeo's inter-

view last week with CBS in which he said the United States may have to "change paths" if the negotiations break down, Reuters reported.

"Changing paths is not a privilege that only the United States has, but it could be our own choice if we make up our mind," Choe said, according to the official KCNA news agency.

"If the United States fails to reestablish its position within the timeline we gave, it will see truly undesired consequences." She also said North Korea's determination to denuclearise remained unchanged. It would happen "when the come comes", but only if the United States changed its current calculations.

"We know the path we will take, but we're just hesitating to choose as we have set the deadline for the United States," Choe said.

## 'Supporting Saudi war on Yemen is in U.S. best interest'

United States Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has defended U.S. support for the Saudi-led war on Yemen, saying it is "in America's best interest".

"The support we're providing to the Saudis as they attempt to engage these dangerous missiles systems is in America's best interest," said Pompeo, according to the Hill on Monday.

Pompeo made the comments in reference to missile attacks launched by Yemen's popular Houthi Ansarullah movement, which is defending the country against the Saudi-led invasion.

Seeking to deter the Saudis from further attacks, Ansarullah has targeted a number of strategic Saudi installations, including airports.

"Airplanes flying through King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh are at risk, and the United States has an obligation to protect our citizens," said Pompeo.

The U.S. has been generously providing arms support for the kingdom and its allies during their onslaught against Yemen. Washington has also provided the coalition logistical assistance, including bombing coordinates.

According to Pres TV, Washington's support for Riyadh's war, however, has come under increasing scrutiny in Congress ever since the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal



Khashoggi at the kingdom's consulate in Istanbul, Turkey last October.

Earlier this month, the U.S. President Donald Trump vetoed a congressional war powers resolution against U.S. support for the war. Backers of the resolution believe the American involvement is an act of war and, therefore, needs approval from Congress.

Last week, senior U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders, who originally co-sponsored the anti-war resolution, wrote a letter

to fellow Senators urging them to override Trump's veto in a bid to "protect" Congress's constitutional authority.

The Senate is expected to act on Trump's decision later this week, according to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. It is, however, not clear what type of vote will be made in response to the veto.

Saudi Arabia and a number of its regional allies launched the devastating campaign against Yemen in March 2015, with the aim of bringing the former Saudi-sponsored government back to power.

Earlier this month, the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), a nonprofit conflict-research organization tracking casualties in Yemen, announced that the death toll from the Saudi-led war surpassed 70,000 deaths, with more than 10,000 being killed in the five last months alone.

The war has also taken a heavy toll on the country's infrastructure, destroying hospitals, schools, and factories.

The UN has warned that a record 22.2 million Yemenis are in dire need of food, including 8.4 million threatened by severe hunger. According to the world body, Yemen is suffering from the worst global famine in more than 100 years.

## Iraq says Daesh remains threat, Baghdadi filmed video in 'remote area'

TEHRAN — Daesh (ISIS) terrorist group remains a potent threat around the world despite reduced capabilities, Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi said on Tuesday, adding its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi had made his latest video appearance in a "remote area."



Abdul Mahdi did not say which country that area was in.

A video released late on Monday by Daesh's media network showed a man it said was Baghdadi in what would be his first appearance since he declared the extremists' now-defunct "caliphate" five years ago.

The authenticity and date of the recording could not be independently verified.

Abdul Mahdi said Baghdadi's appearance was an attempt to boost militants and that Daesh would attempt to carry out more attacks.

"Regarding the location of Baghdadi, we can't give intelligence information right now but it's clear from the video that he's in a remote area," Abdul Mahdi said at a news conference on a visit to Berlin.

"Daesh is not just a small organization, it's widespread and will try to put confidence back in its militants and carry out acts such as those in Sri Lanka," he said, referring to the Easter attacks there this month claimed by the group.

"But its capabilities have greatly reduced," he said.

In the 18-minute video from the Al Furqan network, a bearded man with Baghdadi's appearance says the bombings in Sri Lanka were Daesh's response to losses in its last territorial stronghold of Baghouz in Syria.

Although, taking Baghdad and Damascus by surprise at first, the group began to suffer one defeat after another after the countries enlisted the assistance of their allies.

Russia began lending aerial support to Syria's ground operations against the group in 2015. Iran has also been providing the Syrian and Iraqi militaries with advisory support.

The combined push led to Daesh's defeat in late 2017.

## F-35 project is bound to collapse without Turkey: Erdogan

TEHRAN — The F-35 fighter jet project is doomed to fail if Washington keeps blocking the delivery of the promised aircraft to Turkey over its refusal to back out of an arms deal with Russia, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said.

Speaking at a defense expo in Istanbul on Tuesday, Erdogan blasted Washington for applying "injustice and pressure" against its ally Turkey over the beleaguered F-35 deal.

According to RT, the U.S. blocked the delivery of the jets to Ankara, saying that the planes will not be shipped unless the country scraps its contract to buy the S-400 air defense missile systems from Russia. The U.S. politicians argued that getting arms from Moscow undermines the security of NATO.

"No attempts to impose anything [on Turkey] will be accepted," Erdogan warned.

"We have now begun to take steps in building our own national combat aircraft," he told the audience, emphasizing that the nation plans to have its Air Force entirely comprised of domestically built warplanes in the future.

Turkish officials have earlier hinted that they will seek various defense technology, including warplanes, from other partners if the U.S. fails to deliver the promised jets.

Ankara had also been repeatedly telling the U.S. that it will stick to the S-400 purchase, insisting that as a sovereign nation it is free to buy arms from whoever it likes. The first pack of the S-400s is scheduled to be shipped to Turkey in July.

## Trump places Israel above U.S.: Iran's Takht-Ravanchi

→ Third, the U.S. has proven to be an unreliable partner, particularly when it comes to anything regarding Palestine. Therefore, no one should trust its ill-advised proposals about the Palestinian question, including with respect to the so-called "deal of the century".

Indeed, the inalienable rights of a nation can neither be compromised by putting them under extreme military, political and economic pressure nor be bought by petrodollars.

Fourth, in the last 70 years, Israel has committed numerous crimes, including waging war against all neighbors with total impunity. The decade-long illegal inhumane blockade on Gaza, the continuation of which is drastically deteriorating the already grave humanitarian situation, is another example in this regard.

Under current circumstances, the international community must continue its longstanding strong support for the just cause of the Palestinians and the full realization of their inalienable rights, in particular the establishment of the independent State of Palestine with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Furthermore, the international community should resist any attempt by the U.S. and Israel to change the nature of real threats in the Middle East. The first and foremost problem of the Middle East is the question of Palestine, and the plan by the U.S. and some of its allies including Israel and Saudi Arabia to substitute it with artificial and manufactured threats and crises is designed to divert the attention of the international community from its illegal occupation of Palestine and others' lands.

## West Ham to introduce new fan voting platform

Premier League club West Ham United will introduce a new fan engagement platform allowing supporters to buy the right to vote on selected club decisions, following the example of French club Paris Saint Germain and Juventus of Italy.

Socios.com, a blockchain-based fan engagement platform, allows supporters to buy fan 'tokens' or to earn or 'hunt' them through games, in order to take part in club polls.

The club chooses the kind of polls it wishes to run but it is imagined they could include decisions on 'third kit' designs and other fan experience issues and not management or personnel decisions. The fan tokens will also give supporters access to rewards, exclusive merchandise, games and competitions.

"We recognise that many fans are now digital users first, with many looking at and using new technologies in their day-to-day lives," said Karim Virani, West Ham's Digital and Commercial Director. "Socios.com's state-of-the-art platform will further give us the ability to interact and get direct feedback in real-time from our global fanbase which will be important to our future fan engagement strategy."

The tokens are able to be traded within the system which operates via a mobile phone app.

Socios.com CEO Alexander Dreyfus said the company expects to announce more European and Premier League partner clubs in the near future.

(Source: Mirror)

## Netflix signs deal for Thai cave boy rescue miniseries

Netflix said on Tuesday it had secured the rights to make a miniseries about the dramatic rescue of 12 boys and their soccer coach from a cave in northern Thailand last year that captured international attention.

"The story combines so many unique local and universal themes which connected people from all walks of life, from all around the world," Erika North, Netflix's Director of International Originals, said.

"Thailand is a very important market for Netflix and we are looking forward to bringing this inspiring local, but globally resonant story...to life," she added.

The "Wild Boars" soccer team, aged between 11 and 16, and their 25-year-old coach became trapped on June 23 while exploring the cave complex in the northern province of Chiang Rai when a rainy season downpour flooded the tunnels.

A 17-day effort to rescue them gripped the world with experts from various countries volunteering to help.

"We look forward to working with all involved parties to ensure our story is told accurately," assistant coach Ekkapol "Ake" Chantapong said. The miniseries will be directed by Crazy Rich Asians director Jon M. Chu and Nattawut "Baz" Poonpiriya.

Netflix and SK Global Entertainment secured the rights from the 13 Thamluang, a company established by the boys and their coach. So far, two books about the rescue have been published while a feature film by British-Thai director Tom Waller, "The Cave", wrapped up shooting in December, according to the Hollywood Reporter.

(Source: Reuters)

## 'Big differences': Hamsik struggling to adapt to Chinese football

Marek Hamsik says that he is struggling to settle in Chinese football and admitted he has problems communicating with his Dalian Yifang team-mates.

The 31-year-old, Napoli's all-time leading goal-scorer, left Serie A for the Chinese Super League (CSL) in February but has failed to find the net or provide an assist in six games.

Hamsik was dropped for Sunday's 4-1 defeat at top-of-the-table Beijing Guoan and did not even make the bench.

"I am not particularly satisfied with my performances," the Slovakian international midfielder told CCTV.

"I have always tried my best to help the team but I've not encountered a situation like this before.

"There are big differences between Chinese and European football, but I will try to overcome this and adapt."

Hamsik said that he was surprised by the number of fouls in the CSL and how much playing time is lost because of that and disputes with referees. Hamsik, who spent 12 years at Napoli including a stint as captain, said the biggest problem he faces in China is the language barrier. "Many times I want to communicate with my team-mates, for example on pitch, but because of the language I can't, so I can only use gestures," he said.

(Source: AFP)

## Thomas Tuchel slams Neymar for fighting with supporters

Thomas Tuchel has blasted Neymar for hitting a fan who insulted Paris Saint-Germain players as they filed up to collect their French Cup losers' medals.

A 28-year-old delivery driver from Nantes had been filming the PSG players and making less than flattering comments about them when a simmering Neymar grabbed the hand that held the mobile phone and shoved it towards the fan's face.

"I don't like it. You can't do that, you just can't do that," Tuchel said of the incident, which was caught on video by fans at the Stade de France.

Neymar lashed out on Saturday after his side threw away a two-goal lead to draw 2-2 with Rennes before losing the penalty shootout 6-5 after extra time.

"It's not easy to go up the steps after a defeat. It's very difficult for me, for everybody, but we have to accept it," Tuchel added.

"If we lose, we have to show respect. You can't get into a fight with a spectator." The blow continued a bad-tempered end to the evening for PSG. Neymar's strike partner Kylian Mbappe was sent off for a dreadful tackle with two minutes left in extra time.

(Source: Fox Sports)

# Barcelona 'Perfect' opponents for Liverpool - but Lionel Messi could change all that

Barcelona are 'perfect' opponents for Liverpool in the semi-finals of the Champions League tomorrow night.

That's according to journalist Duncan Castles, who believes the Reds' style of play means their last-four showdown is extremely difficult to call.

Liverpool are just two games away from reaching the Champions League final for the second season in a row.

However, standing in their way are none other than La Liga champions Barca - whose star man Lionel Messi is as determined as ever to clinch his fifth triumph in the competition.

Yet in spite of Messi's individual brilliance, Castles thinks Ernesto Valverde's men are ideal opponents for Jurgen Klopp and co.

"I think this tie sets up very nicely for Liverpool," he told The Transfer Window podcast.

"We know they can defend, we know they can press defenders who want to overplay the ball, we know they can set pressing traps in midfield and turn over possession quickly and turn it into goals.

"Having that degree of desire and focus from one of the two best players in the world [in Messi] against you is the difficulty for Liverpool.



"But tactically, in terms of team shape, in terms of the kind of opposition Liverpool



would like to have in a match like this if they're gonna play a really good team, I think Bar-

celona are perfect for them."

He added: "And you have to say that physically they've dealt with this run-in very well, they're not dropping their energy levels, they aren't performing consistently in matches.

"We had probably three months of this season where they barely produced a performance of the level they're capable of, but the last few weeks they're getting much closer to the level they're capable of and they're consistently playing very well.

"Again, a fascinating tie to watch and really difficult to call. I'd say this is a coin toss between the two teams."

Tomorrow's first leg is taking place at the Nou Camp, with the second scheduled for next Tuesday at the Nou Camp.

And ahead of their trip to Spain, Klopp insisted their opponent's 99,354-seater home is nothing special.

"The Camp Nou is just a stadium. It is pretty big, but it is no temple of football," he told DAZN.

"It had to arrive at some point. You see the other teams who have a bad time when they play there and now we will experience it.

"Although of course we hope to play well." (Source: Daily Star)

## Tim Howard: 'I hope Liverpool never win a title while I'm still breathing'



Old habits die hard. Old rivalries run deep. For Tim Howard, the former Manchester United and Everton goalkeeper, this season's Premier League title race has proven to be something of a Sophie's choice.

Manchester City or Liverpool. Local rival or arch enemy. The team once described by Sir Alex Ferguson as a "noisy neighbor" or the club that Ferguson made it his life's goal to usurp.

"My greatest challenge was knocking Liverpool right off their f\*\*\*ing perch," Ferguson once famously declared.

Howard is unequivocal. "I hope Liverpool never win a title while I'm still breathing," he told CNN after his Colorado Rapids side was beaten by Atlanta United, speaking with a twinkle in his eye.

"We have two teams in the form that they're both in. It'll come down to the wire. If no one has a slip up, then City wins."

Indeed, with two games to go, City hold a one-point lead over Liverpool, and with games at home to Leicester and away at Brighton almost certain to decide the trophy's destination. Liverpool must play away at Newcastle and then is at home to Wolves on the final day of the season.

This year has represented a curious quandary for a man whose heart bleeds both Merseyside blue and Manchester red. Even a decade ago, it would have seemed an implausible notion -- an outlandish nightmare, light-years away from reality.

(Source: CNN)

## Kerr 'disappointed' after Rockets fury at officiating



Golden State Warriors head coach Steve Kerr hit back at criticism of NBA officiating on Monday after the Houston Rockets complained of a series of missed calls in their game one playoff loss.

Rockets star James Harden claimed officials missed a series of foul calls on Sunday as Houston slid to a 104-100 defeat against the Warriors in Oakland.

Harden -- a vocal critic of the officiating all season -- suggested refs had not given the Rockets a "fair chance" during the loss, citing several non-calls on his three-point attempts.

"Call the game how it's supposed to be called, and that's it. And I'll live with the results," Harden grumbled.

However Kerr was unimpressed with the Rockets criticism on Monday, and risked stoking tensions ahead of game two on Tuesday by suggesting players were trying to cheat refs by deliberately drawing contact.

"It's disappointing because the focus should be on two teams playing extremely hard," Kerr told reporters.

"We just watched the tape upstairs. You don't think there were 10 calls where we thought we got fouled? I mean this is how it goes. Every coach in the league will tell you the same thing. You watch the tape and go 'That's a foul, that's a foul,'" Kerr said.

Without naming any specific player, Kerr added that officials were also vulnerable to "deception" by athletes.

"It's very, very difficult to officiate an NBA game," Kerr said. "In the modern game a lot of players have gotten really good at deception, creating contact.

"I don't remember people falling down on three-point shots all the time when I played. The game has got so much deception as part of it. It's very, very difficult to officiate.

"Every coach in the league will tell you the same thing. You watch the tape and think 'Man, we got screwed'. The reality is you get some, you lose some, the refs do the best job they can and you move onto the next game."

Meanwhile, the NBA released its "Last Two Minute Report" on Monday, which maintained that a pivotal call Harden and the Rockets had complained about was in fact correct.

Harden believed he should have been awarded a foul after he attempted a three-pointer with 10 seconds left which missed.

However there was no foul called on Golden State's Draymond Green, with officials ruling that the Houston star had initiated contact.

Meanwhile, the league slapped Rockets guard Chris Paul with a \$35,000 fine on Monday for "aggressively confronting and recklessly making contact with a game official."

(Source: Eurosport)

## Two arrested after Sala image posted online

Two people have been arrested after an image of deceased footballer Emiliano Sala's body had been posted on social media.

Dorset police announced on Saturday an investigation would be launched following the discovery of the image online.

"On Feb. 7 2019, a post mortem examination of Emiliano Sala was conducted at Holly Tree Lodge Mortuary in Dorset," a police statement read. "On Feb. 13, Dorset Police became aware of an image on Twitter purporting to show the post mortem of Emiliano, and an investigation was launched.

"The image had been swiftly removed by Twitter, but unfortunately it had been circulated extensively on various social media sites by this time. As part of the enquiries by Dorset Police, a warrant was obtained for an address in Wiltshire and, on Feb. 18, this warrant was executed by officers from the Digital Investigations & Intelligence Unit within Wiltshire Police.

"A 48-year-old woman from Corsham was arrested at the scene on suspicion of unauthorized access to computer material [an offence under the Computer Misuse Act] and



malicious communications, and is currently released on conditional bail. "As the police investigation continued, a 62-year-old man from Calne was also arrested on suspicion of unauthorized access to computer material, and is currently released under investigation."

## 'He kept saying I am going to hurt you' - Onuoha accuses Ibrahimovic of disrespect

Ex-Manchester City defender Nedum Onuoha has claimed Zlatan Ibrahimovic threatened to hurt him during LA Galaxy's victory over Real Salt Lake, and accused the striker of disrespect.

The pair clashed twice, before Ibrahimovic scored the 78th-minute winner and celebrated in Onuoha's face. Onuoha, 32, says he rejected the Swede's apology in the dressing room.

"Over here it is just a show for him. A lot of people are scared of him - but he is just

a mere mortal," he said. "First, he was very arrogant. Secondly, I thought: 'What is this guy playing at?'"

"This is not the way you are supposed to do it, especially someone who is meant to be the face of the game here and the game

globally. "I wasn't a fan before - and I'm definitely not a fan now."

"This time he hit me on top of head. I was again thinking: 'What is going on here?'" Onuoha told BBC Sport.

(Source: BBC)

# Iran files complaint to FIFA over Carlos Queiroz's claims

**S P O R T S** TEHRAN — The Football Federation of Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) says it is filing a complaint to FIFA against Carlos Queiroz for making a string of false allegations against the federation in relation to a contractual dispute between the relevant parties.

The Portuguese coach had filed a complaint to FIFA two weeks ago saying the Iranian federation still owes him salary from his spell in charge of the national team.

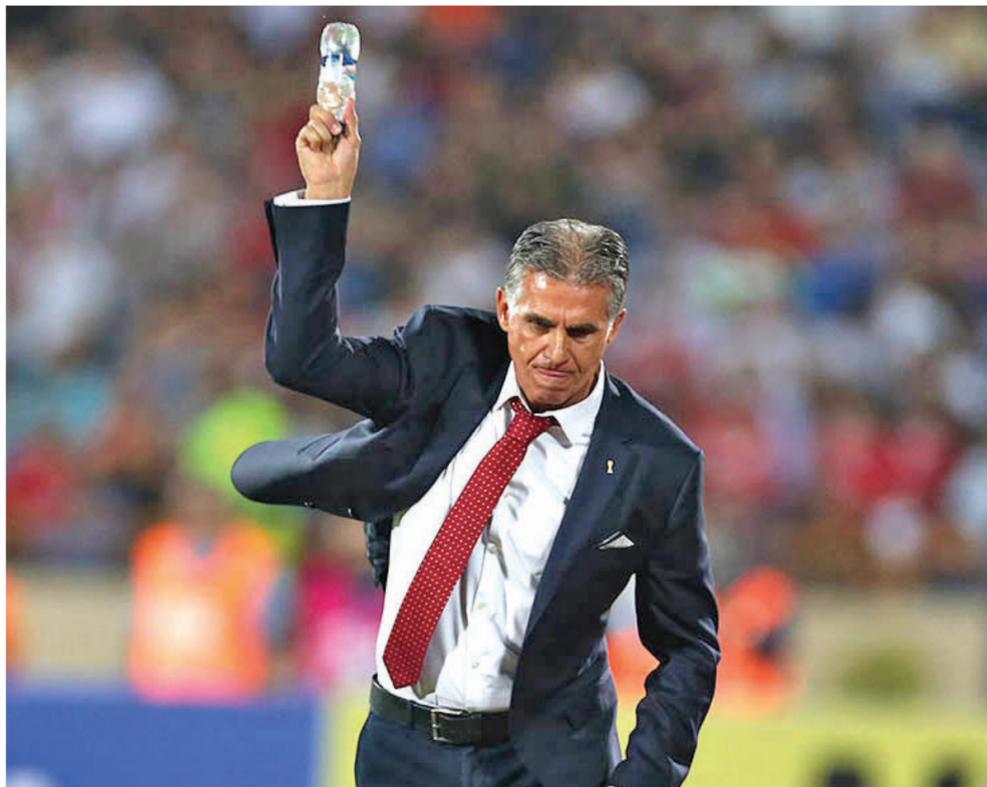
His lawyers had claimed that the Iranian federation failed "to fulfil its obligations, related to the last six-month contract that ended in January and also related to the previous one."

Afterward, FFIRI President Mehdi Taj said that the non-payment was due to sanctions which restrict bank transfers, however Queiroz in an interview with Tehran Times accused the Iranian top official of 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," the ex-Real Madrid coach told Tehran Times correspondent.

Now, the Iranian federation has filed a complaint against Queiroz over his false allegations.

"Queiroz will face prosecution in relation to his allegations, claiming the Iranian federation is misleading the public. FFIRI is working to fulfil its obligations and it takes time but Queiroz is continuously violating the FIFA's ethics code in relation to this issue. The Iranian football federation is complaining against Queiroz for making false claims," FFIRI said in a statement released on Tuesday.



## Peruvian medalists to receive apartment



The Congress of the Republic of Peru passed a bill guaranteeing that all Peruvian athletes and Para athletes who take a gold, silver or bronze medal at the Lima 2019 Pan American and Parapan American Games will receive an apartment at the Village.

It was approved with all 64 votes in favour. This initiative was presented by Congress first Vice-president Leyla Chihuan and supported by Educational, Youth and Sports Commission Head Milagros Salazar.

This regulation considers winners both in individual and team sports, who will receive one of the 1,096 apartments built for the Pan American and Parapan American Village in the district of Villa El Salvador.

"Athletes are the true protagonists of this event; their performance will inspire our population to practice sports and will develop people's personal skills which they

will later apply in their professional and educational lives," Chihuan said.

Seven towers, three with 19 floors and four with 20, make up the Village. Each building has four elevators with a capacity for up to 18 people and access for wheelchair users. The Village will feature 70-square-metre and 75-square-metre apartments, with accessible bathrooms.

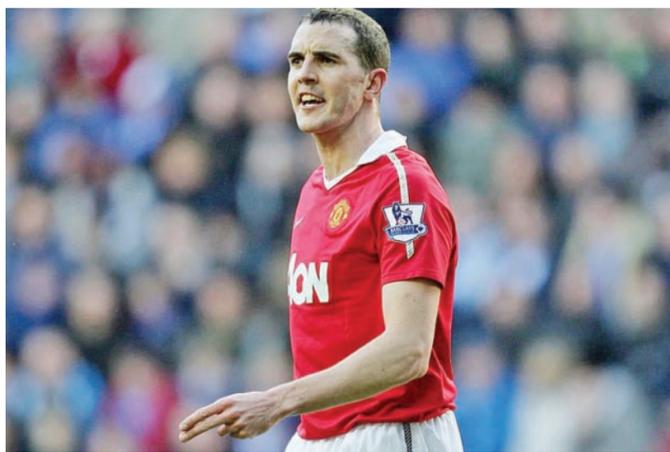
The Village will receive around 2,955 people for the Parapan American Games, including athletes and officials, and will become the biggest accessible housing complex in Peru.

It will be an important legacy for those living in the district of Villa El Salvador and the country.

Lima 2019 will take place between 23 August and 1 September and will feature over 1,800 athletes competing across 17 sports, overtaking Toronto 2015 as the biggest Parapan American Games in history.

(Source: Paralympic)

## Ex-United defender O'Shea to retire



Reading have confirmed that 38-year-old center-back John O'Shea, formerly of Manchester United, will retire at the end of the season.

Former Manchester United and Republic of Ireland defender John O'Shea is set to retire at the end of the season, his club Reading have confirmed.

O'Shea, who won five Premier League titles during his time at Old Trafford, announced his decision on his 38th birthday on Tuesday. The versatile defender also won the FA Cup and two EFL Cups and was part of the United squad that won the Champions League under Alex Ferguson in the 2007-08 season.

O'Shea left United in 2011 to join Steve Bruce's Sunderland, spending seven years at the club before signing for Reading last year.

But opportunities have been limited for the veteran this term and he has started only seven Championship games for the Royals, while he was on the bench for their FA Cup defeat to United at Old Trafford in January.

"A fabulous playing career is coming to a close — today, on his 38th birthday, John O'Shea has announced he is to retire at the end of the season," Reading posted on Twitter.

"Just a very small part of his playing days have been spent with the Royals, but he has amassed a medal collection that any player would be extremely proud of, winning almost everything possible during almost 20 years as a professional footballer. "And, off the pitch, one of the nicest, most humble and genuine people you'll meet in any walk of life. Happy birthday and thank you for all your efforts during your time at Madejski Stadium, John! We wish you well in the next chapter of your career!"

O'Shea, who won 118 caps for his country, was still a regular in Ireland squads until he retired from international football last year.

His last appearance as a senior professional could come when Reading host Birmingham City on Sunday.

(Source: Fox Sports Asia)

## Group B: Vietnam qualify by the barest margin to deny Iran

Hanoi: Vietnam qualified for the AFC U-19 Women's Championship Thailand 2019 Finals despite a 2-1 defeat against Korea Republic, with Islamic Republic of Iran narrowly denied despite their earlier 5-1 win against Lebanon on Tuesday.

### ■ KOREA REPUBLIC 2-1 VIETNAM

A late goal from Kim Soo-jin sealed a third successive win for Korea Republic, but it was Vietnam who had cause to celebrate after they sealed qualification for the Finals ahead of Iran by virtue of their lower fair play points.

Kim netted a double for the Koreans in their 2-1 win, but Vietnam's narrow defeat was enough to take them to the Finals by the narrowest margin after they finished level on points, head to head, and goal difference with the Iranians.

Vietnam entered the match knowing simply avoiding defeat would be enough to seal their place in Thailand 2019, but that was a task easier said than done against a Korea Republic side which had scored 11 unanswered goals in their opening two matches.

The hosts defended strongly in the opening half, and nearly took the reward of a clean sheet to half-time, but their work was undone five minutes before the break when what appeared to be an attempted cross from Korea Republic's Kim bounced over stranded goalkeeper Tran Thi Ngoc Anh and into the net from well over 30 yards.

The crossbar prevented Choo Hyo-joo from firing the Koreans further ahead in the 48th minute, before a goal-mouth scramble allowed Nguyen Thi Tuyet Ngan to provide



a Vietnamese lifeline with 20 minutes remaining.

In a chaotic sequence, Korean goalkeeper Kim Min-young spilled a high cross from Vietnam's Truc Huong, before a missed clearance from Hye-jong sent the ball in the direction of Tuyet Ngan, who made no mistake from six yards.

That goal looked to have given Vietnam the draw they needed to reach five points, and qualify directly, but that changed in the 83rd minute, when Kim seized on indecision in the Vietnamese defense to score her second of the match.

With Vietnam's progress on a knife-edge, both teams searched for further goals, but the score remained at 2-1, ultimately allowing the hosts to breathe a sign of relief after sealing safe passage to the tournament proper.

(Source: the-afc)

## Saipa defeat Zob Ahan in Iran Professional League

**S P O R T S** TEHRAN — Saipa football team defeated Zob Ahan in Iran professional League (IPL) on Tuesday.

In the match held in Isfahan's Fooladshahr Stadium, Saipa beat Zob Ahan 2-0 thanks to goals from Reza Asadi in the 6th minute and Mehrdad Kafshgari in the added time.

It was Zob Ahan's first defeat in IPL after nine matches. Saipa leapfrogged Zob Ahan to seventh place in the table with 37 points with three weeks left to play.

Zob Ahan moved one place down to eighth place with 35 points. Persepolis sit top of the table with 56 points, followed by Sepaha with 51 points.

## Esteghlal GM Fathi says Winfried Schaefer's behavior was unprofessional

**PLDC** — Esteghlal General Manager Amirhossein Fathi accused Winfried Schaefer of conducting an unprofessional behavior.

The German coach was suspended from all activities until the end of the season following poor results in Iran Professional League and AFC Champions League.

Winfried and his son Sascha Oliver Schaefer went to Esteghlal training on Monday but the team's officials didn't let them to enter the ground.

"Schaefer's behavior was really an unprofessional conduct. It was really surprising because we had informed him about his suspension. Schaefer should not go to the training," Fathi said.

Farhad Majidi has been appointed as head coach of Esteghlal until the end of the season.

## Goalkeeper Mohsen Forouzan suspended for one month

**TASNIM** — Tractor Sazi goalkeeper Mohsen Forouzan has been suspended from all football-related activities by The Disciplinary Committee of Iran Football Federation for one month.

Forouzan is suspected of being involved in a fixing, although the committee has not confirmed it.

The goalkeeper was suspended until further notice by the Tractor Sazi club following his mistakes in the match against Sepidrood in mid-April.

Forouzan conceded a goal just two minutes into the match after making a big blunder.

He made another mistake in the second half and failed to save a shot, conceding a goal from close range.

## Elber believes Vietnam players can compete in the German Bundesliga

Bayern Munich legend Giovane Elber has said that footballers from Vietnam have enough quality to ply their trade in the Bundesliga, the German football's top flight.

Elber, now 46 years old, scored 139 goals for Bayern from 265 appearances between 1997 and 2004 winning the Bundesliga four times and the UEFA Champions League in 2000-01.

And the Brazilian, who is in Vietnam for a promotional event, gave his opinion on Vietnamese football and footballers during an exclusive interaction with FOX Sports Vietnam.

"This world is quite small, everybody knows good players are here (in Vietnam)," Elber said when asked players like young full back Doan Van Hau, who was recently linked with a move to Borussia Monchengladbach, can cut their teeth in the Bundesliga.

"Vietnamese players can probably play in the Bundesliga and also other leagues in Europe. Bundesliga requires players to be a little bit more skilful but that is not beyond Vietnamese players," said the Brazilian, who is currently a Bayern Munich ambassador.

"I know there are many Brazilian players (in V.League). According to what I see in the media, they say positive things about the competition. It's kind of good and interesting," he said when asked about his initial impressions of the domestic football scene in Vietnam.

"When it comes to the national team, I think they played very good in the tournaments recently. Now, [the Golden Dragons] are led by a South Korean coach [Park Hang-seo]. It's a good combination. I think you should focus on the youth in the near future," Elber added.

(Source: Fox Sports Asia)

## Chelsea's Rudiger set to undergo surgery on knee injury

Chelsea defender Antonio Rudiger is in Rome to undergo surgery on his injured knee and is unlikely to play again this season, sources have told ESPN FC.

Germany international Rudiger returned ahead of schedule from a knee problem that forced him out of Chelsea's defeat at Liverpool earlier this month.

He started the 1-1 draw against Manchester United at Old Trafford on Sunday but limped off after 65 minutes.

Sources told ESPN FC that Rudiger is set to undergo an operation on his left knee on Thursday -- a procedure that will almost certainly rule him out of the remainder of Chelsea's campaign.

Rudiger has established himself as a key presence at the heart of Maurizio Sarri's defence, starting 33 of Chelsea's 36 Premier League games this season and making 44 appearances in all competitions.

His absence is likely to provide an opportunity for Andreas Christensen to start alongside David Luiz, while opening the door for club captain Gary Cahill -- who has not made a competitive appearance since November -- to return to the bench.

Rudiger is the second Chelsea player to suffer a season-ending injury this month after winger Callum Hudson-Odoi ruptured his Achilles tendon against Burnley.

(Source: ESPN)

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

If you are greeted, you should greet more warmly, and if a hand of generosity is stretched towards you, return a worthier reply and be more humane. And yet kindness and nobility belong to him who takes the first step.

Imam Ali (AS)

Rare manuscript of One Thousand and One Nights to be scrutinized in Tehran

TEHRAN — A rare manuscript of One Thousand and One Nights dating back to the Qajar period (1789–1925) will be scrutinized in a meeting, which will be organized at the Anthropology Museum of Golestan Palace in Tehran on Wednesday.



A folio of a rare manuscript of the One Thousand and One Nights illustrated by Sani ul-Molk, which is preserved in Tehran's Golestan Palace.

The folio, which has been illustrated by Iranian painter and miniaturist Sani ul-Molk and his pupils during the 1850s, is preserved at the archives of the palace, a public relations team announced in a press release on Tuesday.

It is one of few fascinating manuscripts of the One Thousand and One Nights in the world.

Prints of about 40 folios of the manuscript have previously been showcased during exhibitions in several Iranian cities.

"One Thousand and One Nights" is the story of the Persian king Shahriar who marries a girl each night and the next morning he beheads her to take revenge from his unfaithful wife.

He finally marries Scheherazade, who begins to tell a fascinating story during the night for the king but she does not finish it, so the king keeps her alive to find out the end of the stories.

Over the course of 1001 nights, the king had fallen in love with Scheherazade, so he spared her life and made her his queen.

Trento festival picks Iranian films

TEHRAN — Three Iranian films have been selected to be screened in the 67th edition of the Trento Film Festival, which is currently underway in the Italian city.

Among the films is Yaser Talebi's documentary "Beloved". The film, which is about an 82-year-old woman who prefers a hard, solitary herder's existence with her cows to a more comfortable life among people, is competing in the official section of the event.



A scene from Mohammad Farzinnia's documentary "Red and White".

The acclaimed short animated movie "The Fox" by Sadeq Javadi Nikkeh is scheduled to screen in the festival.

"Red and White", a documentary by Mohammad Farzinnia, is competing in the Alp and Ism, a non-competitive section of the festival.

Produced at the Documentary and Experimental Film Center, "The Fox" tells the story of a young fox on the verge of experiencing the first love. Meanwhile, it gets trapped by a hunter. Thus begins the fox's effort to survive and love, and seek revenge.

"Red and White" is about the burial of a group of mountaineers under an avalanche and the efforts of fellow alpinists to save them which ended in a tragedy.

The Trento Film Festival will come to an end on May 5.

Iran introduces new movie ratings system

TEHRAN — The Cinema Organization of Iran introduced a new movie ratings system on Tuesday.

The movie ratings system, which contains three chapters and 16 articles, has been communicated to theater owners, production companies, distributors and producers.

The age-based ratings must be subtitled during the screenings of a movie five times, each time for 30 seconds.

According to the ratings system, "Movies having inappropriate words and scenes are forbidden for children under nine."

Films with cigarette-smoking characters, "inappropriate language and violence, horror scenes" are forbidden for children under 12.

In addition, people under 15 are not allowed to watch scary movies and films with strong language and violence, drug abuse scenes, and relationships that violate common law.

People under 18 are not allowed to watch movies with strong language, extreme violence, drug abuse and marriage relationship scenes.

Based on the system, movies are not allowed to depict ethnic, racial, gender and religious discrimination.

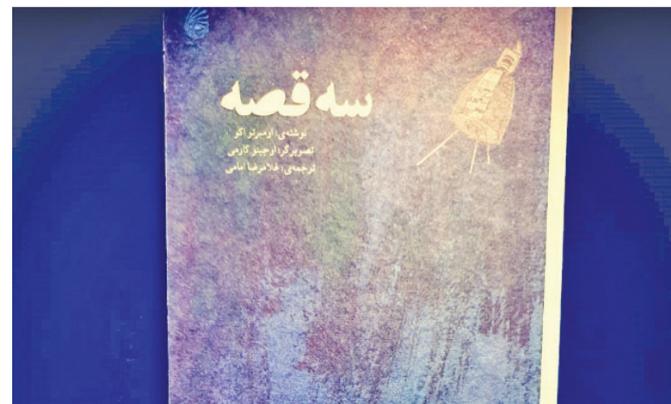
According to the new regulations, film distributors, movies theaters, movie streaming sites and movie ticket booking sites must inform people of the ratings of movies onscreen.

Disregard for the regulations by the relevant organizations will be prosecuted, the Cinema Organization of Iran noted.



This file photo shows filmgoers watching a movie at a theater of Tehran's Kurosh Cineplex.

Persian publisher to introduce Umberto Eco's "Three Stories" at Tehran book fair



The front cover of the Persian version of "Three Stories" by Umberto Eco.

TEHRAN — Chekkeh, the Iranian publisher of books by Italian writer Umberto Eco will introduce a Persian translation of his "Three Stories" ("Tres cuentos") during a special session at the 32nd Tehran International Book Fair today.

The publisher has purchased the copyright of the book, which has been translated into Persian by Gholamreza Emami.

Writer Mohsen Hejri and poet Biuk Maleki will also be attending the session.

"Three Stories" include the stories of "The Bomb and the General", "The Three Astronauts" and "The Gnomes of Gnu".

In "The Bomb and the General", the atoms locked in a nuclear bomb rebel against the general who wants to unleash a war with the arsenal accumulated in the attic.

In "The Three Astronauts", an American, a Russian and a Chinese compete among themselves for being the best in their mission to Mars. They do not understand or

like each other until a six-handed Martian makes them see reason.

A presumptuous emperor sends an explorer with the mission of civilizing an innocent and happy little planet in "The Gnomes of Gnu".

Born in the northwestern Italian city of Alessandria, Eco rejected his father's wish to study law and instead read philosophy and literature at the University of Turin.

Eco shot to fame with "The Name of the Rose", a medieval detective novel which was published in 1980. The novel captured imaginations globally and was turned into a film starring Sean Connery.

His 1988 novel "Foucault's Pendulum" could be described as a "thinking man's Da Vinci Code".

Umberto Eco was president of the Scuola Superiore di Studi Umanistici, University of Bologna. Additionally, he has written a multitude of academic texts, children's books and essays.

Cartoonist Derambakhsh prepares "Salad" for Tehran showcase



A poster for cartoonist Kambiz Derambakhsh's exhibition "Salad".

TEHRAN — Celebrated Iranian cartoonist Kambiz Derambakhsh will showcase his latest decorative collection named "Salad" in an exhibition, which will open at Tehran's Deilaman Gallery on Friday.

"I have been working on my decorative collection for years but it is not very famous," Derambakhsh, who is widely known for his quick and simple cartoons, said in a press release on Tuesday.

"The collection is composed of about 5,000 works with different themes like animals, nature and flowers," he added.

"I usually draw over 100 sketches every day, but select only 10 daily and get them framed. It has turned out to be a huge collection, which I am planning to showcase gradually in different exhibits," he noted.

"These days there is this love towards domestic pets that is increasing, and part of my works also approves of the idea. I have tried to give friendly images of pets

in my works," he said.

Derambakhsh also noted that his works are mostly liked by the youth and that he is happy that he has been able to make good relations with them.

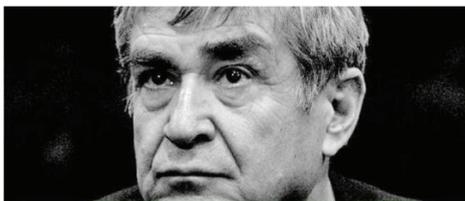
"Those who do not know me in person and have only seen my works think the works are done by a young artist," he remarked.

He also mentioned that he produces his artworks in great numbers and offers them at lower prices hoping they can find ways into the homes of lower-income families.

Derambakhsh will organize the exhibition in collaboration with graphic designer Soheil Hossein, who also cooperated with the cartoonist in "Owl Land", his previous exhibition that was held at A Gallery in Tehran in October 2018.

The exhibit will be running until May 17 at the gallery located at No. 50 Purmeshkati St. off Shariati Ave.

Theater troupe to pay tribute to Hamid Samandarian with "Play Strindberg"



به یاد استاد حمید سمندریان نمایشنامه خوانی «بازی استریندبرگ»

A poster for director Kurosh Sassanian's reading performance of "Play Strindberg".

TEHRAN — A theater troupe will pay homage to prominent Iranian stage director and playwright, Hamid Samandarian, by performing a reading of Swiss writer Friedrich Durrenmatt's 1969 play "Play Strindberg".

The reading performance will be directed by Kurosh Sassanian at Tehran's City Theater Complex on Wednesday. Sassanian, Elena Ahi and Farzin Nobarani are the members of the group.

Samandarian, who translated "Play Strindberg" into

Persian in 1972, also staged the play in Tehran's theaters at that time as well as again in 1999.

Sassanian directed "Play Strindberg" with different casts in 2017 and 2018 in Tehran to celebrate Samandarian's birthday, which is on May 6.

"Play Strindberg" is a free adaptation of August Strindberg's "The Dance of Death", using Strindberg's characters.

The comedy play is about a couple, Alice and Edgar, who are disappointed by their careers, children and life, until Alice's cousin Kurt arrives after a 15-year absence.

U.S. youth suicides up after Netflix show, cause unclear: study

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Suicides by young Americans rose by nearly a third in the month following the 2017 debut of popular Netflix television drama series "13 Reasons Why," in which a teenage girl kills herself, a U.S. study showed on Monday.

The researchers said the study had limitations and they could not make a direct causal link between "13 Reasons Why" and the increase in suicide rates or rule out other factors. Another, previous study had found watching the program was associated with a reduced risk of self-harm for some young adults.

The rate of suicide in April 2017 was 28.9 percent higher among U.S. youth ages 10 to 17 than would be expected based on suicide counts and trends observed in previous years, the National Institutes

of Health-supported (NIH) study said on Monday.

It found rates of suicide for 10- to 17-year-olds were also higher in the rest of the year, resulting in an additional estimated 195 suicide deaths from April to December 2017 versus expectations based on past data. The increase was driven primarily by young boys, they said.

A Netflix spokesman said the company had just seen the study and was reviewing it.

"It's a critically important topic, and we have worked hard to ensure that we handle this sensitive issue responsibly," the Netflix spokesman said.

The spokesman also said the research conflicted with a recent finding by a team at the University of Pennsylvania.

In a survey of 18- to 29-year-olds, the

Pennsylvania researchers found students who watched all of season two of "13 Reasons Why" were less likely to report self-harm and suicidal thoughts than others who did not watch the series at all.

The show tells the story of a teen who leaves behind a series of 13 tapes describing why she decided to take her own life. The first season's final episode depicted her slitting her wrists in a bathtub.

The graphic scene caused a backlash among parents and health professionals, prompting Netflix in 2017 to put up additional viewer warnings and direct viewers to support groups.

A second season was released in May 2018 and a third season has been ordered by Netflix.

Chief Executive Reed Hastings defended

the third season renewal at a shareholder meeting in June 2018.

"13 Reasons Why" has been enormously popular and successful. It's engaging content. It is controversial. But nobody has to watch it," Hastings said.

The NIH-backed researchers said their findings "should serve as a reminder to be mindful of the possible unintended impacts of the portrayal of suicide, and as a call to the entertainment industry and the media to use best practices when engaging with this topic."

The study was conducted at several universities, hospitals, and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), part of the U.S. government's National Institutes of Health. NIMH also funded the study.