



Larijani lauds Italy's sensitivity about region's security

2

# IRAN DAILY



Minister: US pressure on Iran, Venezuela making oil market fragile

4

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Democrats demand Trump tax returns by April 23

3



'Redemption' as Hamilton wins 1,000th race in China

11



Tehran gearing up for 37th Fiff as cultural-tourism event

12

## Interior minister: Iran floods caused billions in damage



IRNA

Floods unleashed by heavy rain across Iran in recent weeks have caused an estimated \$8.3 billion in damage to roads, bridges, homes and agricultural land, state media cited

ministers as telling lawmakers on Sunday. The flooding, which began on March 19, has killed 76 people, forced more than 220,000 people into emergency shelters, and left aid agen-

cies struggling to cope. The Armed Forces have been deployed to help those affected. "The recent floods are unprecedented... 25 provinces and more than 4,400 villages have been affected," Interior

Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli said in Parliament. Fazli said the floods had caused around 350 trillion rials (\$8.3 billion) worth of damage.

Continued on Page 2



IRNA

## Zarif raps Europe for delaying INSTEX launch

Iran once again complained about a delay by European partners in the 2015 nuclear deal to make operational a non-dollar direct payment channel with Tehran, saying they now have "no excuse" for further postponement of the project.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif made the remarks on the sidelines of a ceremony to launch the ministry's Economic Diplomacy website in Tehran on Sunday, Press TV reported.

The Europeans, Zarif said, introduced the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchange (INSTEX) as "a preliminary measure" - as part of their multiple commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) - following Washington's withdrawal from the nuclear accord.

In order to begin honoring their commitments, the Europeans were required to set up INSTEX, he explained.

An Iranian structure parallel to INSTEX, called the Special Trade and Finance Institute (STFI), was launched just last week, Zarif said, noting that the European signatories have no longer any excuse to delay the start of their job.

He also stressed that the European partners are "lagging behind" in fulfilling their commitments and "should not believe that the Islamic Republic will [continue to wait] for them."

Continued on Page 2

## UK gov't to resume cross-party Brexit talks this week



AFP

The British government will resume talks with the main opposition Labour Party this week on how to resolve the deadlock over Brexit, a senior minister said Sunday.

Prime Minister Theresa May's effective deputy, David Lidington, said they wanted to be able to "take stock" of any progress when parliament returns from its Easter break on April 23, AFP reported.

"What we have agreed is a program of meetings this week on particular subjects with the ministers and shadow ministers concerned getting together," he told the BBC.

They would discuss environmental standards and workers' rights after Brexit as well as the future security relationship with the EU.

"Then we would hope to take stock of where we are as soon as parliament gets back after the Easter recess," he said.

"But I don't think that this question can be allowed to drag out for much longer."

May was forced to ask fellow EU leaders last week to postpone Brexit for a second time, from April 12 to October 31.

She has been unable to persuade MPs to back the withdrawal terms she has struck with Brussels, but is also unwilling to take Britain out of the EU with no deal at all.

She is still hoping Brexit can happen in time to avoid Britain taking part in European Parliament elections on May 23.

May met Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn on April 3 and there have been further lower-level talks since then over Labour's demand for a close future relationship with the EU.

Lidington said there must be "compromise on both sides", adding that if no agreement could be reached, they would put a series of Brexit options to parliament to decide.

## Sudan Foreign Ministry urges global backing for army rulers

Sudan's Foreign Ministry on Sunday urged the international community to back the country's new military rulers to help "democratic transition."

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is looking forward to the international community to understand the situation and to support the transitional military council... in order to achieve the Sudanese goal of democratic transition," the ministry said in a statement.

"The steps taken by the army on Thursday, April 11, take the side of the people for the sake of freedom, peace and justice," the ministry said, echoing the catch-cry of the months-long protest movement that led to the ousting of long-time leader Omar al-Bashir.

The chief of the military council, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, is "committed to having a complete civilian government and the role of the

council will be to maintain the sovereignty of the country," the military said.

Burhan was also committed to an independent judiciary and to preparing the environment for political parties and civil society to build themselves up "in order to have a peaceful transition of power," the ministry said.

Burhan took the oath as chief of the military council after his predecessor stepped down a day after ousting Bashir.

Tens of thousands of people have been camped outside the army headquarters since April 6 demanding both the deposing of Bashir and the transition to civilian rule.

In remarks broadcast on state TV, Burhan said Saturday the council has invited "all spectrums of Sudanese people for dialogue."

He said he was lifting the nighttime

curfew imposed Thursday, which was to last for a month, and declared the immediate release of all those detained and tried during the wave of unrest that began in December.

Bashir imposed a state of emergency in February, banning unauthorized public gatherings and granting sweeping powers to the police in an effort to quash the protests. Dozens of people were killed in clashes between police and protesters, and hundreds were tried before emergency courts.



AFP

### 'Immediate' transition

Meanwhile, organizers of the protests called on the military to "immediately and unconditionally" hand power to a transitional civilian

government that would rule for four years.

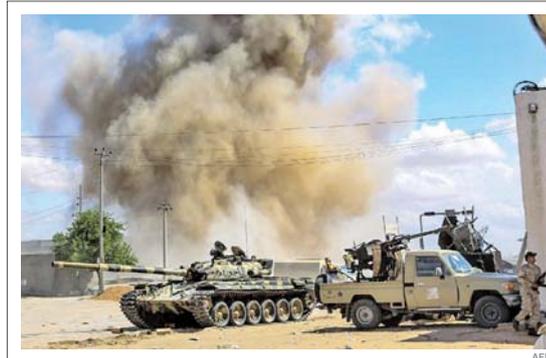
The political parties and movements behind the four months of protests said in a joint statement that they will remain in the streets until their demands are met. They said the handover to civilian rule would be the "first step toward the fall of the regime."

The military overthrew al-Bashir on Thursday, ending his nearly 30-year reign and placing him under house arrest in the capital, Khartoum. The protesters fear that the military, which is dominated by al-Bashir appointees, will cling to power or select one of its own to succeed him.

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates meanwhile issued statements in support of Sudan's transitional military council.

AFP and AP contributed to this story.

## Over 120 killed, 560 wounded in Libya fighting: WHO



AFP

Fighting near Tripoli has killed 121 people and wounded 561 since strongman Khalifa Haftar launched an offensive earlier this month to take the Libyan capital, the World Health Organization said Sunday.

WHO's Libya account said on Twitter the organization was sending medical supplies and more staff to Tripoli, and denounced "repeated attacks on health care workers, vehicles" during the fighting which erupted on April 4, AFP reported.

Haftar's forces, which con-

trol swathes of the country's east, have defied international calls to halt their battle against fighters loyal to the UN-backed Government of National Accord based in Tripoli.

The United Nations' office for humanitarian affairs said more than 13,500 people had been displaced by the clashes, while more than 900 residents are living in shelters.

"Three medical personnel have been killed and five ambulances have been incapacitated by shrapnel," OCHA said in a Saturday statement.

As well as fighting on the ground, the two sides have launched daily air raids and accuse each other of targeting civilians.

The north African country has been in turmoil since the NATO-backed overthrow of dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, which has led to the creation of a bewildering array of militias all seeking to take control.

Haftar backs a rival administration based in eastern Libya that refuses to recognise the UN-backed unity government led by Fayez al-Sarraj.