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# Marchers back nuclear decision

## Iran says can't trust Trump who acts recklessly

**TEHRAN** — Iran's ambassador to the United Nations Majid Takht-Ravanchi has said that there is still a "window of diplomacy" to save the Iran nuclear deal, aka the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Speaking to PBS's Nick Schiffrin on "NewsHour" in an interview aired on Thursday, Takht-Ravanchi stated that Iran's decision to suspend some its com-

mitments to the JCPOA comes only after a year of patience since the United States unilaterally violated the 2015 nuclear deal and reimposed sanctions on Iran. "Over the last year, we exercised extreme patience in order to show that Iran is ready to take extra mile, in order to show that it is sincere in its implementation of the nuclear deal," he said. **→2**

## Moscow calls on all countries to keep buying Iranian oil

*By staff and agency*  
The Russian Foreign Ministry issued a statement on Thursday calling on all countries to continue buying Iranian oil despite the U.S. announcement to end sanctions waivers for importers of Iranian oil. "We urge everyone to not turn off such economic ties, including purchase of Iranian products, primarily energy resources. We insist that Washington must stop

any actions that impede the interaction of other states with Iran in the financial, economic, political and other spheres," the statement said, according to Sputnik. Iran informed on Wednesday the ambassadors of the UK, France, Germany, China and Russia of its decision to suspend some of its obligations under the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). **→2**

## U.S. crafting surrender document not a peace plan: Palestine FM

**TEHRAN** — The United States is crafting a surrender document, not a peace plan, and the Palestinians will not accept it regardless of how much money is offered, Palestine's foreign minister said addressing a United Nations meeting. Riyad al-Maliki was on Thursday expressing the Palestinian stance on the pro-

posed plan by the Trump administration to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Al Jazeera reported. "This is not a peace plan but rather conditions for surrender," al-Maliki said as the U.S.'s Middle East peace negotiator, Jason Greenblatt, listened on. "And there is no amount of money that can make it acceptable." **→13**

## Security official: Iran to follow policy on nuclear deal 'step by step'

**TEHRAN** — Keyvan Khosravi, the spokesman for Iran's Supreme National Security Council, has said that Iran will follow the path it has adopted toward the 2015 nuclear deal "step by step". Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) issued a statement on Wednesday declaring if it cannot benefit from the nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), it will gradually halt its com-



mitments it has undertaken beyond the NPT. In the first step, Iran suspended its commitment to limit its stockpile of enriched uranium to 300 kilograms and its heavy water to 130 tons. It gave the remaining parties to the nuclear deal (France, Germany, Britain, Russia and China) to either honor their obligations to the JCPOA or Iran will cease its voluntary commitments one by one. **→2**

## Even massive inspections not to prevent the sale of Iran's oil: energy expert

*By Payman Yazdani*  
**TEHRAN** — Visiting Research Scholar in the CESP Omid Shokri believes that even with massive inspections the U.S. will not be able to drive Iran's oil export to zero. To drive Iran's oil export to zero, the Trump administration said that it will no longer exempt any countries from U.S. sanctions if they continue to buy Iranian oil, stepping up pressure on Iran in a move that primarily affects the five remaining major importers: China and India and U.S. treaty allies Japan, South Korea, Turkey.

To shed more light on the issue we discussed it with Omid Shokri Kalehsar a Washington-based Senior Energy Security Analyst. Here is the full text of our interview with him: **■** Saudi Arabia and the UAE have announced they will compensate for Iranian oil. Is this possible technically? **A:** Supply and demand is an important factor in the international oil market. The oil market needs increased supply from major OPEC members and non-members such as Russia. It seems that Saudi, the UAE and

Iraq with Russia must produce more oil to overcome the shortage of Iranian oil in the oil market. At present major importers of Iranian oil are looking to find an alternative to Iranian oil because the U.S. did not extend the waiver for Iran's major oil buyers. India and South Korea are importing more oil from the U.S. and also imported more US LNG, refineries from these both countries are adapting themselves to U.S. oil, they previously imported Iranian oil and are now ready to import U.S. oil. **→7**

## Syrian troops liberate key town, nearby villages in Idlib

**TEHRAN**— The Syrian army has regained control of a strategic town from Takfiri terrorists in the country's northwest, media reports and local residents say. They said government forces captured Qalaat al-Madiq and two nearby villages, Tal Hawash and al-Karkat, on Thursday. The so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said militants had withdrawn after being

nearly encircled by the army. The recapture of Qalaat al-Madiq on the southwestern edge of the Idlib region comes after government forces retook the nearby town of Kafr Nabouda on Wednesday. Syria's army launched ground operations this week against the militant-held zone consisting of Idlib and parts of adjacent provinces. Turkey and Russia brokered a deal in Sep-

tember 2018 to create a demilitarized zone in the region that would be evacuated of all heavy weapons and militants. However, terrorist outfits especially militants from the Jabhat Fateh al-Sham terror group formerly known as al-Nusra Front constantly breach the agreement by attacking civilians and carrying out provocations against the Syrian army. **→13**



## Posters challenge Trump's declaration of Al-Quds as capital of Israel

**TEHRAN** — A collection of posters created during an international workshop in the northeastern Iranian city of Mashhad challenge U.S. President Donald Trump's declaration of Al-Quds as the capital of Israel. The International Union of the Unified Ummah (IUU) organized the workshop titled "Return of the Century" from May 1 to 4 in collaboration with the Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization, Owj Arts and Media Organization and several other Iranian institutions. **→16**



**ARTICLE**  
**Martin Love**  
Political analyst from North Carolina

## Trump's "Threat" Administration is a one trick pony so far

The Trump Administration ought to be renamed "The Threat Administration". Even the so-called "special relationship" between the U.S. and the U.K. had been threatened simply because the Brits seem to want to buy top of the line Chinese 5G Huawei broadband technology. In fact, it's not hard to get the impression that Trump and his foreign policy team, Bolton and Pompeo especially, are now bouncing off the bloody walls of the White House of late frustrated by their own failures so far and beginning to bump in to each other. First, the apparent biggest failure of late: The planned coup d'etat and the failed installation of the hapless Juan Guaido, who now may be more useful dead than alive to the coup plotters in Washington. They have found no firm pretext to militarily invade Venezuela even though invasion may be the last card they have, and they have been looking for one, but not even the people of Venezuela and its army, who have rallied behind Maduro on balance, want to deal with American military gringos rampaging in Venezuela. But the result of stalemate and failure in Venezuela has evidently shifted the focus rather decidedly towards Iran, based apparently on some bogus "intelligence" coughed up by the Zionists suggesting that American troops may have been specifically targeted by Iran should military hostilities commence. Thus, Trump has sent a flock of four B-52 bombers to the big American airbase in Qatar, and as well sent the aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln through the Suez Canal towards the Persian Gulf. What to make of this? Well, it's no secret that Trump or at least Mike Pompeo and John Bolton want to provoke Iran in to some action that might serve as a pretext for an attack. But the qualifier "at least" is important here. Because Trump, if he has any sense at all, must be aware that a new war anywhere will sink his Presidency and his reelection chances IF he caves to the belligerency of his advisors towards Iran. One not privy to Iranian forward contingency planning cannot know what Iran's leadership is exactly thinking, but to say any action by Iran might be dicey must be the understatement of the century so far. **→6**



**ARTICLE**  
**Yusuf Abdullah**  
Islamic scholar from Nigeria

## Al-Taqla (Piety): The ultimate goal of Ramadan

In the name of Allah who states "Ramadan is the month in which was sent down The Qur'an, as a guide to mankind, also clear Signs for guidance and judgment (Between right and wrong). So everyone of You Who is present (at his home) During that month should spend it in fasting ..." Q2:185 May the everlasting peace and blessings of Allah be upon His noble servant, our master Muhammad and his purified progeny? Some significant events remembered in this month include the loss of prophet's beloved wife Sayyidah Khadijah and compassionate Uncle Abi Talib, father of Imam Ali, the commander of the faithful. Thus, the year was named year of sorrow in Islamic history. Sayyidah Khadijah was the first wife of the noble messenger. She was a prominent lady known for her piety, compassion and generosity before revelation for which she was referred as "the pure" among other names. The prophet has related the success of Islam to her wealth, sword of Ali in defense of the religion and protection of Abu Talib! Throughout their married life, the prophet did not marry any other woman. A'isha, mother of the faithful reported "one day the messenger of Allah remembered Khadija (his deceased wife). I disliked this and said she was old, she was such and such. Now Allah has provided you with a better wife. (She meant herself). He said; Allah has not provided me with a better wife. She believed in my prophet hood when others refused to believe in me, and she verified and supported my words when others contradicted them, and she placed her wealth at my disposal when others disappointed me. Allah blessed me with children through her and not through any other wife" Isti'aa by Ibn AbdulBarr, with similar records by Bukhari and Muslim. The prophet (S) has given sayyida Khadija glad tidings of Allah's forgiveness and mercy in the hereafter! Abu Talib on the other hand was the father of Ali. He believed in the noble prophet and gave him utmost care although enemies of his son have rejected his faith. He also died in the same year as Sayyida Khadija for which the noble messenger suffered much and named the year as mentioned above. **→6**



## Zarif to EU: Uphold your obligations instead of asking Iran to unilaterally honor JCPOA

Zarif criticizes EU for rejecting ultimatum on JCPOA

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Thursday criticized the European Union for their reaction to Tehran's ultimatum on preserving the nuclear deal, aka the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

On Wednesday, May 8, Iran announced it will suspend part of its obligations under the JCPOA in retaliation for the U.S. exit from the nuclear agreement and a failure by the EU to redress the effects of sanctions on the Iranian people. Iran said the EU has just 60 days to sit for negotiations to put the JCPOA on its right track otherwise it will take the next steps.

The measure by Iran took place exactly a year after President Donald Trump pulled the U.S. out of the multilateral accord and ordered sanctions on Iran.

"EU statement today is why JCPOA is where it is: the U.S. has bullied Europe—and rest of world—for a year and the EU can only express 'regret,'" Zarif wrote on his Twitter page.

Zarif added, "Instead of demanding that Iran unilaterally abide by a multilateral accord, EU should uphold obligations — including normalization of economic ties."

Zarif's tweet came after the three European countries signatory to the JCPOA — Britain, France and Germany (E3) — and the EU, represented by its chief diplomat Federica Mogherini, rejected Iranian ultimatums over the landmark deal, in a sign of the deepening crisis engulfing the accord.



They warned Tehran on Thursday over its threat the previous day to revive its atomic program, a response that highlighted anxiety in European capitals over the risk of the deal collapsing.

"We reject any ultimatums and we will assess Iran's compliance on the basis of Iran's performance regarding its nuclear-related commitments," a joint European statement said, according to Financial Times.

Emmanuel Macron, French president, said he hoped "very deeply" that Iran would remain in the accord. "We need to maintain it, Iran must stay within this deal — and we will do everything we can to make sure it stays," he told reporters.

Under the agreement endorsed by the UN Security Council Resolution 2231 in July 2015, Iran accepted curbs on its nuclear program in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions.

This month, Trump stopped waiving sanctions on Iranian oil as part of his efforts to maximize pressure on Tehran.

The Europeans said they would monitor the findings of regular International Atomic Energy Agency reviews of whether Iran was honoring its obligations under both the nuclear agreement and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

As the U.S. conducts a "maximum pressure" campaign against Tehran, Trump on Wednesday announced new measures targeting Iranian metal exports. He warned Tehran could "expect further actions unless it fundamentally alters its conduct".

When asked on Thursday if U.S. military action against Iran was an option, Trump replied: "I guess you could say that always." He added that he would "like Iran to call me".

On Wednesday Iranian President Hassan Rouhani announced Tehran would take two steps relating to enriched uranium and the heavy water involved in enrichment that mean it is no longer implementing certain commitments in the 2015 accord.

On Wednesday, Zarif said limiting Iran's level of commitment to the nuclear deal does not mean that the deal is dead, but warned Europe that they have a "narrowing window" of diplomacy to save the deal.

The Europeans said they regretted the U.S. reimposition of sanctions last year, adding that they would continue with efforts to support "legitimate trade with Iran".

One such effort is a new company, INSTEX, created by France, Germany and the UK to enable commercial activity with the Islamic republic despite U.S. sanctions. The Europeans had vowed to install INSTEX in the fall of 2018, but it is not yet operational and is expected initially to focus only on a narrow range of humanitarian trade exempted from U.S. sanctions.

The EU and E3 called on countries outside the deal not to hamper efforts being made to save it by the remaining parties, which also include Russia and China.

European officials say Iran's tougher stance has left room for diplomacy, as it gives time to respond and threatens only a partial renewal of nuclear activity rather than a wholesale repudiation of the deal.

## Security official: Iran to follow policy on nuclear deal 'step by step'

Khosravi says next steps may include exit from the JCPOA

**1 →** Under the JCPOA, endorsed by the UN Security Council Resolution 2231, Iran agreed to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions.

"In any other situation, where Iran's legal rights are not secured, Tehran would take the step-by-step path devised by the Supreme National Security Council's new decision, and will go on until full withdrawal from the JCPOA and even beyond that if necessary," Iran Front Page quoted Khosravi as saying in an interview published on Thursday.

Whether the game would be a win-win or lose-lose one depends on how the ball of JCPOA, which is now in the other side's court, will move, he said.

"Iran's new decision, which has been made using the capacity of Articles 26 and 36 of the same deal, is the continuation of the path of diplomacy for returning the violators to the rail of JCPOA commitments," Khosravi explained.

He added, "Following the Supreme National Security Council's decision, the path [to withdrawal] will be pursued nonstop and stage by stage."

# The West has caused numerous miseries for Afghans, Araqchi says

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Abbas Araqchi said on Friday that the Western countries have caused many problems for the Afghan people and should fulfil their duties in helping the Afghan refugees.

"Iran has been hosting Afghan refugees for 40 years with generosity and the Western countries, which have caused many miseries for the Afghan people, should fulfil their duties in this respect," Araqchi told IRNA.

The issue of refugees and asylum seekers is an international issue and helping them is also "an international responsibility", he insisted.

He added, "The European governments should pay their share for hosting refugees be it through helping financially or granting them asylum."

Elsewhere, Araqchi said, "It is obvious that under the current situation in which the U.S. administration has imposed cruel and illegal sanctions against Iran with no international justification and seeks to restrict the Islamic Republic's financial resources, the Iranian people's demands will find new dimensions."

However, he said, it is not on Iran's agenda



to expel the Afghan refugees.

In a televised interview aired on Wednesday, Araqchi said that Iran hosts the Afghan refugees wholeheartedly, despite many financial costs.

"There are over three million Afghans in Iran who have taken more than two millions job opportunities and take three to five billion euros out of the country," he explained.

He added that there are 468,000 Afghan students in Iran and each of them costs 600 euros for the Iranian government per year.

There are also more than 3000 Afghan university students in Iran whose education costs Iran about 15,000 euros annually, the senior diplomat explained.

The deputy foreign minister said Iran will be forced to adopt new policies when

## Iran says can't trust Trump who acts recklessly

Takht-Ravanchi says 'window of diplomacy' not closed to save JCPOA

**1 →** "But, unfortunately, due to U.S. bullying of even its closest allies, we have not received the economic benefit that we were promised to receive based on the nuclear deal. And then we were left with no other option than to say that, for 60 days, we are going to stop implementing or to cease performance of some of our obligations, voluntary obligations, based on the nuclear deal.

"And we will see what will happen during the next 60 days. The window of diplomacy is not closed. We believe that Iran will speak, will negotiate with the partners, the remaining participants of the JCPOA, and we will see what will be the outcome of the negotiations."

Asked why Iran needs to enrich uranium at a higher level than 3.67 percent, he answered "Well, no, for the time being, we are adhering to the JCPOA on the limit of the enrichment, the level of enrichment. What

we have said is, for the next 60 days, we are going just to be free for our stockpile. We are not talking about enriching more than 3.67 percent for the next 60 days."

"... our partners have had more than enough time, ... for the last year or so ... to compensate what the Americans have done to the JCPOA. So if they cannot do it in the next two months, that means that the political will is not there. And then we will act in accordance with our national interests."

On U.S. President Donald Trump's statement earlier the day that he would like to meet with Iranian leaders, the diplomat said, "There is... no utility in meeting somebody who carelessly tear apart, you know, an international agreement. It wasn't an

agreement between Iran and the United States. Other countries, the European Union were part of it. So, all of a sudden, we see that the president comes and says, I don't like it because of so many reasons, because the former president took the initiative to sign such an agreement with Iran. So, how can we trust somebody who carelessly and recklessly do something like this?"

The host then asked Takht-Ravanchi about concerns that Tehran's new stance will allow hard-liners in the U.S. and perhaps Israel a stronger case to argue that Iran is not trustworthy, to which he replied by saying: "I think the hard-liners, as our foreign minister has coined it, four B's, Bibi Netanyahu, Bolton, bin Zayed, and bin Sal-

**"There is no utility in meeting somebody (Trump) who carelessly tear apart an international agreement."**

## Envoy: Oman ready to mediate between Iran, U.S.

Oman's ambassador to Washington has said his country is ready to mediate between Iran and the U.S. for solving tensions.

According to a report by al-Monitor, Hunaina Al-Mughairi, addressing the current state of affairs between Tehran and Washington, said that while Oman does not interfere in the foreign policies of neighboring countries, it would be willing to help mediate the crisis if the two sides

would find such support helpful.

"Oman has not been approached, but I'm sure that if we were approached we would be happy to assist," she said.

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday that Iran will give a 60-day moratorium to the states parties to Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) to remedy their failure to restore Iran's interests enshrined by the international deal.



its income is reduced because of the U.S. sanctions.

Afghans made their way into the neighboring countries, mainly Iran and Pakistan, after the Soviet invasion and during the civil war that followed.

In May 2015, Ayatollah Khamenei issued a decree to the Ministry of Education allowing all Afghan children of school age, regardless of documentation status, to attend primary and secondary school education. In addition, all refugees of school-age are now exempt from paying costly refugee-specific tuition fees, which encourages even vulnerable and economically challenged families to send their children to school.

U.S. President Donald Trump unilaterally pulled Washington out of the 2015 nuclear deal in May 2018 and ordered reimposition of sanctions against Iran. The first round of sanctions went into force on August 6 and the second round, which targets Iran's oil exports and banks, were snapped back on November 4. In November the U.S. allowed sanctions waivers for countries such as China, India and Turkey to continue importing limited volumes of oil from Iran, however it announced on April 22 that if any country buys oil from Iran will be sanctioned.



man, they are doing whatever they can, no matter what Iran does.

"So it doesn't matter how we are dealing with JCPOA. Their agenda is to provoke. Their agenda is to agitate the situation. Their agenda is to prepare a war against Iran. We are not trying to wage war against anybody, but, definitely, we will defend ourselves no matter what."

## Moscow calls on all countries to keep buying Iranian oil

**1 →** The Russian Foreign Ministry added in the statement, "We are treating with understanding the decision of the Islamic Republic of Iran to suspend the fulfilment of some of its voluntary assumed obligations under the JCPOA... At the same time, we urge Iran to refrain from taking further steps to curtail the fulfilment of obligations under the JCPOA. We urge all the state parties to the nuclear deal to comply with their obligations under the Action Plan; speed up the implementation of projects coordinated in accordance with comprehensive agreements, in particular the modernization of the reactor in Arak."

On Wednesday, President Rouhani officially announced that Iran stops selling stockpiles of enriched uranium and heavy water for 60 days in response to the U.S. exit from the JCPOA and a failure by the European Union to cushion the blow.

The suspension took effect on Wednesday, May 8.

"This announcement is for 60 days. We have announced to the other side, the five countries [Germany, France, UK, Russia and China], that if they come to the negotiating table in 60 days and we reach a conclusion and safeguard our main interests which are oil [sale] and banking relations, we will return to the previous situation of May 7, 2019," Rouhani told a cabinet meeting.

However, he warned, if any conclusion is not reached, Iran will resume enriching uranium and will not follow obligations under the JCPOA according to which its uranium enrichment should not exceed the purity level of 3.67 percent.

Under the JCPOA, Iran was only al-



lowed to keep 300 kilograms of enriched uranium. Also, based on the agreement, Iran was authorized to exchange heavy water for importation of yellow cake.

"No word reduced or added. The JCPOA is the same JCPOA and will not change. However, we are ready to sit at the negotiating table to better implement it and make our implementation of the commitments better," Rouhani explained.

Under the JCPOA, endorsed by the UN Security Council Resolution 2231, Iran was tasked to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions. However, since Trump pulled the U.S. out of the JCPOA, the European countries cut banking ties with Iran, stopped purchasing Iranian oil, annulled agreements, and their companies left Iran one after another.

Trump's exit from the JCPOA and Europeans' refusal to respect their obligations happened despite the fact that International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has issued 14 reports each time confirming that Iran has been fully abiding by the terms of the agreement.

## Japan hopes to mediate between U.S. and Iran

*By staff and agency*

The Japanese government hopes to mediate between the U.S. and Iran in an effort to rescue 2015 international nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, officials have said, according to The Japan Times.

"We note that Iran denies it is withdrawing from the nuclear deal," Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasutoshi Nishimura told a news conference Thursday after Tehran announced the suspension of some of its commitments under the 2015 agreement.

"We intend to contribute to regional peace and stability, utilizing our traditional friendly relations with Iran," Nishimura added.

Tokyo has consistently supported the JCPOA that terminated sanctions by the U.S. and Europe against Iran in exchange for restrictions on the country's nuclear program.

As a retaliation against the U.S. pullout from the 2015 nuclear deal and reimposition of sanctions on Iran coupled with a failure by the European Union to compensate for the U.S. exit, President Hassan Rouhani on Wednesday officially announced that Iran stops selling stockpiles of enriched uranium and heavy water for 60 days from May 8.

Under the 2015 nuclear agreement, Iran was only allowed to keep 300 kilograms of enriched uranium. Also, based on the agreement, Iran was authorized to exchange heavy water for importation of yellow cake.

"This announcement is for 60 days. We have announced to the other side, the five countries [Germany, France, UK, Russia and China], that if they come to the negotiating table in 60 days and we reach a conclusion and safeguard our main interests which are oil [sale] and banking relations, we will return

to the previous situation of May 7, 2019," Rouhani told a cabinet meeting.

However, he warned, if any conclusion is not reached, Iran will resume enriching uranium and will not follow obligations under the JCPOA according to which its uranium enrichment should not exceed the purity level of 3.67 percent.

Pointing to a letter he sent to the leaders of the remaining parties to the JCPOA, Rouhani said he has mentioned in the letter that Iran will give a firm response if the remaining parties refer the issue to the UN Security Council.

The remaining signatories to the JCPOA are Germany, Britain, France, Russia and China.

Rouhani's letter was submitted to the ambassadors of these countries in Tehran by Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Abbas Araqchi.

Rouhani noted that Iran has not quit the JCPOA and his action is within the framework of the articles 26 and 36 of the deal.

Under the JCPOA, endorsed by the UN Security Council Resolution 2231, Iran was tasked to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions. However, since Trump pulled the U.S. out of the JCPOA, the European countries cut banking ties with Iran, stopped purchasing Iranian oil, annulled agreements, and their companies left Iran one after another.

Even when the oil sanctions were introduced against Iran first in November 2018, which exempted certain countries, including Greece and Italy, these two EU members refused to buy oil from Iran. However, certain other countries such as China, India, Japan, South Korea and Turkey continued to buy oil from Iran under sanctions waivers.



# MPs stand up for Iran's JCPOA declaration

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** – While Iran's **d e s k** Wednesday decision to stop implementing some parts of its commitments under the 2015 nuclear deal was met with mixed reactions from other countries, lawmakers at home have unanimously championed the move, even calling for stronger decisions if the other parties to the deal, officially called the JCPOA, continue to fail to fulfill their obligations.

Ahmad Amir-Abadi, a member of the Majlis presiding board, has said if the JCPOA does not help Iran remedy its economic problems and export its oil, Tehran will make stronger decisions on the implementation of the deal, Mehr news agency reported on Friday.

The JCPOA can only be implemented if it's a "win-win" game for both sides, not a "win-lose", Amir-Abadi said.

Iran has fulfilled all of its commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, but the Europeans and Americans have not upheld their obligations, he stated.

The lawmaker described the 60-day deadline to European countries as a considerable period of time, adding now it is European countries' turn to make their own decision.

"The sanctions will end ultimately, and then the companies and countries which had not cooperated with the Islamic Republic [during the American sanctions period] will



not have any share of Iran's energy market," Amir-Abadi warned.

In another reaction to the move, Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh, chairman of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, said Iran's decision was in accordance with international law.

Speaking to Mehr correspondent, Falahatpisheh underlined that Iran needs to scale down its JCPOA commitments via conducting

negotiations with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the five remaining parties to the deal.

He voiced Iran's commitment to maintaining security and peace, adding, "Our difference with the U.S. is that we respect international order."

Mohammad Javad Jamali, also a member of the committee, has called the EU rejection of Iran's ultimatum an "escape forward", saying

despite the EU's rejection, Iran is committed to its declared 60-day ultimatum and will take its expected steps after the deadline.

"It seems the U.S. and European Union have divided the responsibilities between themselves; the U.S. imposes tough sanctions on Iran and takes extreme positions, while the European Union keeps us waiting to find enough time for relinquishing its responsibilities," he said. "The European Union's statement proves that they want more pressure on Iran."

Another member of the committee, Mohammad Hassan Asafari, has said "Europe is playing the role of the good cop and it is clear that it has made some agreements with the U.S."

He emphasized that according to the JCPOA, Iran has the right to reduce its commitments to the nuclear deal but is trying to maintain cooperation with the other sides.

Lawmaker Ali Akbar Karimi has welcomed Iran's move against the U.S. as well as European countries which have failed to fulfill their commitments after U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA.

"We decided to reduce our commitments in Barjam (JCPOA) under our rights," he said, adding that Iran could have announced the decision right after the United States exited the nuclear accord in May 2018.

## Amoli Larijani says Iran's patience doesn't signify weakness



**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** – Chair-**d e s k** man of the Iran's Expediency Council says the U.S. must realize that the Islamic Republic is stable and powerful, and its compliance with the JCPOA does not mean that it is weak.

Speaking on Wednesday, Ayatollah Sadeq Amoli Larijani condemned the U.S. for its irresponsible act by pulling out of the 2015 Iran deal, emphasizing that Iran's compliance with the accord represents its loyalty to its commitments, Mehr reported.

Amoli Larijani voiced regret over the hostile and improper behavior of the U.S. administration, saying the Iranian nation will continue to resist

against the U.S. animosity and will stand up in defense of the Islamic Republic.

He also praised President Rouhani's decision to stop complying with parts of the nuclear deal in protest to U.S. hostile actions, calling on the government to take further steps to show to the Trump administration that Iran is a stable and powerful country.

Iran announced on Wednesday that it had suspended two commitments under the 2015 accord in response to the economic sanctions the U.S. reimposed last year.

It also threatened to step up uranium enrichment if it was not shielded from the sanctions' effects within 60 days.

## Marchers back decision to suspend some nuclear commitments



**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** – Iranians **d e s k** held nationwide rallies to express support for the decision by Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) to suspend implementation of some of Iran's commitments under the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the JCPOA, in response to the United States' withdrawal from the deal and a failure by the Europe to compensate for U.S. exit and reimposition of sanctions.

The rallies took place after Friday prayers across the country. The marchers chanted slogans and held placards in support of the decision. Demonstrators in Tehran issued a statement welcoming the decision by the SNSC and warned the U.S. against any further provocation against the country.

The statement also called for a full halt

to the JCPOA if European signatories failed to uphold their obligations under the deal.

"We strongly demand full halt to unilateral implementation of commitments by the Islamic republic of Iran... and seek full exit from this treaty if European countries continue to violate their undertakings," the marchers said in the statement.

Iran has complained to Europe for its long-delayed implementation of a promised European financial mechanism designed to bypass U.S. sanctions.

In its statement on Wednesday, the SNSC threatened Iran would take further steps in 60 days if the remaining signatories fail again to ensure that Tehran benefit from staying in the nuclear accord despite the U.S. withdrawal.

## 'Position of power' is a must in countering Trump's irrational moves: advisor

**TEHRAN (MNA)** – A senior advisor has welcomed Tehran's decision to reduce commitments to the 2015 nuclear deal (JCPOA), saying that to counter U.S. President Donald Trump's irrational moves, one must take the position of power.

In a Thursday tweet, Hossein Amir Abdollahian, a senior foreign policy advisor to the parliament speaker, wrote, "The Iranian government's move for confronting the West's lack

of commitment to the JCPOA is welcomed."

Noting that the international community knows the power politics well, the advisor said that the governments "must retreat enemies by power politics and power of logic in a steeper slope."

"With irrational [moves by] Trump, one must cope with him from the position of power," he added.

Iran's decision to reduce commitments to the JCPOA

comes as Washington is ramping up pressure against Iran, by re-imposing new sanctions, including restrictions on Iran's low-level uranium enrichment, and ending the sanctions waivers for Iran's major oil clients in an attempt to drive the country's oil exports to zero.

Iran has stressed that it has no intention to leave the JCPOA, and its decision on reducing commitments is still within the framework of the agreement.

## Iraq won't be part of anti-Iran sanctions: Iraqi PM

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** – Iraqi Prime **d e s k** Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi said on Thursday that his country will never be a part of the U.S. sanctions against neighboring Iran.

Iraq favors good relations with all its neighbors and other states, including the U.S. and Iran, the prime minister said in a meeting with the ambassadors of Germany, Britain and France whose countries are signatory to the 2015 nuclear deal, IRNA reported.

Iraq's ties contribute to regional stability and security, he asserted.

Abdul Mahdi also called for efforts to strengthen regional security and curb the crises faced by the region and safeguard the nations from insecurity and instability.

The comments came one day after U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo scrapped a visit to Germany to make an unannounced trip to Iraq, pressing Iraqi leaders about what he called the increased dangers to Americans there from Iran's forces and allies.

Pompeo said he also used the four-hour visit to Iraq to discuss "big energy deals that can disconnect them from Iranian energy."

U.S. pressures on Iraq to point itself off Iran has become a major point of conflict between Washington and Baghdad. A lightning rod in their spat is Iraq's reliance on Iranian gas imports to generate electricity consumed daily in the country.

Iraqi leaders say the country cannot stop Iranian gas imports without serious electricity shortages.

## Russia can help Iran circumvent sanctions in three fields: expert

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** – An expert **d e s k** on Russian affairs has said Moscow can help Iran circumvent the U.S. sanctions in three fields.

"The first field is exporting oil, the second is importing foreign exchange and establishing banking transaction, and the third is cooperating to import some strategic products," Shuaib Bahman said, ISNA reported on Wednesday.

Highlighting the importance of Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif's visit to Moscow on Wednesday, Bahman said Russia, as one of the biggest countries in the world and a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council Russia, "has vast political and economic capabilities in the world and is politically

very important for Iran."

He added that Tehran and Moscow enjoy close ties and still need to expand their relations.

"Although economic relations between Tehran and Moscow have not developed in recent years, the two countries can cooperate in numerous fields," the expert remarked.

Bahman added that Tehran can use its ties with Moscow to hamper the negative impacts of U.S. sanctions.

Tensions have risen between Tehran and Washington since the Trump administration withdrew a year ago from a 2015 international nuclear deal with Iran and began ratcheting up sanctions to throttle the Islamic Republic's economy.

## UNSC, Europe are subject to a great test, cleric says



**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** – Mohammad Javad Haj Ali Akbari, **d e s k** an interim Friday prayer leader in Tehran, has said the United Nations Security Council, the Europeans and the international community in large are subject to a great test.

He was referring to Iran's Wednesday announcement that it will stop implementing some parts of its commitments under the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"Our measure was completely legal and was carried out under the articles 26 and 36" of the JCPOA, Haj Ali Akbari told worshippers in Tehran.

"This measure could have been carried out last year, after the U.S. withdrawal from Barjam (the Persian acronym for the JCPOA), but it was done with delay and great patience," he added.

The cleric further voiced widespread support for the move in Iran, saying, "We are certain that it will lead to some opportunities."

## Tehran denounces U.S. sanctions on metal industry



**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** – Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas **d e s k** Mousavi on Thursday strongly condemned the U.S. decision in imposing sanctions on Iran's metal industry.

Mousavi said the U.S. measure contravenes the U.S. international commitments and will result in international liabilities for Washington, the Foreign Ministry website reported.

"The sanctions, as has been the case with all the United States' unilateral measures, counter the basic principles and regulations of international relations," he said in a statement.

According to the spokesman, the bans are specifically against Washington's international commitments under the UN Charter, the Algeria Declaration, the Treaty of Amity, and the injunction of the International Court of Justice, and the U.S. must be held responsible for its offences at the international level through judicial procedures.

The Trump administration announced new sanctions on Iran's metals sectors – steel, aluminum and copper industries – on Wednesday.

Trump's executive order came hours after Iran announced it was withdrawing from parts of an Obama-era nuclear agreement, known as the JCPOA.

## Iran under no external threat: commander

**TEHRAN (MNA)** – Commander of Iran's Army Ground Force Brigadier General Kiomars Heidari said on Thursday that the country is presently under no external threat and if the enemy plays fool, it will encounter Iran's vigorous response immediately.

"This is not the first time that the enemy is showing its true face. We are familiar with it from the beginning days of the Islamic Revolution victory. But we are standing on our feet," the Iranian Brigadier General said.

He assured the Iranian nation that no enemy dares to take an aggressive action against Iran.

## Merkel: EU wants to avoid escalation of Iran dispute

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** – The European Union wants to **d e s k** avoid an escalation in the dispute about Iran's nuclear program, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said on Thursday.

Merkel added that Tehran must recognize that it is in its own interests to remain committed to the nuclear deal, Reuters reported.

On Wednesday, Tehran announced it would resume high-level enrichment of uranium if world powers do not keep their obligations under the 2015 deal, officially known as the JCPOA.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said the remaining signatories to the JCPOA – the UK, France, Germany, China and Russia – had 60 days to implement their obligations to protect Iran's oil and banking sectors from U.S. sanctions.



STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	211344.1
IFX	2605.7

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,002 rials
GBP	54,632 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$70.79/b
WTI	\$62.10/b
OPEC Basket	\$69.88/b
Gold	\$1,286.45/oz
Silver	\$14.83/oz
Platinum	864.90/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



Iran to launch organized forex market next week: fin. min.

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** - Iranian finance and economic affairs minister announced that an organized forex market will be launched in the country in the next week. IRNA reported on Friday.

Farhad Dejpasand said the mentioned market is due to set the real foreign currency exchange rates.

Establishment of this market has been approved by the Money and Credit Council (MCC), the highest banking policy-making body of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), on January 8 as the CBI aims to explore the real volume of demand and supply in the foreign currency market through a new mechanism.

Regarding this market, a CBI official said on May 5 that the new mechanism aims to organize the transactions in the foreign currency exchange market between the exchange shops, Mehr news agency reported.



Côte d'Ivoire seeks boosting trade ties with Iran

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** – A high-ranking trade delegation from Ivory Coast National Union of Savings and Credit Cooperatives, known as COOPEC (Union Nationale des Coopératives d'Épargne et de Crédit de la Côte d'Ivoire) visited Iran to explore avenues of mutual trade.

The 12-member delegation met with Iranian officials and representatives of the country's private sector at the place of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture on Wednesday, ICCIMA portal reported.

In the meeting, the two sides discussed potential areas for mutual trade and emphasized expansion of economic ties.

Speaking in the event, the director general for Arab-African states in international department of ICCIMA, Shahram Khapour, pointed to Iran's unique strategic and economic position in the region, noting that "facilitation of banking transactions and establishment of an easy transportation system between the two countries are two basic infrastructures for the continuation of economic cooperation between the two sides."

Ivory Coast has a strong agricultural industry. Cacao, coffee, banana, pineapple, apricots, and mangoes are among the main exported commodities from this country.

France still hopes for ADP privatization, delay hurts shares again

France's finance minister said on Friday he remained committed to privatizing the country's main airports group ADP, but the company's shares slumped for a second straight day over plans for a public vote on the process.

As per Reuters, the Constitutional Council on Thursday approved plans for a referendum that will delay, and could block, the planned privatization.

Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said the government would not take the process any further while a referendum was being pursued by opposition politicians.

"Fundamentally, I believe in this project," Le Maire told CNews. President Emmanuel Macron's centrist government wants to sell off state assets in order to finance a 10 billion euro (\$11.2 billion) innovation fund, and to pay off state debts.

Those assets include the state's majority 50.6 percent stake in ADP - the operator of Paris' Charles de Gaulle and Orly airports. But the government is facing broad opposition against the plan due to concerns over the loss of an income stream, and a loss of influence in the transport sector.

ADP shares were down 10% in early trading on Friday, adding to a 5.7% drop on Thursday following the decision by the French constitutional council.

Investment bank JP Morgan downgraded ADP to "neutral" from "overweight" following that decision on Thursday.

"Although we were expecting this decision, and although we understand that technically the government could still launch the privatisation should they really want to, the government has decided to put the privatization decision on hold during the referendum process," wrote JP Morgan.

"We also believe that bidding appetite in this context would be impacted," added the U.S. bank.

Monthly non-oil trade at \$4.8b

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — The value of Iran's non-oil trade stood at \$4.87 billion during the first Iranian calendar month of Farvardin (March 21-April 20, 2019), ILNA reported, citing the data released by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

As reported, the worth of non-oil trade during the first month of this Iranian calendar year fell 13.5 percent compared to that of the same month of the past year.

Although, the country recorded a non-oil trade surplus of \$213 million in Farvardin of this year.

Iran exported 8.52 million tons of non-oil commodities worth \$2.54 billion during the first month, registering a 7.66-percent increase in weight, but an 18.25-percent decline in value compared to the first month of the previous year.

Monthly non-oil imports amounted to 2.08 million tons worth \$2.33 billion, up 7.75 percent in weight, but down 7.65 percent in value year on year.

As previously announced by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration



(IRICA), the value of Iran's non-oil exports stood at \$44.3 billion in the previous year while \$42.6 billion worth of commodities

were shipped into the country.

Iran shares border with fifteen countries, namely the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Tur-

key, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Russia, Oman, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kuwait, Qatar, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia.

Based on the latest data published by TPO, the value of trade with the neighboring countries stood at over \$36.5 billion in the past Iranian calendar year, that is about 41 percent of the country's total non-oil trade in the mentioned time span.

Iran plans to launch 15 mega export projects to identify more target markets, the acting head of Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) announced last week.

Mohammadreza Modoudi said with the implementation of these projects, which mainly focus on the markets of neighboring countries, identifying professional trade and promoting export of non-oil commodities will be put on agenda, Mehr news agency reported.

The official further referred to the \$1.7 billion positive trade balance in the country's non-oil trade in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2019), and said this positive balance was achieved through cooperation with the private sector.

Steel projects with over 10m tons of capacity to be inaugurated by Mar. 2020

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iran will inaugurate steel projects with the capacity of at least 10 million tons during the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 19, 2020), IRNA quoted Deputy Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Jafar Sarqini as saying.

Also, Ardeshtir Sa'd Mohammadi, a deputy director in Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO), has recently announced that the country's crude steel production capacity will increase by 25 million tons within the next four years.

He said that through such increase in crude steel output, the required feedstock for the plants will be properly supplied.

The official further lamented that of the 35 million tons of crude steel produced in the past Iranian calendar year, 25 million tons were used in the production process.

A report by the World Steel Organization (WSO) has 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.

Also, a recent report by the WSO says that 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.

It is while crude steel production in the world increased 4.5 percent in the first quarter of this year.

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.

Iran exported 4.899 million tons of steel ingot during the past Iranian calendar year, IRNA reported on Tuesday citing the data released by the Iranian Steel Producers Association.

As reported, billets and blooms accounted for 67 percent of the steel ingot exports in the past year.

Over 40% of crude steel produced in Iran is exported to



different markets worldwide, according to IMIDRO Head Khodadad Garharibpour.

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.

Trump ramps up tariffs on China, escalating the high-stakes trade war

President Donald Trump more than doubled the tariff rate on more than a third of Chinese imports early Friday morning.

Businessinsider reported beginning at 12:01 A.M. ET, a total of about \$250 billion worth of shipments from China will face an import tax of 25%.

The escalation has cast doubt on trade negotiations and is expected to lead to higher prices for American businesses and consumers.

President Donald Trump on Friday more than doubled the tariff rate on roughly \$200 billion worth of Chinese imports, a move that sets the stage for retaliation from Beijing and that significantly raises the stakes in a yearlong trade war between the world's largest economies.

After accusing China of renegeing on past trade commitments, the Trump administration has sought to increase pressure on Chinese officials in negotiations taking place this week. About \$250 billion worth of Chinese products will now face a 25% duty when shipped to the U.S. Previously, a majority of those had been subject to a 10% import tax.

That could lead to higher prices on a wide range of everyday products from electronics to clothing. While Trump claims Chinese companies will pay the price, research suggests American businesses and consumers bear the brunt of tariffs.

Officials at the Chinese Commerce Ministry — who have



denied that they made reversals on major aspects of a draft trade agreement — vowed on Wednesday to take counter-measures against increased tariff rates.

Those could include tariffs on American products or other trade barriers. China has already placed retaliatory duties on \$110 billion worth of imports from the U.S., which had caused significant trouble for the U.S. agricultural sector.

The escalation comes just as officials were thought to

be nearing a deal. As recently as last week, there were high hopes for the two days of trade negotiations in Washington that began on Thursday.

While both countries have indicated a trade deal is still possible, questions have been raised about the timeline of and the ability to enforce an agreement.

"China can be made to fold, but it would require much more sustained action than the US has taken to now," said Derek Scissors, a resident scholar at the conservative-leaning American Enterprise Institute. "More likely, China does not fold and smaller-scale U.S. action becomes permanent."

Trump on Monday also threatened to slap steep tariffs on all remaining Chinese imports, roughly \$325 billion worth, a move that economists warn would have widespread effects on businesses and consumers.

"New tariffs on those goods that president has so far left untaxed will fall on American families, as these mostly hit textiles, apparel, shoes, home goods, etc.," said Mary Lovely, a trade scholar at the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

"Higher taxes on these goods are likely to be highly regressive, in that lower and middle class Americans spend a higher portion of their income on these Chinese imports than do higher income Americans," she continued.

Germany's economy shows resilience as exports rise unexpectedly

Germany unexpectedly reported a rise in exports in March, adding to recent indications that the eurozone's largest economy is showing more resilience to global economic challenges than previously forecast.

The Financial Times reported exports rose 1.5 percent from February and 1.9 percent from the same month a year earlier, the government's statistics office revealed on Friday. Analysts had forecast a 0.3 percent decline, nonetheless an improvement from the previous month's 1.3 percent decline in

exports, a Reuters poll showed.

Imports rose 0.4 percent, close to a predicted 0.5 percent in a Reuters poll, pushing them up 4.5 percent from a year earlier.

Germany exported €118.3b and imported €95.6b of goods in March, putting the foreign trade balance at a seasonally adjusted €20bn for the month, Destatis said.

Bundesbank provisional data revealed the current account of the balance of payments showed a surplus of €30.2b in March, which

takes into account balances of trade on goods, services, primary and secondary income. That barely moved from the €29.4b of March last year.

In a week when industrial output surprised analysts with an increase, 1 percentage point away from a Reuters poll that had forecast a 0.5 percent drop, the figures suggest a pick-up in growth for Europe's biggest economy.

Analysts this week said that the better production figures would feed into the country's economic growth, which will be

reflected next week when first-quarter gross domestic product figures are published. The latest German government forecast for GDP growth is of 0.5 percent in 2019, down from the 1.8 percent growth it had expected at the start of this year.

Germany's resilience reflects a wider outperformance across the eurozone. The bloc's GDP data surprised economists with stronger than expected quarter-on-quarter growth of 0.4 percent in the first three months of this year.

UK economic growth picks up as stockpiling boosts manufacturing

Britain's economy strengthened in the first three months of the year, with growth of 0.5% helped by unprecedented stockpiling by manufacturers fearful of the impact from a no-deal Brexit.

The Guardian reported it was an improvement on 0.2% growth in the previous three months and was boosted by the strongest quarterly performance for manufacturers since 1988, with factory output up 2.2%, according to the figures from the Office for National Statistics.

However, widespread uncertainty about the Brexit negotiations proved to have a greater impact in March as the services sector and construction industry went into reverse to leave GDP down 0.1% month on month.

The downward trajectory through the first quarter suggests that consumers became increasingly jittery about the prospects for the UK economy as the Tory government's plan to push through a Brexit deal foundered.

The services sector, which accounts for more than three quarters of GDP, nudged ahead by 0.3% in the latest quarter, although all the uplift in activity was in January and February, while March registered a 0.1% fall. The construction sector was another area of the economy to provide a boost in the first



two months of the year and a negative contribution in March.

■ In manufacturing sector

Net trade during the period proved to be negative, suggesting that much of the activity in the manufacturing sector involved higher imports of raw materials to increase stocks to cope with a disorderly Brexit.

Tej Parikh, a senior economist at the Institute of Directors, believes the strong three month figures could be a "flash in the pan".

He said: "Some businesses brought activity forward early

this year in preparation for leaving the EU, so higher stocks and earlier orders have artificially bumped up the growth numbers.

"In the second quarter many firms will be keen to run down their Brexit caches, which will drag on economic growth."

The chancellor, Philip Hammond, said the first-quarter growth figures showed the UK economy was robust, with growth of 0.5% "benefiting every major sector".

He said: The "economy has grown for nine consecutive years, debt is falling, employment is at a record high and wages are rising at their fastest pace in over a decade.

"We're investing at records levels in our infrastructure and skills to boost productivity and wages, which will ensure that Britain is well-placed to seize the opportunities that lie ahead."

The Bank of England recently raised its forecast for GDP growth in 2019 based on a higher level of global GDP growth than expected at the beginning of the year. The central bank ripped up its prediction of 1.2% growth this year in favor of a 1.5% forecast.

The European Commission also took a more optimistic view, although it only raised its forecast by 0.1 percentage points to 1.3% this year.



# South Pars daily gas production to rise 60 mcm by March 2020

**ENERGY** **TEHRAN** — Daily gas production in South Pars gas field (Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf) will be increased by 60 million cubic meters (mcm) by the end of current Iranian calendar year (March 19, 2020), according to the managing director of Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC).

Mohammad Meshkinfam said that five new platforms will become operational in the field during this calendar year, adding that two of them belong

to phase 14 of development of the field, Shana reported.

The POGC managing director also said that the first gas sweetening train of phase 14 refinery will come on stream by the end of the current calendar year or the early months of the next year.

POGC is in charge of developing South Pars, which is the world's largest gas field shared between Iran and Qatar. Iran is developing the mega project in 24 phases. It reportedly provides more than two-thirds of the country's natural gas.



South Pars holds an estimated 40 trillion cubic meters of natural gas, or roughly 8% of the world's reserves and

approximately 18 billion barrels of condensates. It adjoins Qatar's North Field that spans over 6,000 square kilometers.

## Cutting Iranian oil supplies to cost Japanese refiner nearly \$1m per month

**ENERGY** **TEHRAN** — The President of Japan's Fuji Oil Company said replacing Iranian oil supplies is going to cost the company an extra 100 million yen (\$911,000) each month, Reuters reported.

Speaking at a press conference in Tokyo, Atsuo Shibota noted that although the refinery will be able to buy oil from free markets but it will cost them more.

Fuji Oil said Iranian oil accounted for about 20 percent of the company's supplies in the financial year through March, down from around 30 percent the previous year.

Japan was among the countries which was granted waiver to continue buying Iranian oil after the United States reimposed sanctions on Iran in November after pulling out of a 2015 nuclear accord between Tehran and six world powers last year.



Aiming to cut Iran's sales to zero, in April Washington ended all sanctions waivers for those importing Iranian oil.

The Asian country tried all its best to convince the U.S. to let them continue importing oil from Iran.

In late April, Japanese Minister of Economy, Trade, and Industry Hiroshige Seko said, "Japan's relationship with Iran, as one of the world's leading oil producing countries, is important as the country (Japan) relies on almost all of its petroleum [needs] on imports."

## China's April Iranian oil intakes jump to 7-month high

**ENERGY** **TEHRAN** — China's Iranian crude oil imports in April rose to their highest level since August, Reuters reported, citing Refinitiv data.

As reported, Chinese refineries shipped in 24 million barrels or about 800,000 bpd of Iranian crude oil in the mentioned month.

China, the world's biggest oil importer, took in 164.9 million tons of crude during the first four months of 2019, or about 10.03 million bpd, up 8.9 percent on the same period a year earlier, according to data from the Chinese General Administration of Customs.

According to Wang Zhao, head of crude oil research at Sublime China Information Company, the rises come as refiners pre-stocked supplies in anticipation of the impact of U.S. sanctions. Chinese Commerce Ministry on Thurs-



day announced the country's opposition to unilateral U.S. sanctions against Iran, saying that cutting Iranian oil supplies will only worsen volatility in global energy markets.

Earlier in April, Washington announced that it will no longer grant waivers for buyers of Iranian oil to continue imports from Iran.

China is Iran's largest oil customer with imports of 475,000 barrels per day (bpd) in the first quarter of this year, according to Chinese customs data.

## The shale boom is about to go bust

By Nick Cunningham

The shale industry faces an uncertain future as drillers try to outrun the treadmill of precipitous well declines.

For years, companies have deployed an array of drilling techniques to extract more oil and gas out of their wells, steadily intensifying each stage of the operation. Longer laterals, more water, more frac sand, closer spacing of wells — pushing each of these to their limits, for the most part, led to more production. Higher output allowed the industry to outpace the infamous decline rates from shale wells.

In fact, since 2012, average lateral lengths have increased 44 percent to over 7,000 feet and the volume of water used in drilling has surged more than 250 percent, according to a new report for the Post Carbon Institute. Taken together, longer laterals and more prodigious use of water and sand means that a well drilled in 2018 can reach 2.6 times as much reservoir rock as a well drilled in 2012, the report says.

That sounds impressive, but the industry may simply be frontloading production. The suite of drilling techniques "have lowered costs and allowed the resource to be extracted with fewer wells, but have not significantly increased the ultimate recoverable resource," J. David Hughes, an earth scientist, and author of the Post Carbon report, warned. Technological improvements "don't change the fundamental characteristics of shale production, they only speed up the boom-to-bust life cycle," he said.

### ■ The shale patch

For a while, there was enough acreage to allow for a blistering growth rate, but the boom days eventually have to come to an end. There are already some signs of strain

in the shale patch, where intensification of drilling techniques has begun to see diminishing returns. Putting wells too close together can lead to less reservoir pressure, reducing overall production. The industry is only now reckoning with this so-called "parent-child" well interference problem.

Also, more water and more sand and longer laterals all have their limits. Last year, major shale gas driller EQT drilled a lateral that exceeded 18,000 feet. The company boasted that it would continue to ratchet up the length to as long as 20,000 feet. But EQT quickly found out that it had problems when it exceeded 15,000 feet. The "decision to drill some of the longest horizontal wells ever in shale rocks turned into a costly misstep costing hundreds of millions of dollars," the Wall Street Journal reported earlier this year.

Ultimately, precipitous decline rates mean that huge volumes of capital are needed just to keep output from declining. In 2018, the industry spent \$70 billion on drilling 9,975 wells, according to Hughes, with \$54 billion going specifically to oil. "Of the \$54 billion spent on tight oil plays in 2018, 70% served to offset field declines and 30% to increase production," Hughes wrote.

As the shale play matures, the field gets crowded, the sweet spots are all drilled, and some of these operational problems begin to mushroom. "Declining well productivity in some plays, despite application of better technology, are a prelude to what will eventually happen in all plays: production will fall as costs rise," Hughes said. "Assuming shale production can grow forever based on ever-improving technology is a mistake—geology will ultimately dictate the costs and quantity of resources that can be recovered."

### ■ The drilling techniques

There are already examples of this scenario unfolding.

The Eagle Ford and Bakken, for instance, are both "mature plays," Hughes argues, in which the best acreage has been picked over. Better technology and an intensification of drilling techniques have arrested decline, and even led to a renewed increase in production. But ultimate recovery won't be any higher; drilling techniques merely allow the "play to be drained with fewer wells," Hughes said. And in the case of the Eagle Ford, "there appears to be significant deterioration in longer-term well productivity through overcrowding of wells in sweet spots, resulting in well interference and/or drilling in more marginal areas that are outside of sweet-spots within counties."

In other words, a more aggressive drilling approach just frontloads production, and leads to exhaustion sooner. "Technology improvements appear to have hit the law of diminishing returns in terms of increasing production — they cannot reverse the realities of over-crowded wells and geology," Hughes said.

The story is not all that different in the Permian, save for the much higher levels of spending and drilling. Post Carbon estimates that it the Permian requires 2,121 new wells each year just to keep production flat, and in 2018 the industry drilled 4,133 wells, leading to a big jump in output. At such frenzied levels of drilling, the Permian could continue to see production growth in the years ahead, but the steady increase in water and frac sand "have reached their limits." As a result, "declining well productivity as sweet-spots are exhausted will require higher drilling rates and expenditures in the future to maintain growth and offset field decline," Hughes warned.

(Source: oilprice.com)

## OPEC in the dark on oil supply as Russia, Iran cut exports

OPEC is in the dark on the oil supply outlook for the second half of this year, with Iranian and Russian outages looking increasingly significant but Saudi Arabia reluctant to pump more due to fears of a price crash, Reuters reported, citing sources in the organization.

An oil contamination forced Russia to halt flows along the Druzhba pipeline, a key conduit for crude into Eastern Europe and Germany, in April. The suspension left refiners scrambling to find supplies and its duration is unclear.

Iran's oil exports are likely to drop further in May as the United States tightens sanctions on Tehran's main source of income. Shipments from Venezuela, also under U.S. sanctions, could fall more in coming weeks.

The dearth of information is a headache for OPEC and allies led by Russia, which gather in June to decide whether to renew a supply-cutting deal. A panel of ministers meets on May 19 in Saudi Arabia to discuss the market and make recommendations.

Two delegates from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries said the Russian outage, on top of Iranian and Venezuelan export losses, would be discussed at the Jeddah meeting and it seemed more than a short-term technical glitch.

"It's potentially significant," one of the delegates said of the pipeline halt.



Still, the delegate added, the price of Brent crude — close to \$70 a barrel, down from a 2019 high of \$75.60 last month — suggested traders saw no major risk of any shortage.

Other OPEC sources said there were conflicting views on the significance of the Russian outage, and that the complexity of Russia's pipeline system meant the issue was not straightforward.

"I'm not quite seeing the impact in terms of supply shortage," another OPEC delegate said.

### ■ Supply drop

Analysts at Citigroup saw the Russian

export loss as enough to affect the balance between supply and demand.

"While it is still difficult to assess the final impacts on balances, the severity of the problem could mean up to 400,000 bpd (barrels per day) of Russian exports could be pulled out of the market for longer than earlier anticipated," they wrote.

That would further tighten the market, with OPEC signaling even before the Druzhba outage that demand would exceed supply by more than 800,000 bpd in the third quarter.

A further cut by Russia would mean producers in the alliance known as OPEC+

exceed their pledged output reductions by an even greater margin.

The full extent of the drop in Iranian exports this month remains to be seen. Tehran's biggest oil customer, China, has yet to say whether it will keep buying despite the U.S. decision to end waivers that had allowed limited Iranian exports.

OPEC, Russia and other non-member producers are reducing output by 1.2 million bpd from Jan. 1 for six months, a deal designed to stop inventories building up and weakening prices.

OPEC's agreed share of the cut is 800,000 bpd but its actual reduction is far larger due to the losses in Iran and Venezuela, which are exempt from voluntary reductions under the OPEC+ deal.

U.S. President Donald Trump has said he called OPEC and the group's de facto leader, Saudi Arabia, and told them to lower oil prices. Riyadh, however, is reluctant to boost supply quickly and risk a price crash.

On Wednesday, a Persian Gulf source familiar with Saudi plans said the kingdom had received moderate crude-buying requests from countries that previously took Iranian oil, although production would stay under its OPEC+ quota in June.

Iraq, another OPEC member able to raise output at short notice, said on Sunday it would not decide unilaterally on any production boost.

## Iran turning thermal power plants to combined cycle to save energy

**ENERGY** **TEHRAN** — Iran has turned six percent of its thermal power plans into combined cycle plants in order to reduce greenhouse gases and save energy, IRNA reported, quoting an energy official.

According to the MAPNA Group's Managing Director Abbas Aliabadi, so far 27 thermal power plants have been converted to combined-cycle ones.

"The conversion of a thermal power plant to a combined cycle one takes about one to two years, however, it is possible for us to convert all the country's thermal power plants into combined cycle plants over a five-year period.

Currently, a total of 478 thermal power plants are operating throughout Iran, of which 160 units could be turned into combined cycle plants. In doing so, 12,600 megawatts will be added to the country's power capacity.



As reported by IRNA on Wednesday, Iran's Nominal electricity generation capacity has reached 80,509 megawatts (80.509 gigawatts). The country increased its electricity generation capacity by 500 megawatts (MW) compared to the last year (ended on March 20).

Currently, with a total generation capacity of 25,083 MW (31.2 percent) combined cycle power plants account for the biggest share in the country's total power generation capacity followed by gas power plants generating 29.9 percent.

## Iran, Pakistan explore ways of boosting energy co-op

**ENERGY** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan Mehdi Honardoost and Special Assistance to Pakistani Prime Minister on Petroleum Nadeem Babar held talks on Wednesday on the expansion of mutual energy ties.

As reported by Mehr news agency, during the meeting held in Islamabad, the two sides explored ways of boosting cooperation between the two countries in all energy spheres, especially the oil and gas sectors.

Mentioning the two countries' great potentials for mutual trade, Honardoost called for conducting comprehensive studies on the ways to tap those potentials to achieve the goal of \$5-billion trade turnover in the upcoming years.

According to the official, enhancing oil and gas cooperation could help fulfill the envisaged plans to increase the trade volume between Tehran and Islamabad.

He also urged the need for joint efforts to complete the gas pipeline project from Iran to Pakistan.

Babar, for his part, welcomed the continuation of energy talks between the two sides, saying that building strong cooperation with Iran would definitely benefit Pakistan's energy sector.



## Oil gains as supply factors offset trade tensions

Oil prices rose on Friday even as the start of U.S. President Donald Trump's tariff hike on \$200 billion of Chinese goods kept tensions high in the trade dispute between the world's two biggest economies.

Brent crude oil was up 45 cents at \$70.84 a barrel by 0917 GMT, having touched a peak of \$71.23, according to Reuters.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were up 43 cents at \$62.13, having earlier hit \$62.49.

The United States escalated its tariff war with China on Friday by increasing levies to 25% for \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods, but negotiations were set to continue on Friday.

U.S. President Donald Trump issued orders for the tariff increase, saying China "broke the deal" by reneging on previous commitments. He also said he would start the "paperwork" on Friday for 25% duties on a further \$325 billion of Chinese imports.

Prices were supported by tighter supply amid continuing production cuts by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and U.S. sanctions on Iran and Venezuela.

Growing trade between the world's two largest oil consumers could affect oil demand. The two countries together accounted for 34 percent of global oil consumption in the first quarter of 2019, data from the International Energy Agency shows.

While trade war concerns have weighed on prices this week, "the spreads clearly point toward a tight market", ING bank said.

The July Brent crude contract was trading at nearly \$1 a barrel above the August contract in a market structure known as back-wardation.

The United States reimposed sanctions on Iran in November after pulling out of a 2015 nuclear accord between Tehran and six world powers last year, though it allowed Tehran's biggest buyers to continue purchasing oil via waivers for another six months.

Those exemptions ended at the beginning of May, with Washington seeking to cut Iran's oil exports to zero.

Meanwhile, efforts by OPEC to crimp supply to reduce global inventories have also supported prices.

Markets have been buoyed further by expectations that oil demand will rise in 2019. The U.S. Energy Information Administration expects global appetite for oil to rise by 1.4 million barrels per day this year.





## Western media perpetuate Gaza’s brutal blockade

**TEHRAN (FNA)** — Human rights groups continue to slam corporate media outlets in the West for perpetuating anti-Palestinian sentiments in their reporting on the recent Israeli violence against Gaza.

As always, major news sources gave little in-depth information or a timeline regarding the Israeli military’s killing of Palestinians at a protest on Friday, may 3 - one of the weekly demonstrations Palestinians have held for more than a year to call for an end to illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank, blockades which have led to food and medicine shortages, and ongoing attacks by the Israeli forces.

Instead, they reported mainly on more than 200 rockets which Hamas and the Islamic Jihad launched into illegal Israeli settlements, writing that Israel retaliated for those attacks and ignoring what led up to the rocket strikes.

This is while even the United Nations had said earlier this year that Israeli soldiers who attack Palestinians at the peaceful protests along the Gaza border could be found liable for war crimes. So those who come up with headlines to frame the recent violence on Palestinians are complicit in Israeli war crimes as well.

Unsurprisingly, the United States and other Western governments that arm Israel also backed Israeli forces as they bombed the besieged city of Gaza yet again. It’s a sign of utter criminality between Tel Aviv, the West and mainstream media outlets in colonizing Palestine and projecting militarism upon Palestinians, whether through direct force, clandestine subversion, or blockade, illegal settlement construction and false news reporting.

It’s also an expression of complicity on the part of the US and certain European powers. They are assisting through their corps of engineers and companies with the construction of underground steel impenetrable walls and illegal settlements on stolen Palestinian lands.

No doubt the ongoing Palestinian protests are an expression of the desperation created in Gaza as a result of the Western-backed blockade that’s been going on for years in a severe and continuing form. Gaza’s suffering is unacceptable and must end. Israel must lift the blockade and end its collective punishment of the civilian population. The relentless air assault has seen Israeli forces flagrantly disregard civilian life and property, which must be protected under international humanitarian law.

Netanyahu and other Israeli leaders are pretty much aware that what they are doing to Gaza is a war crime. Deliberately attacking civilian homes is a war crime, and the overwhelming scale of destruction of civilian objects points to a distressing pattern of repeated violations of the laws of war. Netanyahu must bear responsibility for his war crimes - identified by the UN Human Rights Council in its investigation into Israel’s last year assault on Gaza.

With Tel Aviv still refusing to respond to the language of diplomacy and peaceful protest, the international civil society should call for greater diplomatic pressure to force the paranoid, exclusivist, and imperious regime to lift the illegal blockade and allow international supporters to help.

It is time for leading international organizations not to admit Israel as a member. The blockade has been presented as punishment for the democratic election of Hamas; punishment for its subsequent takeover of Gaza; and punishment for justified resistance through attacks on illegal settlements. True, the UN has criticized Israel over its blockade. But, criticism alone is not enough. The international body needs to do more than just lip service.

Meantime, to help bring change and peace to the Middle East, business companies, universities, organizations and individuals, especially those that advocate human rights and democracy in the West, should support the international campaign to boycott Israeli goods and the companies that support the regime financially in illegal settlements.

Israel has expanded its illegal settlement construction in the occupied territories in the past few years in defiance of international calls to end its expansionist policies. Over half a million Israelis live in over 120 illegal settlements built since occupation of the West Bank in 1967.

Too many years have gone by with no change in the brutal isolation of Gaza. Since the siege is being backed by the West, mainstream media and military violence, only armed resistance on the part of Palestinians and international pressure on Egypt and Israel can help reopen Gaza’s border to the outside world permanently.

# Al-Taqwa (Piety): The ultimate goal of Ramadan



**recitation of the noble Qur’an is the most important aspect of the month. Every believer should do his or her best in this direction. I use this medium to encourage brothers and sisters on the need to master the noble book as the level of ignorance in this regard is very disheartening.**

Qur’an is the most important aspect of the month. Every believer should do his or her best in this direction. I use this medium to encourage brothers and sisters on the need to master the noble book as the level of ignorance in this regard is very disheartening. Our attention is more on the secular direction. How many of us acquired their first, second degree and PhD but are lagging behind regarding the noble Qur’an? We must wake up and do the right thing for our goodness. We should try to recite the whole Qur’an as many times as possible and sacrifice such rewards to parents and loved ones dead or alive. One could produce a schedule to enable him achieve the goal in this direction. A very important point is the improvement of our recitation. Tajweed, is technically meant to prevent the Qur’anic reciters from mistake in the cause of reading the Noble Qur’an. Allah says “Verily this is a revelation From the Lords of the Worlds; which came down The Truthful spirit. To thy heart that thou mayest admonish in the perspicuous Arabic tongue” Q26:192-195. The Qur’an as revealed

in Arabic has rules and regulations governing pronunciation and other aspects of the language that must be strictly followed. Despite the fact that the messenger of Allah was an Arab, he was taught and supervised on the Noble Book. Allah states “Move not your tongue concerning (the Qur’an) to make haste therewith. It is for US to collect it and to promulgate it” Q75:16-17. He also states “Be not in haste with the Qur’an before its revelation to you is completed, but say o my Lord! Advance me in knowledge” Q20: 114

2. Salat: Another significant aspect to draw attention to is the superogatory prayers. Taraweeh is the most popular in this regard. But there are different series that are said in this month. In fact, there is a popular narration of a thousand raka’ats in the month by Imam Jaafar al-Sadiq (AS). According to the narration, 20 raka’ats are performed in the first 20 nights with 8 raka’ats after Magrib and 12 after Isha. In the last 10 days, 30 raka’ats are performed, 8 after Magrib, 22 after Isha and 100 raka’ats each on Layalul qadr’ 19th, 21st and 23rd nights. There are many oth-

ers obtainable in the books of supplication.

3. Prayers: More than any other time, believers are encouraged to put in more efforts in prayers this time. Allah said “When My servants ask thee concerning Me, I am indeed Close (to them); I respond To the prayer of every supplicant when he calleth on Me; Let them also, with a will listen to My call, And believe in Me; That they may walk in the right way” Q2: 186. Therefore, we should remain steadfast seeking Allah’s forgiveness and mercy for our humble selves, parents and loved ones so that we may achieve salvation. Other forms of Allah’s remembrance such as Salatun Nabi, Istigfar etc., should be maintained. We should befriend the books of supplication like Mafaateehul Jinaan, Dhiyaa’us Saaliheen and the like. On the Zaria massacre and illegal detention, we should not relent in prayers for Allah’s retribution against the killers of innocent, armless and peace loving brothers and sisters.

4. Generosity: the prophet (S) has encouraged the Ummah especially the rich to do their best in this direction. The reward of such gestures are totally incomparable with that of Ramadhan. This is why group and community Iftar was encouraged to help the needy, given the economic hardship artificially created in our societies. That is the rationale behind Zakatul fitrah at the eve of Sallah celebration.

5. Tafseer sessions: the Tafseer as commonly organized on individual and collective levels should be attended. Others relevant sessions should not be neglected. However, we must put the lessons into action which speak louder than voice. As the month moves fast, we should put in more efforts to gain the pleasure of Allah the Most high. In a popular adage, assess yourself before you are assessed. Appraise yourself in relation to the goal of fasting. “O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you that you may learn self-restraint (al-taqwa)” Q2:183. Whoever does not achieve it in the end has really missed goal! “O you who believe! Seek help with patient perseverance And prayer; for Allah is with those Who patiently persevere” Q2:153.

In our self and general assessment, we should never forget the clearly stated objective meant for multiplier-effects in our socio-economic lives.

While congratulating the Muslim Umma for another opportunity to observe the great month, I emphasize the need for the unconditional release of Sheikh el-Zakzaky (H) and his disciples.

## Trump’s “Threat” Administration is a one trick pony so far

**1 →** One thing is known, however. Trump has expressed alarm at the idea of a war on Venezuela, which Bolton and Pompeo have threatened, and he has lately expressed some dissatisfaction with Bolton. Whether he has the intelligence to fire Bolton remains to be seen, but it must have at the margin occurred to him that Bolton has been leading him towards actions that will ultimately spell his personal doom as President and make him a one termer.

Observers note that that a number of notable Americans have ensconced themselves in the Venezuelan embassy in Washington to obviate any of Guaido’s comrades setting themselves up in the embassy as de facto representatives of Venezuela, but Guaido supporters have gathered on the streets outside the embassy in Washington and tried to break in, and meanwhile the police and Secret Service members have permitted power cuts to the embassy and refused to allow well-wishers to deliver food to the brave people inside. How long the peace activists can hold out under pressure inside the embassy is anyone’s guess at this point, but the key point is that Trump had or may still be having misgivings



**Spokespersons for Trump claim Trump does not want a war with Iran, but at the same time the administration maintains “maximum pressure” on the Islamic Republic.**

about his advisors that could, with some luck, spill over to the delicate situation with Iran and the bad advice he has received from them.

Spokespersons for Trump claim Trump does not want a war with Iran, but at the same time the administration maintains “maximum pressure” on the Islamic Republic. What does this “maximum pressure”, which has just included sanctions against Iran’s metals industries (in addition to Iranian oil) aim to achieve? One obvious bet is that Trump or at least Bolton want to provoke Iran to precipitous actions that would be used as a pretext for what Bolton has called “unrelenting” military action. The pressure is on Iran to change its foreign policies, but no one has cited specifics about exactly what changes are desirable a year after Trump scuttled American participation in the JCPOA. Iran, in any event, is unlikely to roll over and suddenly become a whimpering puppet for the U.S. and abrogate its independent postures which, in fact, do NOT constitute anything but ideological differences with the U.S. and its imperialism and never have. One might easily wonder if the U.S. government has lost its mind, so easily does it think, on both sides of the aisle, that militancy is okay...except for people like Rep. Tulsi Gabbard

and Senator Sanders, both of them the best candidates for the 2020 election.

But Iran’s leaders have announced that it would halt compliance with marginal, self-imposed elements of the JCPOA commitments without throwing the deal overboard unless the situation improves and the remaining signatories to the nuclear deal get off their backsides and fulfill their trade promises with Iran. And meanwhile, Mike Pompeo paid a surprise, four-hour visit to Iraq this past week trying to “trump” up a panic about Iran’s alleged plans to attack U.S. troops in the Middle East should the U.S. commence war.

The Iraqi Prime Minister Abdul Mahdi insisted nonetheless that Iraq would not participate in any economic boycott of any country, apparently declining to cooperate with U.S. efforts to squeeze Iran. President Rouhani’s threats to restart some modest enrichment of uranium stock may or may not be foolish given that this could provide ammunition to the warmongers in Washington, even while this does not constitute steps towards a bomb. It must be noted, as ever, that Iran has never ever intended to create nuclear weapons on sincere religious grounds.

Pompeo in any case must be bonkers, because if a war does break out, how can he possibly expect Iranian forces, in defense, NOT to try to fend off the American troops, ships or bombers, putting American troops at risk? How gullible is the American public not to see through this dangerous game? We shall see, but one minor positive is that the B-52 bombers now on the tarmac in the Mideast are in Qatar, a country that has maintained relatively good relations with Iran, which came to Qatar’s aid in 2017 when the Saudis imposed a blockade on Qatar while Trump tweeted falsehoods about the Qataris siding with the Saudis.

Given that members of the Trump gang are proven dissemblers, they don’t deserve credibility. And Iraq’s Shi’ites, including Muqtada al-Sadr, whatever else they think, remain anti-imperialists at bottom and have claimed that U.S. pressure to stop doing business with Iran may result eventually in the closure of the U.S. embassy in Baghdad, the world’s largest, and the expulsion of some 5000 remaining U.S. troops in Iraq. It’s a wonder the embassy has not been shut down already, like years ago.

The utter truth is that Trump and gang know very little about the Middle East, and have no serious interest in the general welfare of the people of the region. This fact alone is ultimately going to haunt the U.S., and not merely in the Middle East. As well, the closer ties the U.S. has developed with the fascists in Israel, who have for decades pushed for war on the Islamic Republic, will also ultimately haunt the U.S. If Trump wants to sink himself, and he’s already doing that to some extent domestically even by withholding his tax returns, he’s well on his way to perfidy by listening to the warmongers surrounding him. His Presidency has been a nightmare for many thoughtful Americans.

Second Announcement

Permit No.1398.781

NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY AHVAZ-IRAN

TENDER NO. : 08-38-9740008

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

Items	Material Description	Quantity
	CORE HEAD. PDC WITH STANDARD THREAD MATRIX BODY	
01	1/8 X 2-5/8 X 4-3/4 IN. -01	25
02	7/8 X 2-5/8 X 4-3/4 IN . -02	15

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. 2, 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 23,547 EURO or 1,125,000,000 RIAL, in favor of NISOC.

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

NO ADVANCE PAYMENT WILL BE PAID

FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT

Bldg. No. 104, Material Procurement Management Complex

Kouy-e Fadaeian Islam (New Site), Ahvaz, Iran

Tel. No.: 061 341 23455 Fax No.: 061 345 7437

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تهران تایمز نویت اول ۹۸/۲/۱۸ نویت دوم ۹۸/۲/۲۱



# Even massive inspections not to prevent the sale of Iran's oil: energy expert

**1 →** Some analysts believe that the Saudis will be faced with the major problem of increasing their oil output by as much as a million barrels; Saudi Arabia's oil consumption is rising in the warm months due to increased cooling applications and oil consumption rises from 400 to 500,000 bpd.

It is claimed that the other barrier which Saudi Arabia faces in increasing its crude exports is that the government have invested heavily in their refineries and oil products exports over the past years. A unilateral increase in oil output beyond the quotas could impose a requirement for other OPEC members and even eliminate the agreement between OPEC and 10 OPEC non-member countries.

It will be possible for Saudi to increase its crude production in the two months of May and June. Saudi Arabia said the country's oil production in the first quarter of this year would be lower than its country's quota, which would allow the country to increase production in those two months. It should be recalled that calculating the compliance of OPEC member states with their oil production quotas is carried out over a six-month period, and the average monthly production of these countries in this six-month period is the basis for judging their compliance with their quotas.

In this way, Saudi Arabia could offset Iranian oil exports from markets by boosting its oil production over the next two months. The decision on the quota for the second six months of this year (July to December) will be taken at the OPEC Ministerial Meeting in Vienna, held in June. Thus, eliminating Iranian oil does not necessarily increase oil prices in the global markets. Some Iranian officials have also confirmed this.

In respect with the United Arab Emirates, which has been proposed as one of the alternatives to Iran's oil market, the country has a production capacity of 3,300,000 barrels per day; its production in 2002 was 2.56 million barrels per day and in 2018 were 3 million and 34 thousand barrels a day. However, according to the latest OPEC announcement, the UAE's oil production in March 2019 amounted to about 3 million and 59 thousand barrels a day. One million barrels will be provided to domestic refineries, and the rest will also be shipped to the export market.

At present some oil producers such as Libya and Venezuela face tensions and political unrest. Currently, aside from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, OPEC has no spare capacity. Of course, the commitment to quotas is an important message for the oil market. On the other hand,



OPEC or the Consumers' Union is also seriously concerned. If major consumers such as China, India or Turkey form an oil consumer organization, America will not be able to cope with them. Most of OPEC's Middle Eastern countries have focused on Asian markets because the European market has no horizons and the future of the oil market is developing in Asia. In other words, in the current century, they are the largest producers of Asian oil.

■ The U.S. is making efforts to drive the export of Iranian oil to zero. Is it possible? If not, why?

A: Even a massive inspection will not prevent the sale of quantities of oil. During the Iraqi oil sanctions, despite the international cooperation in this regard, the country was still able to smuggle some of its oil in various ways, including through neighboring countries. Based on this, the U.S. government largely relied on buyer cooperation and fears of a second-round sanction to curb Iran's oil exports. In terms of the oil market, despite the promise of some exporting countries to compensate for any shortages in the market and OPEC's commitment to maintaining price stability in the oil market, full compensation for Iranian oil exports to its

technical specifications is not urgent, and given the special discounts that the Iran gives to some importers, small companies who are less concerned about cutting U.S. financial and trading facilities will continue to buy oil shipments.

Some of Iran's oil production is being shipped to China for storage, and part of it is also transported to tankers for informal sales. It seems that Iran could ship 300 to 650 thousand barrels of oil a day, which will not be sold every day. Selling Iranian oil on the grey market is the only way to keep some Iranian share in the oil market. Iran must sell its oil at a low price to find costumers for its oil, while another problem is how to get money from costumers? Another way is for Iranian officials is to sell Iranian oil in the name of another (third) country.

■ 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: The main question for oil traders and political analysts is how much America wants to test these relationships by crippling the Iranian economy. According to the latest official figures available in January, Iran provided more than 12% of Turkey's oil imports. Iraq held 24 percent of the main supply, and Russia provided 15 percent of Turkey's imported oil. Turkey imported only diesel from the UAE in January, and now Iran is the third largest supplier of crude oil for Turkey. "Iran's oil is not cheap, but there is a major difference in comparison to the prices of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates," Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said in Ankara.

Turkey has always defended its commercial ties with its eastern neighbors and considers it a strategic requirement. Iran's oil could be another source of diplomatic controversy between Ankara and Washington, when relations between them are tense due to Turkey's emphasis on purchasing a missile defense system from Russia. Turkey, after some time, will be able to find alternative for Iranian oil; although Turkey prefers to have energy relations with Iran, it seems that Turkey will decrease oil imports from Iran and they may drop to zero in the medium term.

Omid Shokri Kalehsar is a Washington-based Senior Energy Security Analyst, currently serving as a Visiting Research Scholar in the Center for Energy Science and Policy (CESP) and the Schar, School of Policy and Government at George Mason University

## China won't flinch in face of tough-talking U.S.



**Global Times** — The U.S. will raise tariffs from 10 percent to 25 percent on \$200 billion worth of Chinese imports effective Friday, according to a notice posted to the Federal Register.

The announcement was made at 8:45 pm on May 8 (Beijing time). At 11:23 pm, the Chinese Minister of Commerce said that China will have to take necessary countermeasures if the U.S. goes ahead with its plan to increase tariffs on Chinese imports. Although China's announcement was made in a calm and peaceful manner, it has shown the country's unswerving resolution to defend its own interests.

Washington has lit the fuse on escalating China-U.S. trade tensions. Beijing had announced it would send a delegation for the May 9 consultations before Washington's May 8 announcement. At this critical time, Washington's imprudent move is clearly an extreme means of sending an alarming message to China. Washington must have expected the Chinese delegation would rush to the U.S. and seize every opportunity to reverse the situation. Instead, the Chinese delegation decided to fly to the U.S. one day later than originally planned. This is the way Chinese express their will and determination.

The 11th round of China-U.S. trade talks in Washington on May 9 looks like a "Banquet at Hongmen." On the one hand, Washington is lighting a fuse on escalating trade tensions; and on the other they still want to continue negotiating with the Chinese delegation. By doing so, they have set a new precedent in the history of trade talks.

Many people may ask: Under such circumstances, why is Beijing still sending the delegation to Washington? In fact, it's really Washington that should be answering the question: Under such circumstances, why is the Chinese delegation invited to Washington for more trade talks?

The answer is simple. Both China and the U.S. want to finalize a trade deal. Obviously, there are some issues that are difficult to overcome for both sides. It seems that both are now mentally prepared for a transition from truce talks to the mode of "fighting and talking" at the same time.

It is a great pity that after meeting halfway on most of their differences, China and the U.S. have not been able to reach consensus on the last few core issues. Those issues are not supposed to come up as they specifically reflect the unreasonable demands by the U.S.. Their emergence is rooted in the misguided perception that the U.S. is privileged by its strength. That misconception has also motivated the latest unexpected tariff rise announced by Washington.

China has turned down the U.S. demands at the final stage of negotiation. It was not only encouraged by its strength, but also motivated by its belief in the principle of equality. China is not afraid of conflict with the U.S. at the last moment. In the face of the "big stick" of the U.S. tariff threats, China has once again demonstrated its confidence in coping with an escalated trade war.

Since neither side has given up on the idea of making a deal, and it is the ultimate goal of both countries, the latest round of China-U.S. trade talks is expected to be conducted in a climate of uncertainty, including that of a looming escalated trade war. Such a scenario has rarely been seen in the history of trade talks.

Will the U.S. hit the brakes on the trade war at the last minute? Chinese want to know the answer to that question, but Americans are more concerned. Washington has found itself caught in a dilemma between its ambition to gain the upper hand in trade over China and its desire to minimize any negative impacts on its stock market. Beijing is serious about both trade talks and trade wars. Now, it is fully ready to switch to the mode of "fighting and talking."

China is well prepared for an escalation in trade tensions. A variety of plans are in place, such as countermeasures for any tariff rise, and favorable policies to minimize losses for Chinese enterprises. Mentally and materially, China is much better prepared than its U.S. counterpart.

In the face of the imminent, unique "Banquet at Hongmen," Chinese have full confidence in their delegation. Members of the Chinese delegation not only have the experience and wisdom to cope with the situation, but they also have the firm support and trust of the entire Chinese society.

Undoubtedly, the delegation will bring both the strong will and goodwill of the Chinese government and people to Washington at this critical juncture.

If there is a new round of tariff conflicts, it would be a repeat, or an enhanced version of what happened in the past. It would definitely incur losses for China and the U.S., losses that are both direct and indirect, explicit and implicit. Anyway, the total scale of losses on both sides would be roughly the same. If Washington has its mind set on going back down the path of a trade war, then China will fight it to the end. China has always had a firm stand on a trade war: China does not want it; China is not afraid of it; China will launch it when necessary.

Seeking fairness and justice on the global stage sometimes requires a huge price. It also can be costly for different parties to reach consensus. In the past year, China and the U.S. have been locked in a trade war and have had 10 rounds of trade talks. However, the two sides have failed to meet each other halfway to make a deal. Many are wondering how much it will cost the two countries before a final agreement is made. If the latest round of talks in Washington fails to solve the puzzle, then the two countries will have to keep searching for the answer in the future.

# A terrible gift of Trump to the European Union!

By Hanif Ghaffari

**TEHRAN** — The three countries of Germany, Britain and France continue to insist on the role of White House agents and agents in the international system! These three countries have shown that since 2017 (when Trump was present at the White House), they prefer to play the game in the United States more favorably than the interests of European citizens.

Europe continues to play its dangerous game on the American ground right now! The three countries of Germany, Britain and France also adhered precisely to the White House proposal on issues such as maintaining a nuclear deal with Iran. The European Union's delay in providing a special financial mechanism reflects the same issue. Finally, the European Union's unwillingness to negotiate a nuclear deal with Iran led to a decisive decision by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Without a doubt, Europeans will pay hard for their ties to the Trump government! We will see one of these in the European Parliamentary elections next month, where radical and nationalist parties in Europe are fully supported by the White House and people like Donald Trump and John Bolton.

The fact is that the European Union is not aware of the effects of its direct play on the land of the Trump government! The paradoxical approaches taken by the European authorities is definitely one of its kind! Over the past months, Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor, has repeatedly emphasized that the EU can no longer rely on the United States to secure its interests. However, the



German Chancellor held secret and hidden negotiations with the U.S. government and Trump to resolve Europe's economic and security problems and crises. In other words, there is a significant difference between the speeches and actions of the European authorities regarding the EU's independence from Washington.

The European Parliamentary Elections will be held in June this year. Undoubtedly, Trump and Bolton, and in general the White House, support the nationalist parties in this crucial and decisive election. The failure of traditional parties, including conservative and social-democratic parties in the European Parliamentary elections, is a terrible gift that the Trump will give to Europeans!

It should not be forgotten that European officials are to blame for the bitter fate that is coming to them soon. They closed their

eyes on realities such as the White House's opposition to the existence of the European Union and the euro area, and brought on a deal with Trump! The outcome of this deal will be terrible for EU leaders. U.S. President Donald Trump is one of the main opponents of the existing structure in Europe! He has come to this conclusion that the collapse of the United Europe will provide the United States with great economic growth among its allies. The White House therefore monitors the simultaneous destruction of the Eurozone and the European Union as essential goals. This is the main reason for Trump's support for nationalist and anti-EU movements in Europe. Recently, Donald Trump has officially urged French President Emmanuel Macron to pull his country out of the EU to benefit from more U.S.-France ties! Also, the U.S. president has asked Theresa May, the British

prime minister, to sue the European Union for making barriers in Brexit talks. Trump has gone even further, and warned Theresa May that she should choose between integrating in the European Economic structure and having economic relations with the United States! Together, these economic and commercial perspective. It should not be forgotten that during the 2016 presidential campaigns, nationalist and anti-EU movements were Trump's only supporters in Europe, and other politicians affiliated with the Social Democratic or Conservative movements in Europe (which currently hold the power) wished that the Democrats and Hillary Clinton could win the election. statements and stances show that Trump is working hard to achieve his main goal in Europe, which is the collapse of the European Union.

Trump is currently trying to define and define a "new Europe" during his presidency. This is while the Christian leaders, such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron, are still trying to prove their commitment to the White House.

So, the president of the United States, on the one hand, is trying to retaliate for the support of the European Union from Hillary Clinton (in the U.S. presidential election of 2016) and, on the other hand, launching the "New Europe" project! This is the worst gift. Which Trump intends to give to helpless and weak people, such as Merkel and Macron. Undoubtedly European officials will once again notice the effects of their game on the White House, which will be too late! Perhaps at this time there will be no EU and Eurozone ...

# Trade war pushing Asia closer together

**Global Times** — In Fiji, Asia agreed to upgrade its currency buffer as the region crises

In May 2000, Asia took an extraordinary step to protect its financial cooperation from future crises by creating a multi-lateral currency swap system. It was a response to Asia's 1997 meltdown, and a wise one.

A decade later, Japan, China, South Korea and 10 Southeast Asian nations were putting real money behind the enterprise, pooling US\$120 billion worth of foreign-exchange reserves. By 2012, the pot expanded to \$240 billion. These dollars could be tapped by any member nation facing a capital flight.

Yet it took a trade war to bring the whole thing together. In Fiji last week at the Asia Development Bank's annual meeting, Asia's finance ministers agreed to build stronger buffers into the swap arrangement and perhaps increase the pool of reserves. Even more significantly, they took the first step to add the Chinese yuan and Japanese yen into the mix — and reduce Asia's reliance on the dollar.

The trade war that US President Donald Trump launched 12 months ago is hitting Asia hard. Not 1997 hard, but Trump's tariffs and the Federal Reserve's rate hikes are causing the worst turbulence Asia has seen since the 2013 "taper tantrum."

Things could soon get a whole lot worse. Trump is threatening to raise levies on \$200 billion of Chinese goods to 25% from 10% as soon as Friday. After that, he might slap tariffs on another \$325 billion of mainland goods and a 25% tax on imports of cars and auto parts. No one can say where Trump's trade war 2.0 is heading. This bull market in uncertainty has Asia coming

together in ways for which the protectionist US leader hadn't bargained. Giving currency swap members a choice of withdrawing emergency funds in yuan, yen or, potentially, other Asian units, reduces Washington's footprint. It's leverage in Asia, too.

Among Chinese President Xi Jinping's biggest ambitions is increasing the yuan's role in trade and finance. In 2016, the yuan was added to the International Monetary Fund's top-five currency basket, joining the yen. What happened in Fiji could provide a fresh tailwind for President Xi's vision.

The same goes for Asian cooperation. It's best not to be naïve here. The region's trade-reliant nations have long competed more than they've worked together.

Asia's numerous summits each year tend to be inane talkfests that achieve little — all photo ops and vague communiqués, with few concrete efforts to link arms. Yet Trump's erratic policies are driving Asia together.

The original 2000 swap arrangement was called the Chiang Mai Initiative, named after the Thai city in which it was forged. The deal happened on the sidelines of the Asian Development Bank's annual meeting.

Last week's discussions also took place around the ADB's gathering. Progress was made to remove limits imposed back 2000, including how long swap lines can remain open. The nature of financial contracts between members and the pool of currencies are being revamped. New steps are being taken to increase market surveillance among peers and methods for sharing data and insights.

All this might sound incremental. But among Northeast Asian

nations, events in Fiji could pave the way to a broader détente. Japan, China and South Korea are, to varying degrees, barely on speaking terms.

The increased safety net the region is building is more than a step the right direction. It's an opportunity to do something constructive despite decades' old gripes.

Xi, Japan's Shinzo Abe and South Korea's Moon Jae-in should compartmentalize the geopolitics. Trilaterally, they could be lowering trade barriers, linking bond and stock markets and devising a collective use for their combined \$4.8 trillion of currency reserves.

In a joint statement in Fiji, governments "agreed to further enhance communication and coordination between China, Japan and Korea to contribute to strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth."

If there's a silver lining in Trump's trade war it is that as it roils regional supply chains, it is upping this urgency. Significantly, Xi in June is planning to visit Osaka, where this year's summit of Group of 20 economies is being held. It will be the first visit by a Chinese president in more than a decade.

China's role in bringing Asia together is complicated. Its mercantilist policies and the leverage Beijing is amassing via the "Belt and Road" scheme are live concerns. But its stabilizing role is unmistakable as Xi's aggressive stimulus gains traction.

"While the Trump administration amps up its trade rhetoric, China, unlike its more sickly condition last year, is suddenly more important to global economic health than the U.S.," says market analyst Dion Rabouin of Washington-based Axios.



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# Plastic gets a do-over: Breakthrough discovery recycles plastic from the inside out

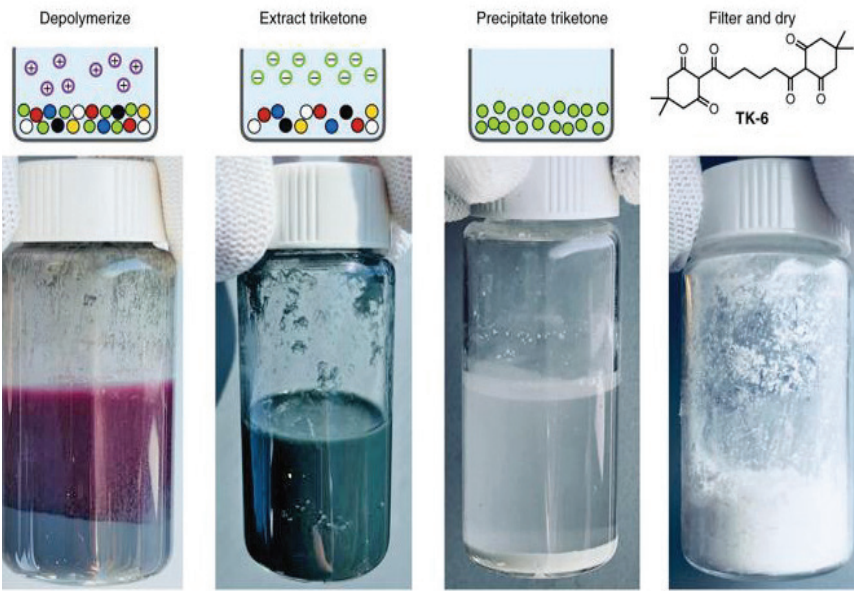
Light yet sturdy, plastic is great -- until you no longer need it. Because plastics contain various additives, like dyes, fillers, or flame retardants, very few plastics can be recycled without loss in performance or aesthetics. Even the most recyclable plastic, PET -- or poly(ethylene terephthalate) -- is only recycled at a rate of 20-30%, with the rest typically going to incinerators or landfills, where the carbon-rich material takes centuries to decompose.

Now a team of researchers at the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (Berkeley Lab) has designed a recyclable plastic that, like a Lego playset, can be disassembled into its constituent parts at the molecular level, and then reassembled into a different shape, texture, and color again and again without loss of performance or quality. The new material, called poly(diketoenamine), or PDK, was reported in the journal Nature Chemistry.

"Most plastics were never made to be recycled," said lead author Peter Christensen, a postdoctoral researcher at Berkeley Lab's Molecular Foundry. "But we have discovered a new way to assemble plastics that takes recycling into consideration from a molecular perspective."

Christensen was part of a multidisciplinary team led by Brett Helms, a staff scientist in Berkeley Lab's Molecular Foundry. The other co-authors are undergraduate researchers Angeli Scheuermann (then of UC Berkeley) and Kathryn Loeffler (then of the University of Texas at Austin) who were funded by DOE's Science Undergraduate Laboratory Internship (SULI) program at the time of the study. The overall project was funded through Berkeley Lab's Laboratory Directed Research and Development program.

All plastics, from water bottles to automobile parts, are made up of large molecules called polymers, which are composed of repeating units of shorter carbon-containing compounds called monomers.



According to the researchers, the problem with many plastics is that the chemicals added to make them useful -- such as fillers that make a plastic tough, or plasticizers that make a plastic flexible -- are tightly bound to the monomers and stay in the plastic even after it's been processed at a recycling plant.

During processing at such plants, plastics with different chemical compositions -- hard plastics, stretchy plastics, clear plastics, candy-colored plastics -- are mixed together and ground into bits. When that hodgepodge of chopped-up plastics is melted to make a new material, it's hard to predict which properties it will inherit from the original plastics.

This inheritance of unknown and therefore unpredictable properties has prevented plastic from becoming what many consider the Holy Grail of recycling: a "circular" material whose original monomers can be recovered

for reuse for as long as possible, or "upcycled" to make a new, higher quality product.

So, when a reusable shopping bag made with recycled plastic gets threadbare with wear and tear, it can't be upcycled or even recycled to make a new product. And once the bag has reached its end of life, it's either incinerated to make heat, electricity, or fuel, or ends up in a landfill, Helms said.

"Circular plastics and plastics upcycling are grand challenges," he said. "We've already seen the impact of plastic waste leaking into our aquatic ecosystems, and this trend is likely to be exacerbated by the increasing amounts of plastics being manufactured and the downstream pressure it places on our municipal recycling infrastructure."

The researchers want to divert plastics from landfills and the oceans by incentivizing the recovery and reuse of plastics, which could be possible with polymers formed from PDKs. "With PDKs, the immutable bonds

of conventional plastics are replaced with reversible bonds that allow the plastic to be recycled more effectively," Helms said.

Unlike conventional plastics, the monomers of PDK plastic could be recovered and freed from any compounded additives simply by dunking the material in a highly acidic solution. The acid helps to break the bonds between the monomers and separate them from the chemical additives that give plastic its look and feel.

"We're interested in the chemistry that redirects plastic lifecycles from linear to circular," said Helms. "We see an opportunity to make a difference for where there are no recycling options." That includes adhesives, phone cases, watch bands, shoes, computer cables, and hard thermosets that are created by molding hot plastic material.

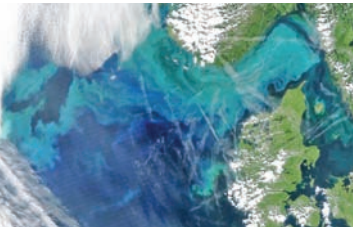
The researchers first discovered the exciting circular property of PDK-based plastics when Christensen was applying various acids to glassware used to make PDK adhesives, and noticed that the adhesive's composition had changed. Curious as to how the adhesive might have been transformed, Christensen analyzed the sample's molecular structure with an NMR (nuclear magnetic resonance) spectroscopy instrument. "To our surprise, they were the original monomers," Helms said. After testing various formulations at the Molecular Foundry, they demonstrated that not only does acid break down PDK polymers into monomers, but the process also allows the monomers to be separated from entwined additives.

Next, they proved that the recovered PDK monomers can be remade into polymers, and those recycled polymers can form new plastic materials without inheriting the color or other features of the original material -- so that broken black watchband you tossed in the trash could find new life as a computer keyboard if it's made with PDK plastic. They could also upcycle the plastic by adding additional features, such as flexibility.

(Source: Science Daily)

## "Reconstruction" begins of Stone Age lands lost to North Sea

Lost at the bottom of the North Sea almost eight millennia ago, a vast land area between England and southern Scandinavia which was home to thousands of stone age settlers is about to be rediscovered.



Marine experts, scientists and archaeologists have spent the past 15 years meticulously mapping thousands of kilometers under water in the hope of unearthing lost tribes of prehistoric Britain.

On Wednesday a crew of British and Belgian scientists set off on their voyage across the North Sea to reconstruct the ancient Mesolithic landscape hidden beneath the waves for 7,500 years. The area was submerged when thousands of cubic miles of sub-Arctic ice started to melt and sea levels began to rise.

The ancient country, known as Doggerland, which could once have had great plains with rich soils, formed an important land bridge between Britain and northern Europe. It was long believed to have been hit by catastrophic flooding.

Using seabed mapping data the team plans to produce a 3D chart revealing the rivers, lakes, hills and coastlines of the country. Specialist survey ships will take core sediment samples from selected areas to extract millions of fragments of DNA from the buried plants and animals.

Prof Vincent Gaffney, from the University of Bradford's school of archaeological and forensic sciences, said: "If this is successful it will be the first time anybody will have produced such evidence for settlements in the deep waters of the North Sea. This will be a real first. That would be new knowledge of what is really a lost continent."

Bradford scientists will join Belgian experts onboard RV Belgica for the 11-day expedition in the Brown Bank area of the southern North Sea.

Gaffney said they were praying for stable weather and good luck. "We can't walk those fields looking for pottery or stone fragments, we can't dig. We're going to drop 'grabs', or do very small-scale dredges, to see if we can find these stones or tools, to give us a clue as to what is there. We are talking about an area that is the size of a modern European country. And we know almost nothing about it."

"We've been preparing for this for a long time and are now on the edge of achieving it. This is the first real chance we've had. We don't know if we will succeed ... We are so close -- we just need a tiny bit of luck to get to the right spot."

Until sea levels rose at the end of the last ice age, between 8,000 and 10,000 years ago, an area of land connected Britain to Scandinavia and the continent.

In previous studies funded by the European Research Council, the Lost Frontiers team mapped the Doggerland region, which is about the size of Holland. The team could identify the location of river valleys, marshlands, hills and even white cliffs, but was unable to find evidence of human activity.

Gaffney said his focus was on the period between 11,000 BCE and 5,000 BCE, the middle Stone Age, in what was "the last great period of the hunter gatherer".

He added: "Vast areas of the North Sea were dry land and inhabited. Then sea levels rose, and pretty much everything about the world changed in this period. The most pleasant places to live would have been on the great plains -- which are now out at sea. This is where they would have wanted to be, not in the hills. But it's all been lost."

Archaeological finds made by fishermen over the past century suggest there was a sand ridge east of Great Yarmouth, known as the Brown Bank, which could have been the location of a settlement.

Gaffney said the project hoped to reveal, for the first time, the culture and lifestyle of the prehistoric Britons who flourished there for 6,000 years.

The team plans to recover ancient pollen, plant and animal DNA, and use high-definition survey techniques to accurately reveal what the landscape looked like.

"It's a needle in a haystack when you're dropping a 1 meter bucket into a landscape the size of Holland," Gaffney said.

It is understood the ancient civilization originally covered about 260,000 sq. km (100,000 sq. miles). However, after the ice age ended coastal zones became increasingly vulnerable to catastrophic flooding and entire civilizations would have been lost.

(Source: The Guardian)

## Ocean activity is key controller of summer monsoons

Each summer, a climatic shift brings persistent wind and rain to much of Southeast Asia, in the form of a seasonal monsoon. The general cause of the monsoon is understood to be an increasing temperature difference between the warming land and the comparatively cool ocean. But for the most part, the strength and timing of the monsoon, on which millions of farmers depend each year, is incredibly difficult to predict.

Now MIT scientists have found that an interplay between atmospheric winds and the ocean waters south of India has a major influence over the strength and timing of the South Asian monsoon.

Their results, published Tuesday in the Journal of Climate, show that as the summertime sun heats up the Indian subcontinent, it also kicks up strong winds that sweep across the Indian Ocean and up over the South Asian land mass. As these winds drive northward, they also push ocean waters southward, much like a runner pushing against a treadmill's belt. The researchers found these south-flowing waters act to transport heat along with them, cooling the ocean and in effect increasing the temperature gradient between the land and sea.

They say this ocean heat transporting mechanism may be a new knob in controlling the seasonal South Asian monsoon, as well as other monsoon systems around the world.

"What we find is, the ocean's response plays a huge role in modulating the intensity of the monsoon," says John Marshall, the Cecil and Ida Green Professor of Oceanography at MIT. "Understanding the ocean's response is critical to predicting the monsoon."

Marshall's co-authors on the paper are lead author Nicholas Lutsko, a postdoc in MIT's Department of Earth, Atmospheric, and Planetary Sciences, and Brian Green, a former graduate student in Marshall's group who is now at the University of Washington.

Scientists have traditionally focused on the Himalayas as a key influencer of the South Asian monsoon. It's thought that the massive mountain ridge acts as a barrier against cold winds blowing in from the north, insulating the Indian subcontinent in a warm cocoon and enhancing the summer time temperature difference between the land and the ocean.

"Before, people thought the Himalayas were necessary to have a monsoon system," Lutsko says. "When people got rid of them in simulations, there was no monsoon. But

these models were run without an ocean."

Lutsko and Marshall suspected that if they were to develop a model of the monsoon that included the ocean's dynamics, these effects would lessen the monsoon's intensity. Their hunch was based on previous work in which Marshall and his colleagues found that wind-driven ocean circulation minimized shifts in the Inter Tropical Convergence Zone, or ITCZ, an atmospheric belt near the equator that typically produces dramatic thunderstorms over large areas. This wide zone of atmospheric turbulence is known to shift seasonally between the northern and southern hemispheres, and Marshall found the ocean plays a role in corraling these shifts.

"Based on the idea of the ocean damping the ITCZ shifts, we thought that the ocean would also damp the monsoon," Marshall says. "But it turns out it actually strengthens the monsoon."

The researchers came to this unexpected conclusion after drawing up a simple simulation of a monsoon system, starting with a numerical model that simulates the basic physics of the atmosphere over an "aqua planet" -- a world covered entirely in an ocean. The team added a solid, rectangular mass to the ocean to represent a simple land mass. They then varied the amount of sunlight across the simulated planet, to mimic the seasonal cycles of insolation, or sunlight, and also simulated the winds and rains that result from these seasonal shifts in temperature.

They carried out these simulations under different scenarios, including one in which the ocean was static and unmoving, and another in which the ocean was allowed to circulate and respond to atmospheric winds. They observed that winds blowing toward the land prompted ocean waters to flow in the opposite direction, carrying heat away from waters closest to the land. This wind/ocean interaction had a significant effect on any monsoon that formed over the land: the stronger this interplay, or coupling between winds and ocean, the wider the difference in land and sea temperature, and the stronger the intensity of the ensuing monsoon.

Interestingly, their model did not include any sort of Himalayan structure; nevertheless, they were still able to produce a monsoon simply from the effect of the ocean and winds.

"We initially had a picture that we couldn't make a monsoon without the Himalayas, which was the established wisdom," Lutsko says. "But in our model, we had no such barrier,

and we were still able to generate a monsoon, and we were excited about that."

Ultimately, their work may help to explain why the South Asian monsoon is one of the strongest monsoon systems in the world. The combination of the Himalayas to the north, which act to warm up the land, and the ocean to the south, which takes heat away from nearby waters, sets up an extreme temperature gradient for one of the most intense, persistent monsoons on the planet.

"One reason the South Asian monsoon is so strong is there's this big barrier to the north keeping the land warm, and there's an ocean to the south that's cooling, so it's perfectly situated to be really strong," Lutsko says.

In future work, the researchers plan to apply their newfound observations of the ocean's role to help interpret variations in monsoons much farther back in time.

"What's interesting to me is, during times when the northern hemisphere was much colder, you see a collapse of the monsoon system," Lutsko says. "People don't know why that happens. But we feel we can explain this, using our minimal model."

The researchers also believe their new, ocean-based explanation for generating monsoons may help climate modelers to predict how, for example, the monsoon cycle may change in response to ocean warming due to climate change.

"We're saying you have to understand how the ocean is responding if you want to predict the monsoon," Lutsko says. "You can't just focus on the land and the atmosphere. The ocean is key."

This research is supported in part by the National Science Foundation and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

(Source: Science Daily)

## Fluctuating oxygen caused evolutionary surges during Cambrian period

During the Cambrian explosion, thousands of new species appeared during a relatively short amount of time. The earliest forms of many modern species first emerged during the Cambrian explosion.

But according to a new study, the evolutionary gas pedal wasn't on the floor during the entirety of the period. There were periods of accelerated speciation, as well as brief slowdowns. Authors of the new study determined the period's ebb and flow was caused by fluctuating oxygen levels.

"The complex creatures that came about during the Cambrian explosion were the precursors to many of the modern animals we see today," lead study author Tianchen He, postdoctoral researcher at the University of Leeds, said in a news release. "But because there is no direct record of atmospheric oxygen during this time period it has been difficult to determine what factors might have kick started this crucial point in evolution."

To map fluctuating oxygen levels during the period, scientists analyzed carbon and sulphur isotopes in ancient rock samples. When scientists compared the timing of oxygen fluctuations,

they found it correlated closely with the increases and decreases in the abundance of Cambrian fossils.

"This strongly suggests oxygen played a vital role in the emergence of early animal life," He said.

Scientists measured changing isotope ratios and fossil abundance in the lower Cambrian strata of Siberia. The ubiquitous limestone deposits host rich fossil records and provided ideal samples for isotopic analysis. The deposits also represent an ancient marine ecosystem, which hosted the majority of species present on earth during the period.

"Combining our isotope measurements with a mathematical model lets us track the pulses of carbon and sulphur entering the sediments in this critical evolutionary cradle," said researcher Benjamin Mills. "Our model uses this information to estimate the global balance of oxygen production and destruction, giving us new insight into how oxygen shaped the life we have on the planet today."

(Source: UPI)

### Second Announcement



Permit No.1398.801

### NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY AHVAZ-IRAN

TENDER NO. : 01-31-9280040

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

Material Description	Quantity
PARTS FOR " COOPER-BESSEMER" GAS TURBINE TYPE COBERRA-182 SERIAL NOS. SN-401,2,3,4,5 AND 6 RT RP FITTED TO COMPRESSOR TYPE RB7-6B , SERIAL NOS 1045-48-51-53 RC REF. COOPER-BESSEMER S.A	23 Items Including 282 NOS
PARTS FOR " COOPER ROLLS" POWER GAS TURBINE , TURBINE TYPE RT 48 , SERIAL NOS. 884 RT, 885 RT, AND 886 RT REF. COOPER ROLLS LTD	06 Items Including 127 NOS

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 5,857 EURO or 276,477,309 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  
Kouy-e-Fadaeian Islam (New Site), Ahvaz, Iran Bldg. No. 104  
Tel. No.: 061 3445 7437

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تهران تایمز نویت اول ۹۸/۲/۲۱ نویت دوم ۹۸/۲/۲۱



## A once-missing piece of Stonehenge could reveal where iconic standing stones were quarried

A lost piece of one of Stonehenge's iconic standing stones has finally been returned.

The cylindrical piece of stone was drilled out of the giant Neolithic standing stone and then taken as a souvenir more than 60 years ago.

The rediscovery means scientists will be able to study the chemical makeup of the largest stones at Stonehenge, in an effort to learn more about where they came from.



A missing piece of Stonehenge was recovered, after being lost for six decades. The cylindrical piece of sandstone was drilled out of one of the giant upright stones at Stonehenge during restoration work in 1958.

English Heritage, the cultural agency that oversees Stonehenge, said the piece was taken from a fallen “trilithon” — a structure made up of two giant upright stone posts, covered by a third stone lintel — that was re-erected during restoration work in 1958.

Archaeologists found cracks in one of the upright stones, and drilled through it in three places so the stone could be reinforced with steel bars. The repairs were then covered over with stone fragments.

One of the drilled “cores” from the repairs, a cylindrical piece of sandstone about 42 inches (108 centimeters) long and an inch (2.5 cm) across, was then taken by a workman at the Stonehenge site, the agency said.

That workman, Robert Phillips, kept the core as a prized souvenir for six decades, but he returned it on the eve of his 90th birthday. (He now lives in retirement in the United States.)

Scientists say the drilled core will now be chemically tested and compared with several sandstone sites in the south of England, in the hope of learning more about the origins of the largest stones at Stonehenge.

The smaller “bluestones” are thought to have been transported for over 140 miles (230 kilometers) from quarries in Wales to the Stonehenge site at Salisbury Plain in southwest England.

But relatively little is known about the larger sandstone boulders, known as sarsen stones, said University of Brighton geoscientist David Nash, who leads the project.

The rediscovered stone core would allow scientists to study the composition of the rock deep inside the sarsen stones, but without making new drill holes or cutting into any of the standing stones at Stonehenge, he said.

That is something that would be almost impossible today, given the stringent cultural protections in place around Stonehenge, Nash told Live Science.

The concentric circles of standing stones at Stonehenge, as well as several Neolithic monuments nearby, make up one of the most famous archaeological sites in the world — they are thought to have been built about 5,000 years ago.

English Heritage said it was now trying to locate the other two stone cores drilled out of the Stonehenge upright in 1958.

(Source: Live Science)



## ROUND THE GLOBE

### Episcopal City of Albi

The Episcopal City of Albi presents a complete built ensemble representative of a type of urban development in Europe from the Middle Ages to the present day.

On the banks of the Tarn River in southwest France, the old city of Albi reflects the culmination of a medieval architectural and urban ensemble.



A view of the Episcopal City of Albi in southwest France with Sainte-Cecile Cathedral in the foreground

Its monumental and urban elements are complementary and well preserved, in subtle harmony of tones and appearance thanks to the use of local fired brick.

It is testimony to a program which was simultaneously both defensive and spiritual, and which was implemented by the Roman Catholic bishops following the suppression of the Albigenian or Cathar heresy in the 13th century.

Sainte-Cecile Cathedral is the most remarkable monumental symbol, in a Gothic architectural style unique to southern France, to which systematic internal painted decoration, a choir, and late Gothic statuary were added in the 15th and 16th centuries.

Finally, the outstanding value of the city is expressed by a medieval urban landscape that is both well preserved and extremely authentic.

(Source: UNESCO)

# Historic bazaar of Tabriz sustains blaze thanks to regular restorations: tourism official

**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** — Historic bazaar of Tabriz in Iran's East Azarbaijan province could sustain a blaze, which erupted around 10 p.m. on Wednesday, a fortune that provincial tourism chief attributes to rounds of previous restoration work on the UNESCO-tagged marketplace.

“Fire inflicted the least damage to the historical bazaar of Tabriz thanks to regular restoration work on the marketplace over the past few years,” CHTN quoted Morteza Abdar as saying on Thursday.

“It had no fatality but 29 people were slightly injured in the fire. Around 100 shops were seriously damaged and 50 ones suffered slight damage,” the official said.

Iranian media say that firefighters managed to put out the blaze which took six hours to extinguish, according to IRNA.

The bazaar has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2010 and was mentioned by Marco Polo when he travelled the Silk Road in the Middle Ages.

A labyrinth of interconnected covered passages that stretches for about 5 km, the bazaar has been a melting pot of cultural exchange since antiquity. It embraces countless shops, over 20 caravanserais and inns, some 20 vast domed halls, bathhouses, and mosques, as well as other brick structures and enclosed spaces for different functions. Its history dates back to over a millennium, however, majority of fine brick vaults that capture most visitor's eyes date from the 15th century.

Tabriz became the capital of the Mongol Il-Khan Mahmud Gazan (1295–1304) and his successor. Timur (Tamerlane), a Turkic conqueror, took it in 1392. Some decades later the Kara Koyunlu Turkmen made it their capital, it was when the famous Blue Mosque was built in Tabriz.

The ancient city retained its administrative status under the Safavid dynasty until 1548, when Shah Tahmasp I relocated his capital westward to Qazvin.

During the next two centuries, Tabriz changed hands several times between Persia and Ottoman Empire. During the World War I, the city was temporarily occupied by Turkish and then Soviet troops.



A firefighter enters a fire inside a historic bazaar of the northwestern city of Tabriz, Iran, May 8, 2019. The Historic Bazaar of Tabriz dates back 1,000 years, and has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2010 and was mentioned by Marco Polo when he travelled the Silk Road in the Middle Ages.

## Ancient South American populations dipped due to an erratic climate

Ancient South American populations declined sharply as rainfall became increasingly unpredictable starting around 8,600 years ago, researchers say.

But hunter-gatherer groups from the Andes and the Amazon to the continent's southern tip bounced back quickly once rain returned to a relatively stable pattern about 6,000 years ago, report archaeologists Philip Riris and Manuel Arroyo-Kalin, both of University College London.

During that roughly 2,600-year intervening period, bouts of unusually wet or dry conditions that disrupted local food sources occurred frequently, every five years or so on average, the scientists report online May 9 in Scientific Reports.

Foragers would have been unable to predict whether extreme rainfall or drought was next up, or precisely when those conditions would hit. Previously, average rainfall patterns had included an abnormally wet or dry year only every 16 to 20 years, Riris and Arroyo-Kalin estimate from rainfall records gleaned from ancient sediments and other sources.

To estimate population changes from around 12,000 to 2,000 years ago, the researchers analyzed 5,450 radiocarbon dates from nearly 1,400 South American archaeological sites. Statistical estimates of when substantial population ups and downs took place, based on changes over time in numbers of archaeological sites, could not assess absolute numbers of people

living in South America at various times. Climate records compared to ancient population patterns were divided into 100-year stretches.

The greatest rainfall fluctuations and largest human population declines were seen in northern, tropical parts of South America.

The new findings build on researchers' previous observations that people abandoned many South American sites around 8,200 years ago. Unpredictable and extreme rainfall patterns might have been one reason why ancient South American hunter-gatherers started to domesticate and cultivate plants, perhaps as backup food sources, the archaeologists suggest.

(Source: Science News)

## How to get by in a country where you don't know the language

Not knowing the local language is no reason not to travel. Here are some tips to get by from someone who does it all the time.

Traveling to a foreign country can be daunting if you don't know the local language, and while François Thibault, the cellar master and co-founder of Grey Goose, speaks only French, his job requires constant travel around the world. “Over the years, I've learned how to navigate foreign countries with limited verbal communication,” he said.

Mr. Thibault has a number of tips to help travelers manage in a destination when they don't speak the native tongue, based on his own experience. Here are a few of them.

Traveling in foreign countries has become much easier in the past few years thanks to the many foreign language apps which translate words on the spot. Mr. Thibault tends to rely on Google Translate and suggests that travelers find an app that works for them. Ideally, find one that specializes in the language you need to translate especially if the language uses a character set



you're not familiar with, or have difficulty pronouncing.

But take note: in Mr. Thibault's experience, these apps work best when you're trying to decipher something in writing, like a restaurant menu or a street sign, rather than in the midst of a conversation.

■ **Speak with your hands and head** Pointing with your hands and nodding or shaking your head, Mr. Thibault said, are an easy way to communicate with locals in the country you're in. “Gestures are almost all universally understood,” he said.

There are exceptions however. In many of the countries in the Balkans, for example, nodding means “no,” and shaking your head

means “yes.” Also, although a smile usually conveys friendliness, in some countries such as Russia, locals don't smile at people they don't know. A quick web search for the country you're visiting and “gestures” or “body language” will turn up anything you need to be aware of before you go.

■ **Learn a few key words**

Knowing basic words and phrases like “hello,” “thank you” and “I'm sorry, I don't speak [insert the language of the country you're visiting], do you speak English?” are a must, Mr. Thibault said. Showing that you care enough to learn some of the language before you went, and at least enough to acknowledge that you don't know more, is a form of respect and will go a long way to endear you to locals.

He suggested going on YouTube to find a tutorial on how to spell and say basic words and phrases, ideally from native speakers eager to teach would-be visitors. “It'll take five minutes of your time and is well worth it,” he said.

■ **Work with a local travel agent**

If you feel particularly uncomfortable

in the country you're headed to, and you have to go anyway, relying on a local travel agent who knows both your and your destination's language can be incredibly useful.

He or she can step in to help translate over the phone should any major issues arise, especially with things like flights, lodging, or other travel-related issues. Many agents also offer services 24 hours a day, so help is just a quick call away no matter what the problem may be.

■ **Hire a local tour guide**

A tour guide can help you get a better grasp of the local language and is a good person to practice words and phrases with. Whenever Mr. Thibault visits a new country, he books a sightseeing tour with a guide on the first day of his trip. “I use this day to learn about my destination and get familiar with the language,” he said.

You can always search the web for local tour guides and fixers before you go, or alternatively find a guide through your hotel's concierge a travel agent or by calling the local tourist office.

(Source: The New York Times)

### Second Announcement



Permit No.1398.804

### NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY AHVAZ-IRAN

TENDER NO. : 31-95204-53-020

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

Material Description	Quantity
LINE PIPE 6 IN RTP (REINFORCED THERMOPLASTIC PIPE) ACCORDING TO STANDARD AP155 & AP17J BURIED COILED 3 LAYER RTP PIPE INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO 1.INNER HDPE LAYER , 2. REINFORCED LAYER ,3.OUTER HDPE LAYER SUITABLE FOR HIGH PRESSURE SOUR WATER & SEWAGE LINE PIPE SERVICES.  MAX ALLOWABLE WORKING PRESSURE:63 BAR & 150 BAR	70.000

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. 2, 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 169,497 EURO or 8,096,000,000 RIAL, in favor of NISOC.

Tender Conditions materials technical thorough specifications and Qualitative Assessment Forms can be accessed via:

WWW.nisoc.ir-material procurement management tab

NO ADVANCE PAYMENT WILL BE PAID

**FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT**

**Bldg. No. 104, Material Procurement Management Complex**

**Kouy-e Fadaeian Islam (New Site), Ahvaz, Iran**

**Tel. No.: 061 341 23455 Fax No.: 061 3445 7437**

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تهران تایمز نویت اول ۹۸/۲/۱۸ نویت دوم ۹۸/۲/۲۱



# ‘One third of Iranian adults have hypertension’

**HEALTH** **TEHRAN**— One third of Iranian adults suffer from hypertension, said Baqer Larijani, the deputy health minister for education.

Larijani made the remarks on a meeting on the occasion of the World Hypertension Day, May 17, ISNA reported.

According to Larijani, the Health Ministry has now started a national campaign to control hypertension.

“The main aim of the campaign is to teach the society about uncontrolled hypertension,” said Larijani.

“It is necessary that experts and professors establish a guideline about hypertension,” he said.

**■ 97,000 deaths caused by hypertension**

Some 97,000 Iranians died of diseases caused by hypertension in 2017, according to Dr. Ramin Heshmat, who is an associate professor of epidemiology in Tehran University of Medical Sciences.

“From 1990 to 2016, the prevalence of high blood pressure among Iranian adults grew three times,” said Dr. Heshmat.

“Unfortunately, among 15 million Iranians who have high blood pressure, only 60% are



aware of their condition; additionally, only half the patients who are aware of their hypertension, receive medication for it.”

It means, he said, only 15% of the patients control their high blood pressure.

According to Heshmat, examining people's awareness of hypertension, its risk factors and consequences and highlighting the importance of early diagnosis are among the objectives of the National Campaign for Controlling

Hypertension.

“The campaign target groups are all people above the age of 30, as well as pregnant women and people with kidney diseases at any age,” he said.

According to Dr. Heshmat, the campaign will run from May 17 to July 6.

“From May 17 to June 6, people are notified about the campaign, its subject and targets and from June 6 to July 6 the field works are carried out such as taking the blood pressure of target groups, registering their information and referring the patients to specialists,” he said.

**■ Reducing 54,000 of deaths**

Over the meeting, Dr. Farshad Farzadfar, director for Non-Communicable Diseases Research Center, said if the plans are made for reaching the target of World Health Organization (WHO) for reducing raised blood pressure, 54,000 of annual deaths are prevented.

WHO has set a target for a 25% relative reduction in the prevalence of raised blood pressure by 2025.

According to WHO, raised blood pressure caused an estimated 9.4 million deaths in 2010. It is a major cardiovascular risk factor and a leading risk factor for global deaths.

## Free health facility for cancer patients under construction

**HEALTH** **TEHRAN** — A free specialized care center for cancer patients will start operation by the end of the current [Iranian calendar] year (March 2020), said Fatemeh Hashemi, the head of Charity Foundation for Special Diseases.

The Charity Foundation for Special Diseases is a public NGO entity, mostly supporting patients with chronic and terminal diseases such as cancer, multiple sclerosis (MS), kidney diseases, diabetes, thalassemia and hemophilia.

According to Hashemi, building the center cost 6 trillion rials (around \$142 million) that was collected by donations made to the NGO, IRNA reported on Wednesday.

“Two sanatoriums for cancer and MS patients are also under construction in cities of Sari and Qazvin. These sanatoriums are particularly built for patients whose families



cannot give them the proper care they need,” said Hashemi.

“Another free hospital has also been recently built in Mesgarabad village, on the outskirts of Tehran,” she said.

“Currently, the NGO has free health facilities in Tehran, Rafsanjan, Shahr-e Babak, Bojnurd, Borujerd and Shahrood,” she added.

Annually, the NGO gives medical and health care to around 30,000 to 50,000 people, Hashemi remarked.

## Fertility rate likely to grow with new technique

**HEALTH** **TEHRAN** — New technique for in vitro fertilization used in Ebnesina hospital is likely to increase fertility chances, said Maryam Rafati, the assistant professor at Avicenna Research Institute.

According to Rafati, in this technique, known as Next Generation Sequencing (NGS), the embryos are screened for genetic abnormalities before their implementation, Mehr news agency reported on Wednesday.

“Many embryos usually don't survive, but by using this new technique, around seven to eight embryos are selected after the genetic tests before they are finally placed in the uterus,” said Rafati.

“This is a most up-to-date technique and we are using it just a few months after it has started in world renowned centers specialized in treating



infertility.”

“With using this method, the success rate of infertility procedures will increase from 30 or 40 percent to around 50 or 60 percent,” she added.

NGS is a pre-implantation genetic testing technique that screens all 24 chromosomes in a developing embryo, enabling scientists to select only embryos with a normal chromosome profile to transfer.

## Where antibiotics fail, ‘bacteria-eating’ viruses may prevail

Antibiotic-resistant bacteria can cause infections that are very difficult to treat, and they may sometimes put a person's life in danger. However, a creative new approach may offer a potent weapon against these “superbugs.”

The recent publication of several scientific reports suggesting that many bacterial strands are developing resistance to antibiotics points to the emergence of a global crisis.

As more and more dangerous bacteria become unresponsive to strong antibiotics, researchers have started looking for alternative means of fighting these “superbugs.”

Recent studies have investigated the usefulness of some surprising therapies against antibiotic-resistant bacteria, including using a specific bacterium that lives in Irish soil and experimenting with new drug combinations.

Now, researchers at the University of Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) in Chevy Chase, MD, provide evidence that a different approach can offer an effective way of fighting off dangerous bacterial infections.

Prof. Graham Hatfull, who works at the University

of Pittsburgh and at the HHMI, and his team have been studying a type of biological infectious agent called “bacteriophages,” or simply “phages.”

Bacteriophages — a name that literally means “bacteria-eating” — are viruses that target, infect, and destroy different strains of bacteria. Previous research co-authored by Prof. Hatfull suggests that there are an estimated 1031 bacteriophage particles on the planet.

Different phages target different bacterial strains, however. For this reason, identifying which agent matches which bacterium can be challenging trial and error task.

**■ Reviving an old idea**

Using bacteriophages to fight off infections, an approach called “phage therapy,” is by no means a new idea. In fact, this notion has been on researchers' radars for close to 100 years.

British, French, and Russian scientists were already experimenting with phages in a clinical setting at the beginning of the 20th century.

However, scholars explain that the initial enthusiasm regarding the potential of phage therapy fell flat for many years. This was, in part, due to the limited knowledge and scientific resources available to

researchers at that time.

Now, though, the interest in phage research may be reemerging in full force thanks to one recent therapeutic success.

Prof. Hatfull and team explain — in a study paper that appears in the journal Nature Medicine — that, by using carefully selected phages, they were able to treat a severe infection experienced by a 15-year-old patient with a complex medical history.

The patient had cystic fibrosis, an incurable genetic condition that causes a buildup of thick mucus, especially — though not only — in the lungs. This, in turn, leads to susceptibility to infections.

In 2017, they presented at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) in London, United Kingdom, to undergo a double lung transplant.

However, not long after the procedure, the patient's doctors noticed that the surgery wound looked red and raw, that they had a liver infection, and that several nodules had formed on their body. Those nodules contained bacteria that were trying to “surface” through the skin.

**■ Using viruses to attack bacteria**

The scientists collaborated with the doctors at GOSH to look for bacteriophages that would attack the specific bacterial strains infecting the 15-year-old patient in question as well as another young person with cystic fibrosis. The other patient had also undergone a double lung transplant and had a severe infection.

The researchers responded to the doctors' appeals; the two young patients did not respond to any of the antibiotics they received.

These infections, the researchers note, were not new; the patients had first developed them many years before but had kept them under control until their surgeries, when they flared up dangerously.

“These bugs didn't respond to antibiotics. They're highly drug-resistant strains of bacteria,” says Prof. Hatfull. So, he explains, the scientists decided to try “[using] bacteriophages as antibiotics — as something we could use to kill bacteria that cause infection.”

Prof. Hatfull's main interests are the study of phages and the treatment of tuberculosis (TB), which is a bacterial infection that mainly settles in the lungs. His London-based colleagues got in touch because, as it happened, both of their young patients had infections caused by strains of Mycobacterium, which is also involved in TB.

The doctors sent Prof. Hatfull samples of the bacterial strains responsible for the patients' infections so that he and his collaborators could identify which phages would be able to attack and destroy them.

Within a few months, they found the set of phages that could match the bacteria infecting one of the patients. However, this initial discovery came too late; the patient had died earlier that same month.

(Source: medical news today)

## Iran to set up drugstore for rare disease patients

**HEALTH** **TEHRAN** — People suffering from rare diseases usually have problems finding their medications and it is planned to set up a drug store for them, CEO of Rare Diseases Foundation of Iran has said.

A rare disease, also referred to as an orphan disease, is any disorder that affects a small percentage of the population.

Final steps to launch the drugstore is being taken and it be up and running in no time soon, IRNA news agency quoted Hamidreza Edraki as saying on Thursday.

Iran's Food and Drug Administration is also collaborating on setting up the drug store, Edraki highlighted.

He also noted that in a meeting with Iranian Health Minister Saeed Namaki it was scheduled to improve screening tests for rare diseases and register patients suffering the diseases.



Since the year 1388 (March 2009-March 2010) some 292 rare diseases are identified in the country, he said, adding that, the reason behind the high number of rare diseases is because of the high number of inter-family marriages in the country.

Genetic counselling and testing can improve the current conditions and decrease the number of children born with rare diseases, he suggested.

Moreover, running screening tests for rare diseases among the newly born babies can also improve their conditions by taking timely treatment measures, he highlighted.

Edraki went on to say that “we have also signed a memorandum of understanding with Ministry of Education so that teachers at elementary schools will be trained about rare disease and in case they observe any of the symptoms among the students they can report the at Rare Diseases Foundation website.”

Edraki also lamented that only 2,160 patients with rare diseases are registered at Rare Diseases Foundation website and that with regard to the country's the population it is estimated that at least 50,000 to 60,000 patients are living with rear diseases nationwide.

He further explained that a disease or disorder is defined as rare in Iran when it affects fewer than one or two in 10,000.

In early April it was announced that at numerous requests put in by patients suffering from rare diseases Health Minister Namaki has tasked Tehran University of Medical Sciences with devising a national document on rare diseases.

Drawing up the plan would set the scene for providing patients with such diseases with better mental and physical care.

According to the Journal of Rare Disorders: Diagnosis & Therapy the importance of rare diseases stem from the fact that in many cases rare diseases are so rare that an individual physician may have never seen a single patient with that disorder. As a consequence, in many of these cases there is insufficient treatment and by the time a diagnosis is made, it may be too late to help the patient.

The variability of presentation of these diseases makes it particularly difficult to recognize and diagnose. Furthermore, some of them may present with common symptoms that may be mistakenly attributed to a common disease. This leads to reduced awareness and a delayed diagnosis. The vast majority of rare diseases are genetically inherited and therefore lifelong.

## As sense of smell fades, does death come closer?

They say the nose knows, but can a loss of smell signal impending death?

Possibly, researchers say.

They discovered that a poor sense of smell was associated with a nearly 50% higher risk of death within the next decade for adults older than 70.

While the study didn't prove cause and effect, that association is enough to make some experts wonder whether seniors' sense of smell should be tested alongside their other vital signs.

“I would not be surprised if someday the sense of smell was included as a simple checkup, to see if this important human sense is affected,” said senior researcher Dr. Honglei Chen, a professor of epidemiology and biostatistics at Michigan State University.

As many as 1 in 4 aging Americans suffers a loss in their sense of smell, researchers said in background notes.

Further, research has linked the loss of an ability to smell to your risk of neurodegenerative disorders such as Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease and some dementias, Chen said.

But Chen and his colleagues suspected that sense of smell might have broader health implications for seniors than just a predisposition to brain conditions.

So they analyzed data from nearly 2,300 adults between the ages of 71 and 82 who were tracked as part of a larger health study.

Participants took a brief smell identification test as part of a battery of health examinations. They then were tracked for about 17 years, to see what illnesses might affect them.

It's unusual for seniors to have their sense of smell tested, said Vidulata Kamath, an assistant professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore.

“We notice when our vision is changing. There's some evidence when our hearing is changing. But what studies have shown is there is a sizable discrepancy between people's report of their sense of smell functioning versus their actual scores on objective testing,” Kamath said. “There's a sizable number of adults who have an unawareness of olfactory [sense of smell] loss.”

Kamath wrote an editorial accompanying the study. Both are published April 30 in Annals of Internal Medicine.

Even worse, the new study showed that a loss of smell did indeed serve as a warning that death could be approaching.

“We found that compared to people with a good sense of smell, those with a poor sense of smell had about a 48% higher risk for death at year 10 and a 30% higher risk at year 13,” Chen said. “As we are talking about an older population, this risk is not small at all.”

(Source: WebMD)

Second Announcement



Permit No.1398.805

**NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY AHVAZ-IRAN**

**TENDER NO. : 48-32-9606002**

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

Items	Material Description	Quantity
01	SKID MOUNTED CRYOGENICAL NITROGEN TANK 2000 US GALLON CAPACITY BASED ON ISO 20421 ALL DETAILS OF CALCULATION & DESIGN BASED ON ISO 20421 SHALL BE SUBMITTED BY MANUF PROPER FRAME AND PORTABLE ON TRUCK CONSIDERATION TO IRAN TRAFIC LAW.4 HOOKING EYES FOR LIFTING WORKING PRESS:6BAR TEST PRESS.10BAR MDMT(MIN.DESIGN METAL TEMP):196C OVERAL DIM.:L:300mm W:2500mm H:2600mm	01

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. 2, 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 3,663 EURO or 175,000,000 RIAL, in favor of NISOC.

Tender Conditions materials technical thorough specifications and Qualitative Assessment Forms can be accessed via: WWW.nisoc.ir-

material procurement management tab

NO ADVANCE PAYMENT WILL BE PAID

**FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT**

**Bldg. No. 104, Material Procurement Management Complex**

**Kouy-e-Fadaeian Islam (New Site), Ahvaz, Iran**

**Tel. No.: 061 341 23455 Fax No.: 061 3445 7437**

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تهران تایمز نوبت اول ۹۸/۱۲/۱۸ نوبت دوم ۹۸/۱۲/۲۱



## No plans for reintroduction of Asiatic lion: DOE official

**ENVIRONMENT** **TEHRAN** — Iran’s Department of Environment (DOE) has no specific plans for reintroduction of Asiatic lion into the wild for the time being, Majid Kharrazian-Moqaddam, director of the wildlife conservation and management at the DOE, has said.

Species reintroduction is the deliberate release of a species into the wild, from captivity or other areas where the organism is capable of survival. The goal of species reintroduction is to establish a healthy, genetically diverse, self-sustaining population to an area where it has been extirpated, or to augment an existing population.



Species that may be eligible for reintroduction are typically threatened or endangered in the wild. Because reintroduction may involve returning native species to localities where they had been extirpated, some prefer the term “reestablishment”.

Disappeared for 80 years, Persian lion once prowled from the Middle East to India, while currently only a fraction of these magnificent animals survive in the wild, which range is restricted to the Gir National Park and environs in the Indian state of Gujarat.

A male Persian lion, born 6 years ago, was sent to Tehran Zoological Garden from Britain’s Bristol Zoo on May 1, under a population management program aiming at endangered species reproduction by the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA).

Iran will soon host a female lion of the same subspecies from Ireland to accompany the recently returned male lion through the conservation program.

And now speculation are running rampant, as some are starting to predict that the animal will be reintroduced into the Iran’s wild once again after long decades of extinction

On the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List, Asiatic lion is listed under its former scientific name Panthera leo persica as Endangered because of its small population size and area of occupancy.

Conflicts with humans, wildfires, poaching, habitat loss, canine distemper virus, decreases in population sizes of native ungulates were among the threats pushed the lions toward extinction in Iran, while lack of protection measures and plans is not deniable either.

“DOE welcomes Asiatic lion’s return to the country after decades of disappearance, however, we have only permitted the return of the animal to the zoo and will monitor its condition and have no plans for its reintroduction for the moment,” IRNA news agency quoted Kharrazian-Moqaddam as saying on Wednesday.

Currently the only purpose of the return of the animal is keeping it at the zoo, he highlighted.

DOE’s priority is to protect the species which are already existing in the country [and not reintroduction of the extinct ones], he stated.

The DOE official went on to say that in order to reintroduce a species into the wild it is essential to restore its former habitats meaning minimizing human conflicts, increasing prey population, and in general omitting current threats to the animals.

Maybe in the future we decide to plan a reintroduction scheme for Asiatic lion in the country, however, making the necessary arrangement may take years, he concluded.

Historical records in Iran indicate that the Asiatic lion 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.

## WORDS IN THE NEWS

### The Moon Landing 30 Years On

(July 22, 1999)  
This week marked the thirtieth anniversary of Apollo 11’s moon landing. President John F Kennedy and astronaut Buzz Aldrin commented on the issue.

I believe **this nation** should **commit** itself to achieving the goal **before this decade is out**, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth. No single space project in this period will be more impressive to **mankind**, or more important for the long-range exploration of space and none **will** be so difficult or expensive to accomplish.

We **will venture** further outward in space. There will be permanent colonies on Mars. It’s a question of whether we have **the will** today to take the tools and the opportunities - as I see it - to first put large numbers of people into space, because by so doing we will increase the awareness, the enthusiasm, the support and the rocket systems that are needed to then economically send explorers back to the moon and on to Mars.

■ **Words**  
**this nation:** the whole country together with its social and political structures  
**to commit:** to definitely decide to do something  
**before this decade is out:** before this decade (the 1960s) ends  
**mankind:** collective reference to all the people in the world  
**will:** modal verb used to express future certainty  
**venture:** verb meaning to go somewhere in spite of danger  
**the will:** noun meaning the determination to do something  
(Source: BBC)



# World Migratory Bird Day: habitat destruction posing threats to the species

**ENVIRONMENT** **TEHRAN** — Unsustainable development leading to habitat destruction is one of the major threats to migratory birds, Masoud Hosseini, an official with Iran’s Department of Environment has said.

He made the remarks on the occasion of the World Migratory Bird Day. The day is observed annually on May 11. World Migratory Bird Day 2019 is being marked under the theme “Protect Birds: Be the Solution to Plastic Pollution”.

Water birds [also known as waterbird or aquatic bird, a term used to refer to birds that live on or around water] normally migrate from one habitat to another to find stable food supplies and breed, Hosseini said, adding that the animals might fly for hundreds of kilometers to find the suitable habitat.

Bird migration is the regular seasonal movement, often north and south along a flyway, between breeding and wintering grounds. Many species of bird migrate. Migration carries high costs in predation and mortality, including from hunting by humans, and is driven primarily by availability of food.

Unfortunately, unsustainable development in the country has resulted in habitat fragmentation posing a serious threat to the migratory birds, he warned.

Anthropogenic disturbance such as agricultural expansion has resulted in dramatic global habitat loss and fragmentation.

Migratory birds wing their ways to their habitats and see that the area is either dried out, turned into a farming land, or an oil facility, he regretted.

Moreover, poaching, overgrazing, and long-standing drought spells have also impacted habitat destruction, ISNA news agency quoted him as saying on Friday.



## Human activities can speed up climate change which would negatively impact migratory birds and their habitats and it ultimately results in their total extinction.

Human activities can speed up climate change which would negatively impact migratory birds and their habitats and it ultimately results in their total extinction, he lamented.

Hosseini went on to say that Dalmatian pelican, Siberian crane, lesser white-fronted goose, and white-headed duck are among the endangered migratory birds which migrate to Iran.

■ **World Migratory Bird Day**  
World Migratory Bird Day is celebrated

each year to highlight the need for the conservation of migratory birds and their habitats.

According to the UN Environment website on World Migratory Bird Day, celebrated on 11 May, two UN wildlife treaties and conservationists around the world are calling for urgent action to stop plastic pollution by highlighting its negative effects on seabirds and other migratory birds.

Plastic pollution presents a three-fold

## Post-flood repair to finish by end of spring: interior minister

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — Repair to the flood-hit houses will be finished by the end of the spring, Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli said on Thursday.

Rahmani Fazli made the remarks over a session held at the ministry focusing on post-flood reconstruction and repair in flood-stricken regions of the country, Mehr news agency reported.

“Construction materials are being purchased and we hope to be able to finish the repairs to the flood-hit houses within the aforesaid period,” he highlighted.

In addition to the government other organizations such as Basij [affiliated to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps], Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation, as well as Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam are collaborating in reconstruction of the houses, he added.

The minister went on to say that home appliances are also being distributed among the flood victims.



Moreover, he said, houses which are totally destroyed will be reconstructed by the end of the current year

(March 19, 2020).


Deputy Interior Minister Mahdi Jamali Nejad, for his part explained that Budget and Planning Organization has allocated some 70 trillion rials (nearly \$1.7 billion) to reconstruction of the flood-stricken areas.

Ismail Najjar, head of National Disaster Management Organization, also said that more than 169,000 housing units in 21 provinces are damaged by the floods which must be either repaired, rebuilt, or retrofitted.

Flood victims will be also provided with allowances to pay for their rents while their house are being reconstructed, Najjar concluded.

Torrential rain started on March 19 led to flood in at least 25 out of 31 provinces of Iran and caused extensive damages to the houses, schools, urban and rural infrastructure, crops and livestock. Provinces of Lorestan, Golestan, and Khuzestan are hit the hardest with the flooding.

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# U.S. crafting surrender document not a peace plan: Palestine FM

➡ “Some ask us, ‘what if they surprise you’; we tell them we would have been more hopeful had they not been deaf to our appeals, blind to Israeli violations and mute, at best, on the fundamentals of peace, when not actively undermining them,” he added.

Palestinian officials have ruled out a role for the U.S. in peace talks after the Trump administration unilaterally recognized Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, upending long-established understandings that underpin negotiations to end the conflict and establish a Palestinian state side-by-side with Israel.

“When the U.S., prior to announcing its plan, recognizes Jerusalem as the so-called ‘capital of Israel’ and claims they are entitled to take such a sovereign decision that is in blatant violation of international law and UN Security Council resolutions and pretend it has no implications on peace, it is not possible to have faith in such efforts,” Maliki said.

### ■ ‘Surprising and unfair’

Greenblatt said it was “surprising and unfair” that Indonesia, Kuwait and South Africa organized the council meeting and



condemned Israel’s behavior when it “was not even invited to speak at this session”.

He added that it was “inspiring” to see Israel celebrate the 71st anniversary of its independence on Thursday, calling it “a small brave country” that grew to a “thriving, diverse economically vibrant democracy,”

the only one in the Middle East.

He called the council’s “obsessive” focus on Israeli settlements a “farce”, saying settlements aren’t keeping Israel and the Palestinians from negotiating peace, and said the UNSC should instead condemn Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad for recently firing

hundreds of rockets into Israel from Gaza.

Speaking from the UN headquarters in New York, Al Jazeera’s diplomatic correspondent James Bays said that the U.S. envoy to the Middle East remained tightlipped about the forthcoming peace plan.

“As he left the meeting, Greenblatt was taking no questions from reporters,” he said. “He would give no more detail about the timing of the release of the peace plan other than to say it would come soon.”

Jared Kushner, U.S. President Donald Trump’s son-in-law and special adviser, has said the peace plan he has led will be released sometime in June after the conclusion of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

Last week, Kushner revealed new contours of the upcoming U.S. peace plan, indicating that it will pull back from long-standing mentions of a two-state solution with the Palestinians and accept Jerusalem as Israel’s capital.

Greenblatt told the UNSC “the vision for peace that we will soon put forward will be realistic and implementable” and “lay out the core issues of the conflict in enough detail that everyone will be able to imagine what peace could look like”.

## Kim orders stronger strike power after long-range missile tests

**TEHRAN** — North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has ordered the military to boost its strike capability a day after he directed a successful long-range strike drill amid stalled nuclear negotiations with the United States.

Kim “stressed the need to further increase the capability of the defense units in the forefront area and on the western front to carry out combat tasks and keep full combat posture to cope with any emergency,” the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported Friday.

He noted “genuine peace and security of the country are guaranteed only by the strong physical force capable of defending its sovereignty,” it said, adding Kim “set forth important tasks for further increasing the strike ability.”

### ■ Kim observed long-range missile test

Kim’s call for “full combat posture” came a day after he observed the test fire of two long-range ballistic weapons that were initially presumed to be short range missiles.

South Korea’s military said Pyongyang test-fired two short-range missiles from the northwestern city of Kusong on Thursday.

KCNA said on Friday Kim himself ordered and oversaw the “long-range strike drills,” which were designed to test

the military’s “rapid reaction” ability.

The North Korean leader reportedly expressed satisfaction with the drill and stressed “the need to further increase the capability” of the country’s armed forces on its western front.

The Pentagon confirmed the missile launches, according to CNN.

Thursday’s firing came less than a week after Pyongyang tested several new weapons systems, the first confirmed launches of their kind since November 2017.

The North put a halt on its missiles and nuclear test launches, shortly before a diplomatic thaw began between Pyongyang and Seoul and led to the first ever summit between Kim and U.S. President Donald Trump in Singapore last June.

The halt was among many other steps that Pyongyang has taken to move forward in denuclearization negotiations with the U.S., but the talks – currently suspended – have made little progress, mainly because Washington refuses to lift its harsh sanctions on North Korea.

In February, Trump and Kim met for a second time at a summit in Vietnam’s capital, Hanoi, but the meeting broke up without an agreement or even a joint statement as the



two sides failed to reach an agreement.

Trump walked away from the summit, claiming that Kim had insisted on the removal of all sanctions on North Korea. Pyongyang rejected that account, stressing that it had only asked for a partial lifting of the bans.

Ahead of the Hanoi summit, Trump had said he was “not in a rush” and that “as long as there’s no testing, we’re happy.”

## Nigerian militia frees nearly 900 children used in war on Boko Haram: UNICEF

**TEHRAN**— A regional militia allied with Nigerian government forces freed on Friday almost 900 children it had used in the war against Islamist Boko Haram insurgents, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) said.

The move brought the total number of children freed to more than 1,700, a UNICEF statement said. Non-state armed groups embroiled in the decade-long conflict against Boko Haram recruited more than 3,500 children between 2013 and 2017 in Nigeria’s northeast, according to UNICEF.

“(This) is a step in the right direction for the protection of children’s rights and must be recognized and encouraged,” UNICEF Nigeria chief Mohamed Fall said in the statement, referring to Friday’s release by

the militia group, which works closely with the military to fight Boko Haram.

“Children of northeast Nigeria have borne the brunt of this conflict. They have been used by armed groups in combatant and non-combatant roles and witnessed death, killing and violence.”

The militia group had committed in September 2017 to ending their use of children in the conflict. Last October, 833 were released by the group.

According to Reuters, it is not clear how many children in total have been drawn into Nigerian armed groups, including Boko Haram, or how they have been recruited. Videos seen by Reuters show child soldiers rescued from Boko Haram demonstrating to Nigerian troops how they were trained to fight and shoot rifles.

## Relentless Taliban violence casts a pall over ‘slow’ Afghan talks

**TEHRAN** — Talks with the Taliban on ending Afghanistan’s war are making steady but slow progress, the chief U.S. envoy involved in the negotiations said on Friday while signaling growing frustration with relentless militant violence, Reuters reported.

A sixth round of talks ended on Thursday in Qatar with “some progress” on a draft agreement on the withdrawal of foreign troops, a Taliban official said. The United States is seeking a Taliban guarantee they won’t let militants use Afghanistan to stage attacks.

The talks, the most sustained effort to end the 18-year conflict - America’s longest war - began last year.

The sixth round got going on April 30 in Qatar’s capital, Doha, but wound up early

in response to a Taliban attack on an aid group in the capital, Kabul, on Wednesday, a senior official with knowledge of the talks said.

The chief U.S. envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad, did not say if the talks had ended early, in comments he posted on Twitter, but expressed frustration with Taliban violence that has shown no sign of easing.

“We made steady but slow progress on aspects of the framework for ending the Afghan war. We are getting into the ‘nitty gritty.’ The devil is always in the details,” Khalilzad said.

“However, the current pace of talks isn’t sufficient when so much conflict rages and innocent people die. We need more and faster progress. Our proposal for all sides to reduce violence also remains on the table.”

## U.S., EU complicit in ‘whitewash’ of Israel’s war crimes against Palestinians: NGO

**TEHRAN**— The United States and the European Union are complicit in the “whitewash” of the Israeli regime’s “war crimes” against the Palestinian people, an international NGO says.

ActionAid International, whose declared primary aim is to work against poverty and injustice worldwide, made the statement less than a week after Israeli airstrikes killed more than two dozen Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip.

“Both the U.S. and EU have publicly supported Israel’s right to ‘defend itself’ this week, demonstrating dangerous bias and deliberate obfuscation in their positions on the war,” the statement stressed.

As Israel celebrates the 71th anniversary of its creation on Thursday, the latest figures show Israeli warplanes killed 27 Palestinians in two days and injured 154 more, including three women, two of them pregnant, and two babies, earlier this week.

ActionAid International hit out at Israel for “deliberately”



targeting reporters, medics, women, children and infants, calling it a war crime.

The Israeli airstrikes, which commenced on Friday and

continued into Sunday, left 130 houses completely destroyed and 700 more partially damaged, the NGO said.

It said 780 Palestinians are now displaced as a result of the recent escalation of targeted attacks against civilians, 44% of whom are children.

The airstrikes also either destroyed or damaged a mosque, four medical facilities, five media houses and ten civil institutions in the Gaza Strip, whose “catastrophic living conditions ... are unbearable.”

according to press TV, the Gaza Strip has been under an Israeli siege since June 2007, causing a decline in living standards as well as unprecedented unemployment and poverty.

Israel has also launched several wars on the Palestinian coastal strip, the last of which began in early July 2014. The military aggression, which ended on August 26, 2014, killed nearly 2,200 Palestinians. Over 11,100 others were also wounded in the war.

## Tripoli urges Trump to stop Haftar’s backers meddling in Libya

**TEHRAN**— Libya’s internationally recognized government denounced its foe Khalifa Haftar as an “aspiring military dictator” on Friday and urged U.S. President Donald Trump to stop foreign support for his month-long offensive on the capital Tripoli.

Fayez Serraj, prime minister of the beleaguered Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA), said Haftar’s U.S.-allied backers were turning Libya into a proxy battleground, risking a war with global implications and further mass migration to

Europe, Reuters Reported.

Haftar’s Libyan National Army (LNA), which is allied to a rival administration in eastern Libya, mounted an offensive on Tripoli in early April, saying the GNA was controlled by what it called terrorists, but has failed to breach the city’s defenses.

Writing in the Wall Street Journal, Serraj said hundreds of Libyans had been killed, more than 40,000 had been forced to leave their homes, and “hundreds of thousands” could flee for Europe.

“The GNA is fighting an aspiring military dictator — Khalifa Haftar — whose rival government is taking money and arms from foreign actors pursuing narrow self-interest at Libya’s expense,” Serraj wrote.

“To prevent a bloody civil war with global implications, Libya needs the U.S. to help stop other countries from meddling in our affairs,” Serraj said.

“I remain hopeful that President Trump will succeed where previous presidents have failed...Libyans won’t accept another Gadhafi-

style military dictatorship.”

Serraj made his appeal a day after the GNA asked 40 foreign firms including France’s Total TOTF.PA to renew their licenses or have their operations suspended, a move that placed economic pressure on Europe to stop Haftar’s offensive.

While Serraj’s Tripoli forces have the backing of the United Nations, Haftar has the support of U.S. allies Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, which have helped train his soldiers.

## Syrian troops liberate key town, nearby villages in Idlib

➡ Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has recently called for the removal of any “obstacles” blocking the full implementation of the deal. He also stressed his government’s determination to eliminate terrorist groups holed up in Idlib.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said last month that the remnants of Daesh and al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra were reluctant to abide by the ceasefire agreement in Idlib, Press TV reported.

On Tuesday, Russia said its surface-to-air missile systems had managed to foil an attack by Takfiri militants against the Hmeimim airbase in Syria’s coastal province of Latakia.

Russia has been helping Syrian forces in the ongoing battles across the Arab country.

Syria has been gripped by foreign-backed militancy since March 2011. The Syrian government says the Israeli regime and its Western and regional allies are aiding Takfiri terrorist groups that are wreaking havoc in the country.

### ■ U.S.-backed militants kill six civilians in Dayr al-Zawr

Kurdish-led militants from the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), backed by helicopters from the U.S.-led coalition, have reportedly stormed a town in Syria’s eastern province of Dayr al-Zawr, killing and injuring a number of locals.

Local sources, requesting not to be named, told Syria’s official news agency SANA that the U.S.-sponsored militants laid siege to the al-Katef neighborhood of al-Shuhayl town for more than two hours on Thursday, before raiding the area and firing at people indiscriminately.

The sources added that six civilians lost their lives and four others sustained injuries as a result. SDF militants rounded up a number of local residents as well.

Back in late April, hundreds of people took to the streets in the northeastern Syrian towns of al-Busayrah, Masheikh, al-Tayyana as well as the villages of Tal al-Dhaman, al-Namliyah and Tayyeb Al Faal to protest the presence of SDF militants, rising cases of abduction and assassination in their areas and plunder of Syria’s oil wealth by the U.S.-sponsored forces.

The protesters closed the main roads to their areas, burning tires and demanding the expulsion of SDF militants from their hometowns.

## Attempts to disarm Palestinian resistance will spark war this summer: Islamic Jihad

**TEHRAN** — Secretary General of the Islamic Jihad resistance movement Ziad al-Nakhala has said that attempts to disarm Palestinian resistance factions will spark a war in the coming summer.

“We, the resistance, will face any war against us with complete readiness,” said al-Nakhala, speaking to the Lebanese al-Mayadeen television channel.

“What happened in Gaza was a maneuver with live fire in preparation for the upcoming war added,” added al-Nakhala, referring to last week’s confrontation between Israel and the Palestinian resistance in the Gaza strip.

The Gaza escalation erupted last Friday following the deaths of four Palestinians in an Israeli air raid on the coastal sliver of land and the regime’s live fire targeting Gaza protesters.

Israeli warplanes struck some 350 sites in Gaza, claiming the lives of 27 Palestinian people.

In response, the Palestinians fired some 700 rockets at the occupied lands between Saturday morning and early Monday morning, killing four Israelis and injuring 200 others.

Israel’s “Iron Dome” missile system only intercepted 240 of the 690 projectiles fired from Gaza, raising serious questions about the effectiveness of the missile system.

According to press TV, after three days of deadly Israeli airstrikes and retaliatory Palestinian rocket attacks, the two sides reached a ceasefire agreement on Monday with the help of Egyptian and Qatari mediators.

## Amnesty slams French weapons sales to Saudi, says Paris no longer trusted

**TEHRAN** — Amnesty International has condemned France’s weapons sales to Saudi Arabia despite the kingdom’s deadly war on Yemen, saying Paris cannot be trusted on claims that the weapons are not being used against civilians.

On Thursday, French human rights protesters sought to block the loading of weapons onto a Saudi vessel that was due to dock in northern France later in the day.

Weeks ago investigative website Disclose had published leaked documents that showed Saudi Arabia was using French weapons including tanks and laser-guided missile systems, against civilians in Yemen’s war, Press TV reported.

Faced with Growing criticism, French President Emmanuel Macron admitted that the weapons were indeed being used in the war but only within Saudi Arabia’s border.

“I would like to say here that what we reiterated was the guarantee for them (the arms) not be used against civilian populations,” he said.

Aymeric Elluin, Amnesty’s advocacy officer for weapons and international justice, said Macron’s words were no longer trustworthy because France was constantly changing its discourse.

“We were told the arms were only used for defensive purposes, and all of a sudden we’re being told ‘we never said there weren’t any French weapons being used in Yemen, we said we didn’t have proof that French weapons were used to kill civilians,’” she said. “So, France’s word is a vast gibberish, we cannot trust what they say.”

“The world now knows that the weapons are used in violation of humanitarian law with civilian targets that are deliberately targeted,” she added.

One of the main arms suppliers of Saudi Arabia, Paris has faced increasing pressure to review its sales to the oil rich kingdom.

French Armed Forces Minister Florence Parly said Wednesday that the vessel would load French arms ordered years ago.

The website Disclose said this week that the shipment included as many as eight howitzer Caesar cannons, manufactured by Nexter.

“So today, when faced with information showing that France is delivering Caesar cannons, one can only contest this because it would be illegal, because it means France knows its weapons could be used to commit atrocities,” Elluin said.



## Neymar banned for three match for lashing out at fan

Paris Saint-Germain striker Neymar was banned for three matches Friday with a further two-match ban suspended for lashing out at a fan following the club's shock defeat in the French Cup final.

Announcing the ban, the French football federation said the sanction would go into effect from May 13 allowing the Brazilian superstar to appear for the French champions against Angers in Ligue 1 on Saturday.

But he will miss the last two games of the domestic season and the French Champions Trophy pitting PSG against their cup final conquerors winners Rennes in Shenzhen, China in August.

Neymar swung at an abusive opposing fan while climbing the steps to receive his French Cup final losers medal following the shock defeat to Rennes on penalties last month.

Meanwhile, Neymar has appealed against a three-match Champions League ban imposed by European football's governing body UEFA.

He was punished for an angry outburst at match officials of PSG's last-16 tie against Manchester United in March.

PSG lost following a last-minute penalty award to the Premier League side after a VAR review of a disputed handball appeal.

Neymar did not play in the match through injury but took to social media to call the penalty award a "scandal" and accuse the VAR referees of incompetence.

(Source: AFP)

## Two athletes positive for steroids in London 2012 retests - IOC

Two athletes who competed in the London 2012 Olympics tested positive for anabolic steroids following retests of their seven-year-old samples, the International Olympic Committee said on Friday.

Armenian weightlifter Meline Daluzyan, who competed in the women's 69kg event, tested positive for steroid turinabol while Latvian long jumper Ineta Radevica, who finished fourth, found to have used another steroid, oxandrolone.

Both athletes, who have retired, face doping bans from their respective federations for the use of prohibited substances.

The IOC stores and regularly re-tests samples from past Games with methods that did not exist at the time or looking for substances that were not known, as part of what it says are efforts to protect clean athletes and the integrity of the competition.

Samples since the 2004 Athens Olympic Games have been stored and reanalyzed systematically.

More than 110 adverse findings have been found in Olympics since 2004 through re-testing of samples, including dozens from the London Games.

(Source: Eurosport)

## Swiss attorney general faces disciplinary steps over soccer probe

The watchdog overseeing Swiss federal prosecutors has requested an independent disciplinary investigation into Attorney General Michael Lauber over private meetings with the head of the global soccer body FIFA, the broadcaster SRF reported on Friday.

Lauber's office has been investigating several cases of suspected corruption involving FIFA, based in Zurich, dating back to 2014 and the presidency of Sepp Blatter. The criminal probe treats FIFA as a victim rather than a suspect.

Lauber has put on record two meetings with current FIFA president Gianni Infantino, saying they were intended to help coordinate his investigation.

But media reports of a third meeting prompted a preliminary investigation by the Supervisory Authority for the Office of the Attorney General, which said Lauber had denied having any other such meetings while in office.

The Authority declined comment ahead of a statement due later on Friday. Lauber, who later said he did not recall the third meeting but that it must have occurred, scheduled a news conference for 1330 GMT.

The Swiss parliament is due to decide next month whether to re-appoint Lauber to his position.

(Source: Reuters)

## Barca's Suarez sidelined for up to six weeks after knee injury

Barcelona striker Luis Suarez is set to be sidelined for four to six weeks after undergoing arthroscopic knee surgery to treat a medial meniscus injury, the club said on Friday.

The surgery brings Suarez's season to a premature end and the Uruguayan will miss their final two La Liga games and the Copa del Rey final against Valencia later this month.

"Luis Suarez has a medial meniscus injury in his right knee and has been operated on by Dr (Ramon) Cugat, undergoing arthroscopic surgery under the supervision of the club's medical staff," a club statement here read.

"The Uruguayan will be out for around four to six weeks. The FC Barcelona striker will miss the three remaining fixtures this season, the league games against Getafe and Eibar and the Copa del Rey final against Valencia on 25 May in Seville."

It remains to be seen if he will be fit for Uruguay's Copa America campaign beginning with a June 16 match against Ecuador.

Suarez has scored 25 goals in 49 matches in all competitions this season, helping Barca wrap up their 26th La Liga title last month.

But his poor form in the Champions League, where he scored only one goal in 10 appearances, cost Barca who were knocked out of by his former club Liverpool, who overcame a 3-0 semi-final first-leg deficit to progress 4-3 on aggregate on Tuesday.

(Source: Mirror)

# Don't mention Brexit! England rule Europe with historic sweep



to also come back from a 3-0 aggregate deficit as Ajax led 2-0 on the night in Amsterdam before Lucas Moura's second half hat-trick sent Spurs into their first Champions League final.

"We enjoyed a lot watching the tie against Barcelona. They are heroes too and, of course, it is going to be an amazing final between two English teams that for sure we are going to enjoy," said Spurs boss Mauricio Pochettino.

Despite record broadcast deals bringing in billions from around the globe, English clubs have been out-thought and out-played at

Champions League level over the past decade.

However, the Premier League now have the world's best managers to go with the best players.

Jürgen Klopp is in his fourth season at Liverpool and Pochettino near the end of season five at Spurs.

### Top level

"Here the level is very high. To get to the final in the League Cup we beat Liverpool and Tottenham who are in the Champions League final, and in the final we played against the best team in Europe in my opinion, Man

## Bale "more likely to go to China than Premier League"



Gareth Bale's Real Madrid future remains up in the air after he was omitted from Zinedine Zidane's squad for the match against Villarreal last weekend with the forward wishing to remain at the Bernabéu and the club seemingly intent on cashing in on the Wales forward and removing his annual salary of 15 million euros from the wage bill.

That is one of the main sticking points for potential suitors for the 29-year-old: his agent, Jonathan Barnett, is looking for a contract that would hand his client a pay rise to closer to 20 million euros, a sum that the vast majority of clubs in Europe would hesitate to offer to a player who will be 30 by the start of the 2019-20 season.

A return to Tottenham Hotspur has often been mentioned - with Real Madrid keen on bringing Christian Eriksen to the Bernabéu a deal involving Bale may suit both parties - but Tim Sherwood, who served the Premier League club as player and manager, thinks that the financial element makes that unlikely.

"I think it's more likely that Gareth Bale will move to China than return to the Premier League," Sherwood said during

an interview with Bwin. "If he is looking to keep the same salary and lifestyle he has at Real Madrid, I think he'll have to go to China. I can see that Bale is having a tough time of it at Madrid and that Zidane has given him the green light to leave, but I don't think he wants to go and he has a big-money contract.

I can't see him going back to Spurs because I don't think it would work financially. It would be romantic, but it would involve a huge fee and a massive salary, more than even Alexis Sánchez gets at Manchester United."

Real Madrid paid a then-world record fee of 101 million euros for Bale in 2013 and since the Welshman's arrival the club has won a Liga, a Copa del Rey and four Champions League titles with the Welshman in the side.

However, injuries have plagued his career in the Spanish capital and Madrid have been actively pursuing a policy of signing emerging talent rather than throwing money at another set of Galáticos. Although that may change this summer, it appears that Zidane has decided Bale has no place in his new-look Madrid for next season.

(Source: AS)

## Liverpool and Spurs fans hit out at rocketing Champions League final costs



Liverpool and Tottenham supporters have called for an end to "cashing in on fan loyalty" amid rocketing prices for flights and hotel rooms for the Champions League final.

Spurs and Liverpool reached the June 1 showpiece thanks to dramatic comeback wins, but supporters making plans to attend the match in Madrid face huge costs.

The price of some flights to the Spanish capital in the days around the match has risen to more than £1,500, while rates for hotel rooms in the city and surrounding towns have soared to over £1,000 a night.

The two clubs have been allocated 16,613 tickets for the match at Atletico Madrid's Wanda Metropolitano stadium, with the cheapest of those costing around £60 and the most expensive £513.

Now Liverpool fans' group Spirit of Shankly and the Tottenham Hotspur Supporters' Trust have issued a joint statement calling for a crackdown on exploitation of supporters and hitting out at UEFA's "measly" allocations.

"This has been a sensational Champions League campaign for Tottenham Hotspur and Liverpool, with fans of both clubs now looking forward to the final in Madrid on June 1," the statement said.

"But supporters' joy has been tempered

City," said Sarri.

"At the moment the Premier League is the best championship in Europe and as a consequence, in the world."

Chelsea needed a penalty shoot-out to beat Eintracht Frankfurt in their Europa League semi-final, while a Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang hat-trick took the Gunners to a 4-2 win over Valencia for a 7-3 aggregate.

Valencia's defeat ended Spanish participation in both competitions. La Liga sides had won nine of the past 10 combined Champions League and Europa League titles.

"La Liga had devoured the European elite," wrote Madrid sports daily Marca. "However the Premier League has rebelled and the final at the Metropolitano will speak English. The same will be the case in Baku where Chelsea and Arsenal will fight for the Europa League."

Barcelona, Juventus and Bayern Munich have dominated at home in recent years, but no club has retained the Premier League title since 2009.

The constant grind of England's top six vying every season for just four Champions League places allows nobody to rest on their laurels, on the pitch or off it in the recruitment process.

"The English have the most money and are now spending it sensibly," said German newspaper Zeit Online.

"Ten years ago, it started to go downhill, but now, at the very moment they want to leave the EU, they are back."

(Source: AFP)

## David Ferrer's 20-year career comes to an end with loss in Madrid

David Ferrer's career came to an end with a 6-4, 6-1 loss to Alexander Zverev in the second round at the Madrid Open on Wednesday.

The 37-year-old Spaniard had announced earlier that this would be his last tournament because he didn't feel he was fit enough to keep competing at a high level on tour.

Ferrer finished his 20-year career with 27 singles titles, fifth-best among active players behind the top four of Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal, Novak Djokovic and Andy Murray. Ferrer had 733 wins in 1,111 matches, fourth-best among active players.

Visibly overcome by his emotions, Ferrer had a difficult time serving while facing match point, backing off a few times and asking for a towel to wipe his face.

After losing he received a standing ovation from the crowd at the packed "Magic Box" center court, then went back to leave his headband on the ground near the net.

Ferrer spoke for several minutes in a ceremony to honor him, thanking everyone who helped his career.



"I'll never forget this day," he said, with his wife and son by his side. "I've been very lucky. I've always wanted to end my career like this. I couldn't keep playing at the level that

I wanted, but I'm very happy and very proud of my career."

Messages from other players were shown on the large screens during the ceremony, with most praising Ferrer's toughness and "never-give-up attitude" on the court.

"All the players are very sad he is retiring," said Zverev, who also looked moved. "You always left everything on the court, in every single match. It's a privilege for me to be here playing against you in your last match."

Ranked 144th entering the Madrid tournament, Ferrer got off to a good start against Zverev, opening a 4-1 lead in the first set. But the defending Madrid Open champion rallied to win the next five games to close out the set and eventually the match.

Ferrer lost to Nadal at the 2013 French Open final, the only time he made it to a Grand Slam title match. Ferrer was No. 3 in the world that year, his highest ever ranking. He was among the top 10 for seven seasons. He also won three Davis Cup titles with Spain.

(Source: SI.com)



# Pressure on Gucci to find his scoring touch in A-League finals

Misfiring Sydney FC striker Reza Ghoochannejhad has been backed to find the scoring touch that seems to have eluded him in the past 12 months as the team's attention switches to Sunday's A-League semi-final.

Ghoochannejhad was one of several players who missed clear-cut chances in Tuesday night's 1-0 defeat to Ulsan Hyundai in South Korea, which has ended their chances of progressing to the AFC Champions League's knockout phase.

It continues a lean period in front of goal for the 31-year-old former Iranian international, who has scored just once in 15 matches since joining the Sky Blues on loan in January.

Those struggles stretch back to his parent club in Cyprus, APOEL, where 'Gucci' hit the back of the net only twice in 15 appearances in all competitions across the first part of this season - weeks after he failed to play for Iran at the World Cup in Russia.

Given his pedigree, much more was expected from Ghoochannejhad, a figure who Sydney FC were initially eyeing off as a marquee player this season. His link-up play remains strong but scoring goals is what strikers are paid to do, and with another start quite likely for Sunday's sudden-death clash with Melbourne Victory, the team needs him to quickly rediscover his killer instinct.

"You wouldn't know it, if he is down on confidence," midfielder Brandon O'Neill said. "He's a very confident guy, always joking and laughing and he works really hard.

"He's been around the world playing football, he's been to a World Cup, he's captained his country - he knows more than anyone with the experience he has.

"It's one of those things, if a few goals come the floodgates probably will open like you've seen with different strikers this year. That's all he needs. He just needs to keep doing what he's doing and we'll support him as much as we can along the way."

For the fourth time in five continental matches, the Sky Blues were probably the better side against Ulsan but were



duly punished for failing to capitalize on their opportunities in front of goal. It's a tendency they can't afford to take into Sunday's clash against an Ola Toivonen-led Melbourne Victory.

Players will mull over what might have been from the luxury of business class as they fly back to Sydney. The travelling squad will link up with skipper Alex Brosque, veteran stopper Alex Wilkinson, marquee Siem de Jong and right-back Rhyan Grant, who were left at home to focus on domestic matters and recuperate from minor injury issues.

O'Neill is confident the team's cutting edge will return

as they renew hostilities with Kevin Muscat's side, who knocked them out of last year's finals series at the same stage before going on to win the A-League grand final.

"There's no real excuses for us, even with the travel - we've got a lot of days now to recover, take it easy and prepare for what's going to be a massive game with a team we know really well," he said. "We always seem to have a classic against them. It's one of those games you really, really, really look forward to."

(Source: Sydney Morning Herald)

## Iran's women's futsal team come fourth at Victory Day Women Cup

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iran's women's futsal team

finished in fourth place at the Victory Day Women Cup 2019 held in Moscow, Russia.

The Iranian team, who participated in the four-team tournament without head coach, lost to Portugal, Russia and Spain.

The two-time Asia champions kicked off the campaign with a 7-1 loss to Portugal.

The Persian lost to Russia 2-0 in their second match and suffered their third successive loss against Spain (3-1).

Portugal won the title with nine points, followed by Spain (six points) and Russia (three points).

Iran rooted to the foot of the table with-



out a single point.

Iran goalkeeper Zahra Lotfabadi was selected as the best tournament's goalkeeper.

## Azad University victorious at Asian University 3x3 Basketball Championship

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Azad University of Iran earned

four successive wins at the 5th Asian University 3x3 Basketball Championship.

The Iranian team narrowly defeated China's representative 14-13 and then beat Mongolian university 19-12.

Azad University defeated a team from Chinese Taipei 8-5 and registered their fourth win against Hong Kong's basketball team, where the Iranian team beat them 19-13.

Azad University booked a place at the competition's semi-finals.

The competition is currently taking place in Kinmen, Chinese Taipei from 8-11 May. A



total of 20 elite university teams are in the fray.

The top two teams will win a ticket to the 2019 FISU University World Cup - 3x3 in Xiamen, in October-November.

## 5 Iranian Bundesliga heroes of yesteryear

As one of Asian football's traditional powerhouses, it should come as no surprise that Iran have had their fair share of exports in the Bundesliga.

Since Karim Bagheri, Khodadad Azizi and Ali Daei led the way in 1997, a total of 15 Iranians have plied their trade in the top flight of football, which is the third-highest Asian representation behind Japan and Korea Republic.

Considering his stature back home, Daei is arguably the most famous from his country to have featured in the Bundesliga but is he the most successful?

FOX Sports Asia looks back at the top five Iranians in the Bundesliga in terms of appearances made.

**■ 5) ALI KARIMI (BAYERN MUNICH, SCHALKE) – 34 games**

Kicking off the list is a man widely regarded as one of Asia's greatest-ever playmakers having won 127 caps in a glittering career that saw him named the continent's Footballer of the Year in 2004.

While he only spent two seasons at Bayern Munich, he achieved the Bundesliga and DFB-Pokal double in 2005/06 and was an important contributor under Felix Magath.

After spells in Qatar and Iran, Karimi would reunite with Magath at Schalke where he won a second DFB-Pokal as part of a formidable squad that boasted the likes of Raul, Klaas-Jan Huntelaar, and a young Julian Draxler and Joel Matip.

**■ 4) ALI DAEI (ARMINIA BIELEFELD, BAYERN MUNICH, HERTHA BERLIN) – 107 games**

Given his legendary status as the all-time top scorer in international football with 109 goals for Iran, it might come as a surprise that Ali Daei only ranks fourth on this list.

Nonetheless, the towering striker did achieve success



as a Bundesliga winner with Bayern Munich in 1998/99 and was also the first Asian to ever feature in the UEFA Champions League.

Apart from his time with Bayern, Daei also had spells with Arminia Bielefeld and Hertha Berlin and finished his five-year stint in Germany with a respectable 19-goal haul.

**■ 3) ASHKAN DEJAGAH (HERTHA BERLIN, WOLFSBURG) – 158 games**

The only one on this list that is still playing, Ashkan Dejagah's career is now winding down in Iran but he achieved plenty in his nine seasons in the Bundesliga.

Having grown up in Germany, the silky-skilled midfielder began his career at Hertha Berlin but it was at Wolfsburg where he became a Bundesliga champion alongside fellow Asian star Makoto Hasebe in 2008/09.

Dejagah would go on to make over 150 appearances for

Die Wolfe and was still starring for the Iran national team as recently as January's AFC Asian Cup 2019.

**■ 2) VAHID HASHEMIAN (HAMBURG, BOCHUM, BAYERN MUNICH, HANNOVER) – 208 games**

Vahid Hashemian's story is one of perseverance given he had a trying start to life in Germany, joining Hamburg in 1999 but making just 12 league appearances in his first two campaigns there.

But, midway through his second season, he made the decision to join Bochum and that is when things really took over as he scored 34 goals in 87 league games to help them not only gain promotion from the 2. Bundesliga in 2001/02 but finish as high as fifth two years after.

His fine displays would see him follow in the footsteps of Daei by earning a move to Bayern, where he would win both the Bundesliga and DFB-Pokal in his one season there before having further spells at Hannover and back at Bochum.

**■ 1) MEHDI MAHDAVIKIA (BOCHUM, HAMBURG, EINTRACHT FRANKFURT) – 255 games**

As the man who scored what proved to be an 83rd-minute winner against United States to hand Iran their first-ever FIFA World Cup win in 1998, Mehdi Mahdavi was always going to go down in Iranian footballing folklore.

Nonetheless, he would go on to achieve plenty in his career and is one of Iran's greatest exports to European football with a total of 255 Bundesliga appearances.

Having made a name for himself as a flying winger, Mahdavi was also able to fill a role at right-back and his association with Hamburg continues till today as a youth coach with the 2. Bundesliga outfit.

(Source: Fox Sports Asia)

## Iran learn fate at AFC U-19 Championship 2020 Qualifiers

The draw for the AFC U-19 Championship 2020 Qualifiers concluded at the AFC House in Kuala Lumpur on Thursday with the 46 teams discovering their opponents.

The teams were divided into two zones of WEST (West + South + Central) with 25 teams and EAST (East + ASEAN) with 21 teams.

**■ WEST**

Group A will see five-time champions Iraq face Pakistan, Kuwait, Palestine and Oman, while 2014 winners and 2018 semi-finalists Qatar have Sri Lanka, Turkmenistan and Yemen for company in Group B.

Quarter-finalists in 2018, Turkmenistan will make their presence felt in Group C alongside Maldives, Lebanon and 1994 champions Syria.

Four-time champions Islamic Republic of Iran missed the last edition in Indonesia and will be hoping to make amends in Group D when they host Nepal, Kyrgyz Republic and United Arab Emirates, who were the



champions in 2008.

Group E pits 2016 quarter-finalists Bahrain against Bhutan, Bangladesh and Jordan, while defending champions Saudi Arabia will entertain Afghanistan, India and Uzbekistan in Group F.

**■ EAST**

Cambodia, who missed the 2018 edition

on goal difference, last made the Finals in 1974 and the young Angkor Warriors have Northern Mariana Islands, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Thailand for company in Group G.

Chinese Taipei ended their campaign in the group stages in 2018 and will entertain Laos, Macau and Australia in Group H, while

Group I sees seven-time champions Myanmar take on Singapore, Guus Hiddink's China PR and 12-time champions Korea Republic.

Vietnam will be making their sixth appearance in the Finals and have Guam, Mongolia and 2016 champions Japan in Group J.

Three-time champions DPR Korea have never missed qualifying for the Finals since 2006 and will face Indonesia, Timor Leste and Hong Kong in Group K.

Top spot in the respective groups will earn direct qualification, while the four best second-placed teams will also advance to the 2020 Finals.

Should the yet to be determined host for the Finals finish either top of their group or among the best four second-placed teams, the next (5th) second-placed team in the ranking among all groups will qualify instead.

The Qualifiers will be played on November 2-10, 2019.

(Source: the-afc)

## 2018–19 Iran Professional League cup unveiled

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iran Football League Organization unveiled the cup and medals of the 18th edition of the Iran Professional League (IPL) on Friday.

With two weeks to spare, three teams have chance to win IPL title.

Persepolis sit top of the table with 57 points, three points ahead of Sepahan.

Esteghlal also are a favorite to win the title while the team have a little chance, with four points adrift of the leaders.

Persepolis will host Machine Sazi in Tehran's Azadi Stadium Saturday night, while Sepahan meet Padideh in Mashhad and Esteghlal face Sanat Naft in Abadan.

If Sepahan and Esteghlal fail to win their away matches, Persepolis will lift the trophy for the third time in a row with even a draw against Machine Sazi.

Iran Professional League is the highest division of professional football in Iran. The league was also known as the Persian Gulf Cup from 2006. It is the top-level football league in Iran since its foundation on Nov. 2, 2001.

Since 2013, the league comprises 16 teams. The winner and runner-up of the Persian Gulf Pro League and the Hazfi Cup champion are automatically qualified for the AFC Champions League group stage.



## Iran's Poomsae team to compete at Universiade Napoli 2019

**MNA** — Iran's Poomsae team will participate at the 30th Summer Universiade Napoli which will be held on 3-14 July 2019 in Naples, Italy.

The biennial multisport event will be in its 30th year and will celebrate 60 years since the first Games were held in Turin, Italy in 1959. The program will include 18 sports, 170 countries and approximately 8,000 participants.

The Summer Universiade is an international university sports and cultural event that is staged every two years in a different city.

These games draw many thousands of student-athletes together to compete, making it one of the largest multi-sport events in the world.

The Summer Universiade incorporates educational and cultural aspects, encouraging student-athletes from around the world to combine high sports performance with their intellectual pursuits. The twelve-day Summer Universiade competition program includes fifteen compulsory sports.

## Mehdi Taremi linked with Red Star Belgrade: report

Iranian international striker Mehdi Taremi has been linked with a move to Serbian club Red Star Belgrade.

Red Star general director Zvezdan Terzic has said the Serbian club is going to sign the 27-year-old player in the summer.

The former Persepolis forward has scored nine goals in 23 games for Qatari club Al-Gharafa in this season but it seems he is not satisfied with his condition in the club.

Taremi has played 40 matches for Iran national football team and scored 16 goals.

(Source: Telegraf.rs)

## Iran discover opponents at AFC U-16 Championship 2020 Qualifiers

The draw for the AFC U-16 Championship 2020 Qualifiers concluded at the AFC House in Kuala Lumpur yesterday with the 47 teams discovering their opponents.

The teams were divided into two zones of WEST (West, South and Central) with 25 teams, and EAST (East and ASEAN) with 22 teams.

In Group A, Jordan will play host to 2018 runners-up Tajikistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Kuwait, while a Central Asian derby between hosts Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan awaits in Group B, which also includes Bahrain and India.

Islamic Republic of Iran will welcome Afghanistan, Maldives and Palestine, who have yet to reach the Finals, in Group C.

Oman has not missed an appearance in the Finals for the past five editions and will look to continue that trend when they travel to Saudi Arabia, also playing against Syria and Pakistan in Group D.

Qatar, who were the hosts of the inaugural Finals in 1985, will welcome Yemen, Bangladesh and Bhutan in Group E, while Kyrgyz Republic will have home advantage against 2016 champions Iraq, Lebanon and the United Arab Emirates in Group F.

In the EAST Zone, 2018 quarter-finalists Indonesia will host two-time champions China PR, along with Brunei Darussalam, the Philippines and Northern Mariana Islands, three teams who have yet to reach the Finals, in Group G.

Vietnam, quarter-finalists in 2018, will host Group H, with Timor-Leste, Mongolia, Macau and Australia completing the cast.

Singapore's last appearance in the Finals was in 2004, and in their bid to end that drought, the Southeast Asian side will play host to two-time champions DPR Korea, Hong Kong and Guam.

Defending champions Japan will be seeking a record fourth title when the young Samurai Blue, Malaysia and Cambodia travel to host nation Laos in Group J.

Group K host Laos face opponents in the form of two-time champions Korea Republic, 1998 champions Thailand and Chinese Taipei, as they aim to return to the Finals for the first time since 2004.

Top spot in the respective groups will earn direct qualification, while the four best second-placed teams will also advance to the 2020 Finals.

Should the yet to be determined host for the Finals finish either top of their group or among the best four second-placed teams, the next (5th) second-placed team in the ranking among all groups will qualify instead.

(Source: the-afc)



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GUIDE TO  
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

A king's friend is like one riding a lion.  
The people envy him and wish to be in his  
place, but he himself is well aware of his  
dangerous position.

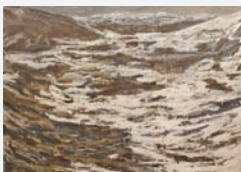
Imam Ali (AS)

## WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES

### Painting



■ Paintings by Hossein-Ali Zabehi are currently on display in an exhibition at Hoor Gallery. The exhibit will run until May 21 at the gallery located at 12 Naeimi Alley, North Mirza Shirazi St., off Motahhari Ave.



■ An exhibition of paintings by Behruz Majidi is underway at El Gallery. The exhibition will be running until May 20 at the gallery located at 1 Hamid Dead End, off Lesani Alley, Jebbeh St., off Mahdiah St. in the Elahieh neighborhood.



■ Vista Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of paintings by Maliheh Hassankhani. The exhibit named "Silence" runs until May 20 at the gallery located at No. 11, 12th Alley, Mir Emad St.



■ A collection of paintings by Samaneh Kaviani is on display in an exhibition at Shalman Gallery. The exhibit titled "Storm of Colors" will run until May 15 at the gallery that can be found at 27 Kavusi Alley, West Rudbar St., off Mirdamad Blvd.



■ Mansur Nosratnezhad is showcasing his latest paintings in an exhibition at Seyhun Gallery. The exhibit entitled "Volcano" runs until May 22 at the gallery located at No. 11, 4th St., Vozara Ave.



■ An exhibition of paintings by Esmail Rabiei is on display at Saleh Gallery. The exhibit named "Gargoor" will run until May 15 at the gallery located at 148 Karim Khan Ave.



■ Delgosha Gallery is showcasing paintings by Zahra Nuri in an exhibition named "The Beginning of the Landscape". The exhibit runs until May 21 at the gallery that can be found at 30 Mohajer Alley, Iranshahr St. off Karim Khan Ave.



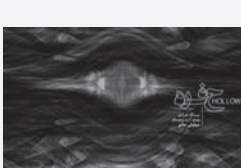
■ An exhibition of sculptures by Setareh Aminollahi is underway at CAMA – Contemporary and Modern Art Gallery. Entitled "Nest in Atemporality", the exhibit runs until May 14 at the gallery located at No. 44, 10th Golestan, Pasdaran St.



■ Sculptures by Seyyed Ali Seyyed Alikhani are on display in an exhibition at Iranshahr Gallery. The exhibit titled "Vaagah" will run until May 21 at the gallery located at 69 Sepand St., off Karim Khan Ave.



■ A collection of sculptures by Najmeh Pashai is on display in an exhibition at Homa Gallery. The exhibit titled "Between Two Worlds" runs until May 21 at the gallery that can be found at 8, Forth Alley, Sanai St., Karim Khan Ave.



■ Videos and sets of installation by Siavash Hatami are on view in an exhibition at Vaali Gallery. The exhibit entitled "Hollow" runs until June 10 at the gallery located at No. 71, Khoddami St. off of Vanak Square.

# Posters challenge Trump's declaration of Al-Quds as capital of Israel

1→ About 70 artists from Algeria, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Bahrain, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Iran participate in the workshop, IUUU secretary Alireza Komeli told the Persian service MNA on Thursday.

The artists created 90 posters, 40 of which have been selected to put on view on social networks and during exhibitions across the world.

The exhibitions will begin on May 15, which marks Nakba Day, until the International Quds Day, which is the last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan.

"The workshop established a close connection among the artists that were little known to each other," said Iranian graphic designer Hamed Mghuri, who was one of the participating masters in the workshop.

This workshop is expected to help the artists collaborate on joint art projects in the future, he added.

Osama Hamdan, the top representative of Hamas in Lebanon, also attended the closing ceremony of the workshop.



Posters by Iranian artists Mikail Barati, Mohammad Farshadian, Maryam and Zahra Dabbagh created at the workshop "Return of the Century" in Mashhad.



## Iranian children from flood-hit regions competing in Barbara Petchenik map contest



A painting by Sara Ghayuri-Saleh won an award at the Barbara Petchenik Children's Map Competition 2013.

### A R T TEHRAN

Paintings by six Iranian children from the flood-hit regions have been selected to be sent to the Barbara Petchenik Children's Map Competition 2019 in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, the Iran National Cartographic Center announced on Thursday.

Paintings by Baran Abdollahzadeh, a five-year-old girl from West Azarbaijan Province, and Ali Ahmadvand, an eight-year-old boy from Lorestan Province, are among the children who will participate in the contest on the theme of "We Love Maps".

Ten-year-old Anahita Afshari-Tavana from Hamedan Province, 16-year-old Zeinab Mostaqi from Central Province, 14-year-old Parmida Hadian from Khuzestan Province and 16-year-old Elaheh Sahraneshin are also competing in the biennial event, which is organized by the International Cartographic Association

founded in Bern, Switzerland in 1959.

Winners will be announced during the 29th International Cartographic Conference of the International Cartographic Association, which will be held in Tokyo, Japan, from July 15 to 20. A selection of the paintings will also be put on display in an exhibition on the sidelines of the conference.

The Barbara Petchenik Children's Map Competition was established by the International Cartographic Association in 1993 in memory of Barbara Petchenik, a ICA vice president and cartographer who throughout her life worked with maps related to children.

The aim of the contest is to promote the creative representation of the world in graphic forms by children.

Sara Ghayuri-Saleh, an eight-year-old girl from Iran, won an award at the Barbara Petchenik Children's Map Competition 2013, which was held on the theme of "My Place in Today's World".



A scene from Iranian director Soheil Beiraghi's debut film "Cold Sweat".

## Sydney Film Festival picks Iran's "Cold Sweat"

### A R T TEHRAN

Iranian director Soheil Beiraghi's debut film "Cold Sweat" will be competing in the Sydney Film Festival, which will take place in the Australian city from June 5 to 16.

Starring Baran Kowsari, the film is based on a true story about Afruz, Iran's national women's futsal team captain, whose lifelong dream appears over

when her estranged husband uses his legal right to prevent her leaving the country for the Asian Games final in Malaysia.

The movie, also known as "Permission", has been screened at numerous international events. It brought Kowsari the jury prize at the Dublin Film Critics Circle Awards in March.

## George Clooney returns to television with "Catch 22"

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Twenty years after he left medical drama "ER", George Clooney returns to television this month with an adaptation of Joseph Heller's "Catch-22", a novel whose complexity the actor said made it ideal for a six-part series.

The Oscar winner, known for films like "Syriana", "Gravity" and "The Monuments Men", also served as executive producer and directed two episodes of the Hulu series set during World War Two about a member of a U.S. bomber squadron fighting the higher-ups in the military bureaucracy.

"I thought it was a fun way to tell this story. It's hard to tell this story as complex as it is in a two-hour movie," Clooney said at the series premiere in Los Angeles on Tuesday evening.

"It's never been about the medium although television and streaming has gotten much more interesting and more fun, it was more about telling the story. It's about telling good stories."

Heller's 1961 novel, previously adapted

into a 1970 movie, follows U.S. bombardier Yossarian who is infuriated that the army keeps raising the number of missions he must fly to be released from duty.

Yossarian's only way to avoid the missions is to declare insanity, but the only way to prove insanity is a willingness to embark on more of the highly dangerous bombing runs, thus creating the novel's absurd "Catch-22."

"The Sinner" actor Christopher Abbott stars as Yossarian while "The Wolf of Wall Street" actor Kyle Chandler plays his commander, Colonel Cathcart. Clooney portrays training commander Scheisskopf.

"It's a heightened piece, it's satirical, it's dramatic, it's harrowing, it's very funny," Abbott said. "It kind of lives in a world on its own but I think the themes are kind of universal because they're really just about the human condition."

At the premiere, Clooney also talked about his friend and former actress Meghan Markle, who married Britain's Prince Harry last year and gave birth to their first child on Monday.

## "Creditors", "When the Doves Disappeared" on stage at Tehran theaters



A scene from "Creditors" by Iranian director Davud Zahedi (Borna/Sakineh Salimi).

### A R T TEHRAN

Swedish playwright August Strindberg's "Creditors" and Finnish writer Sofi Oksanen's "When the Doves Disappeared" are currently on stage at Tehran theaters.

Davud Zahedi is the director of Strindberg's 1889 play, which is being performed at the Neauphle-Chateau Theater.

The three-character play is about a young painter, Adolph, who is approached by an admirer, Gustav, who eases him into making sense of his relationship with his older wife Tekla.

When Adolph and Tekla's relationship gets worse, it becomes apparent that the new friend, Gustav, has some ulterior motives as he is Tekla's ex-husband.

Amin

Raqibdoost,

Mohammadreza Helalzadeh and Shaqayeq Sahrai are the members of the cast for the play, which will be on stage until May 21.

Hasti Hosseini is the director of "When the Doves Disappeared", which went on stage at the Tehran Independent Theater on Thursday.

The play is about Roland, a freedom fighter, and his slippery cousin, Edgar, who are fleeing from the Red Army in Communist-ruled, war-ravaged Estonia in 1941.

When the Germans arrive, Roland goes into hiding, but Edgar takes on a new identity as a loyal supporter of the Nazi regime.

Mehdi Pakdel, Khatareh Hatami, Abbas Khodagolizadeh and Shahrzad Delafkar are the members of the cast for the play, which will remain on stage until May 21.

## Will Smith brings own fun-loving Genie to new "Aladdin"

LONDON (Reuters) — Hollywood star Will Smith was reluctant at first to play Genie in the live-action remake of Disney's "Aladdin" as it meant following in the big footsteps of late comedian Robin Williams who voiced the character in the 1992 animated film.

Smith, who shot to fame in the 1990s television series "The Fresh Prince of Bel Air," added a personal touch - and some hip hop and rap - to portray the energetic CGI-enhanced blue Genie who emerges from a lamp in a cave of treasures.

Speaking to Reuters at the musical film's premiere in London on Thursday, the 50-year-old actor and rapper said his first reaction about taking on the role was: "Hell no, no way."

"Robin Williams didn't leave much room to improve on the Genie. ... So I looked at it and the first thing for me was that it was going to be live action. I thought it could be a little different," Smith said.

"Robin Williams ... took his essentially

stand-up persona and just infused his stand-up persona into the Genie. ... I was like I could just use the extreme version of almost my 'Fresh Prince' persona to be able to infuse that into this wild character. I felt I'd be able to capture the nostalgia while at the same time being able to make something new."

The film follows the 1992 movie plot that saw poor street hustler Aladdin fall in love with headstrong Princess Jasmine, but director Guy Ritchie said the story "needed updating."

"We are half an hour longer and there's just a difference between an animated film and live action," he said.

"Somehow you can take broader strokes in the animated movies that you can't afford in live action. Jasmine was the principal character that needed evolving and developing."

That character is played by "The 33" and "Power Rangers" actress Naomi Scott, who will also star in the upcoming "Charlie's Angels" remake.